Mexico: COIL exchange, study abroad, and intercultural competence

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10th Anniversary Conference COIL Conference
April 25, 2016
Our Team

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  - Assistant Professor of Spanish
  - Binghamton University – BU – (Binghamton, NY, USA)

- Salvador Venegas Escobar – Latin American Academy Fellow
  - Associate Professor of English
  - Universidad de Monterrey – UDEM – (Monterrey, NL, Mexico)
COIL Collaboration

- Fall 2015 courses
  - BU students – Spanish 215 course - 17
  - UDEM students – TOEFL preparation course - 27
- Partnerships were formed with students from both universities
- Six week exchange
- Activities explored culture and the university life in one’s own country and in the country of the partnering institution
  - Synchronous Zoom (video conferencing) sessions
  - Asynchronous Blackboard Discussion Boards
COIL Student Travel

- Three students traveled to the country of their partners
  - One L2 English student – May 2015
  - Two L2 Spanish students – September 2015
- This study’s focus is on the two L2 Spanish students
Six days, five nights
Day 1 – Welcome dinner
Day 2
  - Obispado
  - Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León – MEXTESOL presentation
  - Santa Lucía
  - Tacos
Day 3
  - Chipinque
  - Cascada Cola de caballo
  - Santiago – Pueblo mágico
  - Dinner at Salvador’s home
Monterrey, Mexico Itinerary - continued

• Day 4
  o Meeting with Office of International Programs (UDEM)
  o Campus tour (UDEM)
  o Education course (UDEM)
  o Basilica de Guadalupe (COIL student)
  o Birthday celebration with Mariachi (COIL student’s home)

• Day 5
  o COIL presentation (UDEM)
  o Meeting with Languages Department (UDEM)
  o TESOL course (UDEM)
  o Mexican Independence Day festivities (UDEM)
  o Farewell dinner
  o El Grito

• Day 6 – Travel back to USA
Data collection and analysis

- Pre-survey
- Daily nightly surveys
- Post-survey

- Assessed intercultural competence using Deardorff’s (2012) framework
- Utilized NVivo software to detect patterns in the data
What is intercultural competence?

- Study sought to define intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006)
- Nine definitions were provided from intercultural literature
- Definition that participants indicated as most applicable – 3.5/4 rating
  - One from Byram’s (1997) work
  - “Knowledge of others; knowledge of self, skills to interpret and relate; skills to discover and/or to interact; valuing other’s values, beliefs, and behaviors; and relativizing one’s self. Linguistic competence plays a key role” (Byram, 1997, p. 34).
  - COIL component is a significant

In a study complete by Deardorff (2006),
Deardorff’s (2006) Process Model*

- **Attitudes**
  - Respect
  - Openness
  - Curiosity and discovery

- **Knowledge and Comprehension**
  - Cultural self-awareness
  - Deep cultural knowledge
  - Others’ worldviews
  - Sociolinguistic awareness

- **Skills**
  - To listen, observe, and evaluate
  - To analyze, interpret, and relate

- ** Desired External Outcomes**
  - Effective and appropriate communication
  - Effective and appropriate behavior in an intercultural situation

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*Although taken from Deardorff (2006), the source of this image is Deardorff, (2004).
Deardorff’s (2012) Self-Reflection Framework

- Part One – Self-rating – 15 items
  - Respect
  - Openness
  - Tolerance for ambiguity
  - Flexibility
  - Curiosity and discovery
  - Withholding judgment
  - Cultural self-awareness/understanding
  - Understanding others’ worldviews
  - Cultural-specific knowledge
  - Sociolinguistic awareness
  - Skills to listen, observe, and interpret
  - Skills to analyze, evaluate, and relate
  - Empathy
  - Adaptability
  - Communication Skills

- Part Two - Self-reflection (open-ended)

Deardorff’s (2012) Self-Reflection Framework

| 1. Respect (valuing other cultures) | 4-high | 3-average | 2-low average | 1-poor |
| 2. Openness (intercultural learning and to people from other cultures) | 4-high | 3-average | 2-low average | 1-poor |
| 3. Tolerance for ambiguity | 4-high | 3-average | 2-low average | 1-poor |
| 4. Flexibility (in using appropriate communication styles and behaviors in intercultural situations) | 4-high | 3-average | 2-low average | 1-poor |
| 5. Curiosity and discovery | 4-high | 3-average | 2-low average | 1-poor |
| 6. Withholding judgment | 4-high | 3-average | 2-low average | 1-poor |
| 7. Cultural self-awareness/understanding | 4-high | 3-average | 2-low average | 1-poor |
| 8. Understanding others’ worldviews | 4-high | 3-average | 2-low average | 1-poor |
| 9. Cultural-specific knowledge | 4-high | 3-average | 2-low average | 1-poor |
| 10. Sociolinguistic awareness (awareness of using other languages in social contexts) | 4-high | 3-average | 2-low average | 1-poor |
| 11. Skills to listen, observe, and interpret | 4-high | 3-average | 2-low average | 1-poor |
| 12. Skills to analyze, evaluate, and relate | 4-high | 3-average | 2-low average | 1-poor |
| 13. Empathy (do unto others as they would have done unto them) | 4-high | 3-average | 2-low average | 1-poor |
| 14. Adaptability (to different communication styles/behaviors; to new cultural environments) | 4-high | 3-average | 2-low average | 1-poor |
| 15. Communication Skills (appropriate AND effective communication in intercultural settings) | 4-high | 3-average | 2-low average | 1-poor |

Part One: The items listed below are invaluable in developing intercultural competence and in interacting effectively and appropriately with persons from other cultures. Please rate yourself on the following:

- 5 = Very high
- 4 = High
- 3 = Average
- 2 = Below average
- 1 = Poor
Results

- Self-ratings changed on a daily basis
  - Although some self-ratings were identical before and after the trip, they changed during the trip.
  - Some self-ratings improved, while others decreased.
  - For example, on a scale of 1 to 5, P1 noted an increase in adaptability (from 4 to 5) and P2 indicated a decrease (4 to 3)

- Self-ratings indicated language improvement

- Common threads
  - Friendliness, engagement, and family values of Mexican people
  - Laid back feeling of life
  - Driving in Mexico compared to the USA
  - Self-realizations about language and thoughts about culture
Results – Some example survey responses

What aspects of the Mexican culture do you like most?

- Day 2 - “The personal contact between loved ones/people who know each other/people who wanted to get to know me. It’s a much closer bond. Personal space is much less of an issue. Trust is a very important value.” (P1)
- Day 5 - “The values placed on respect, family, friends; how the young view the old and vise-versa [sic].” (P1)
- Day 2 - The tradional [sic] perspectives. The general respect for elders, religion, family, etc. The is also incredible. Different, but good. (P2)

What aspects of the Mexican culture do you like least?

- Day 2 – “First impressions are held to be very important . . . Though first impressions are universally significant, I think they are more important here.” (P1)
- Day 2 - “Sometimes the driving is a bit scary.” (P2)
- Day 5 – “En este momento, no puedo decir nada.” (P1)
- Day 5 – “Sometimes too laid-back.” (P2)
Day 2 – “I find more now that I am less afraid to ask what something means if I don’t understand. This is because I obviously need to understand whomever I’m talking with in order to learn/gain more culture-specific knowledge.” (P1)

Day 2 – “Again. Keeping an open mind is what I need to do. I feel like I can pass judgement [sic] quickly, but in order to progress, I should be more tolerant.” (P2)

Day 3 - “I tend to smile at others if I want to watch them.” (P1)

Day 3 - “I sincerely believe the immersion is helping.” (P2)

Day 5 – “…all of my experiences were affected by my emotions and how I perceived events because of them. In hindsight, I may have thought something was said a little maliciously or with offense because I was nervous about whether or nor I understood everything or whether or not I would be able to respond.” (P1)

Day 5 – “I guess trying to place myself as an observer less and a contributor more.” (P2)
Conclusions

- Development in attitudes, knowledge, skills, internal outcomes and external outcomes CAN OCCUR during a short stay study abroad trip.

- Language progress CAN OCCUR during a short stay study abroad trip.

- Cultural connections made
  - Increase of culture awareness
  - Increase of language awareness
  - Increase in intercultural communicative competence

- Increase in self-awareness
Conclusions - continued

- Cultural connections made
  - Increase of culture awareness
  - Increase of language awareness
  - Increase in intercultural communicative competence
- Increase in self-awareness
- Language skills improvement
- Increase of technology awareness (COIL)
- Meaningful online collaborations started (COIL)
- Friendships begun
- Understanding of cooperation
- Overall, both COIL collaboration and short study abroad trip were a **SUCCESS!**
Classroom implications

- Cultural component is **KEY** in coursework!!!
  - Need to take into account the COIL activities
  - Regular homework is reduced
  - COIL component is a significant part of grade

- Encourage study abroad trips – even **SHORT STAY** ones!!!
  - In-class – normal syllabus activities
  - Out-of-class – students continued to *practice and improve* ALL four language skill

- Utilize assessments such as Deardorff’s (2012) Self-Reflection Framework when evaluating intercultural competence
References


Thank you! ¡Muchas gracias!

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