

COIL Institute for Globally Networked Learning in the Humanities

Course Development and Implementation Case Study

24. Spain - USA: Spanish & English, Languages & Cultures

Abstract

The major challenge we had was the time difference, but we found the solution, and worked a couple of Sundays. Collaborative activities were infused through the creation of tasks in three categories. First, information exchange, will allow students to establish personal relationships with partners and will increase awareness of cultural differences. Sample tasks include students' presentations of themselves and their cultures to their future partners through cultural autobiographies, students' interviews of each other on certain cultural topics and a production of a virtual presentation (e.g. via Voice Thread) or a written report based on the interview process.

Second, in order to enhance practice of the intercultural skills of observation and to defy stereotypes, students were engage in the tasks, which involved comparison and analysis. Activities in this group joint reading of Sandra Cisners's Casa en Mango Street, and discussions of different intercultural issues, including most controversial ones related to politics, religion, environment, music.

Third, the development of intercultural communicative competence was fostered through collaboration in product creation. Sample activities include a creation of a blog or power point presentation by students in both classes on a topic of mutual interest (topics included family, education, food, etc.).

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Section 1: General Course Information

1. Courses

Course Title	Institution(s)	Discipline	Academic Level
Advanced Spanish: Language and Culture	SUNY, Empire State College	Modern languages	Advanced
Lengua BIII Inglés	Universidad de Las Palmas, Gran Canaria, Spain (ULPGC)	Modern languages	Year 2

2. The team

Team Member #1	
Name:	Nataly Tcherepashenets
Role on Team:	Faculty
Institution:	SUNY, ESC
Position at Institution:	Associate Prof., Area Coordinator World Languages
Department and/or Program:	Center for Distance Learning
Team Member #2	
Name:	Richard Clouet
Role on Team:	Faculty
Institution:	ULPGC
Position at Institution:	Dean of the Faculty
Department and/or Program:	Faculty of Translation and Interpreting
Team Member #3	
Name:	Florence Lojacono
Role on Team:	International Programs
Institution:	ULPGC
Position at Institution:	Vice Dean for International
Department and/or Program:	Faculty of Translation and Interpreting
Team Member #4	
Name:	Hui-Ya Chuang
Role on Team:	Instructional Designer
Institution:	Empire State College
Position at Institution:	Curriculum Instructional Designer
Department and/or Program:	Center for Distance Learning

3. When?

Fall 2012

4. Number of students enrolled from each institution

SUNY, ESC 11
ULPGC (Spain): 13

5. Is this typical for classes of this type?

Regular for advanced level (ESC)

ULPGC: It is not the typical size. This course was offered on a voluntary basis. This means that students enrolled in it were also enrolled in all the required courses for the semester.

Section 2: Issues of Language

6. language(s) of instruction at each institution
In the course, Spanish for SUNY, ESC ULPGC : Spanish
7. Primary language of most students in each class
English (SUNY, ESC) ULPGC : Spanish
8. Language of course collaboration
Spanish and English ULPGC : Between instructors: in English Between students: both in English and in Spanish
9. Language fluency
Good ULPGC : students were fluent in English (level B2 within the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).
10. Language proficiency difference
Though the difference was rather significant, it did not have many implications for the communication (ESC perspective) ULPGC : the potential difference did not represent any kind of gap that could jeopardize the common activities scheduled for this course. On the contrary, the aim of the course was to build on this potential gap to turn it into an opportunity to learn.

Section 3: Curricular Information

11. Online or blended?
online ULPGC : The common course (under the common name of Advanced Spanish/English) was offered fully online.
12. Duration
10 ULPGC : students began to post their entries in week 2 and posted e
13. Class work or discussion related to their collaboration before and/or after the actual collaboration period
Reflections in Journal entries ULPGC : students also had the possibility to meet the instructor (Richard Clouet) as they were following another English course with him in a F2F format. We took this opportunity to set up 2 training sessions. Photos and 2 videos about these sessions are available in the COIL Log. Topics covered were: how to log on Angel, how to navigate on Angel, how to navigate through Blackboard Collaborate, how to build a Voice Thread presentation, how to make this presentation public for other to add their comments. In one of these sessions, Richard and I decided to set up several dedicated spaces for each team on Angel where they would be able to share and comment their work > see screen capture in the COIL Log. Team 1: ULPGC 2 posts (same student, speaker of the team) / ESC 1 post Team 2: ULPGC 2 posts (2 different students, 1 as speaker of the team) / ESC 1 post Team 3: ULPGC 3 posts (3 different students) / ESC 3 posts (same student) Team 4: ULPGC 0 post / ESC 1 post The work involved by both students and teachers at ULPGC was very important, since Spanish learners were full time students who studied from 8am to 2pm at the ULPGC every day and had to log on the Angel platform every afternoon to complete the activities or meet their American classmates at around midnight. The follow-up by ULPGC instructors also had to take place at night, even if we had to be back in our traditional classes the following day at 8am! However, it's something all of us (both students and teachers) did with great pleasure and enthusiasm.

Section 4: Asynchronous Technologies Used

14. Tools
Angel + Blackboard Collaborate ULPGC : students from both institutions were interacting on the Angel platform, the ESC LMS. This means that the ESC students were “at home” and that ULPGC student were “guests”. ESC students did not need to learn how to navigate through a new LMS but ULPGC needed to; ESC did not need to learn how to navigate through Blackboard Collaborate but ULPGC students needed to. In addition to the LMS, some ULPGC students used email, Skype and Facebook to communicate with their ESC classmates.
15. Server location
SUNY, ESC ULPGC : the LMS for this course was the ECS’s one as a requirement. Using email, Skype and FB was personal initiatives of our students.
16. Technical problems
No ULPGC : We did not encounter any significant technical problem. It’s our opinion, based on personal experience, that technical aspects of any web-enhanced course are viewed as a problem if it is so for the instructor. It turns out to be obvious that instructors showing enthusiasm with ICT will experience fewer difficulties and transmit that same enthusiasm to the learners. Those who don’t may transmit the opposite effect. Another point is that cloud-based and personal ways to communicate among students are sometimes undermined by faculty because these tools don’t offer enough tracking (who has done what, how many times and when). As we all know, faculty need data to write papers and will prefer tools that facilitate an easy data collection to any better learning tool which doesn’t offer this opportunity.
17. Frequency of use
Every week. ULPGC : students were expected to log on the common LMS (Angel) at least once in each module. And so they did, or more, from September through to December. They were not expected to have any specific number of contacts using alternative tools such as email, Skype and FB. Nonetheless, this occurred.
18. Informal communication
Informal space was created for groups to meet in Blackboard Collaborate ULPGC : During our 2 training sessions we engaged our students to use the tool that best matched their needs and usual practices in order to connect with their US classmates.

19. Re-use

Yes

ULPGC : We would build much more on these tools as they are much more appropriate for quick and easy connections. The accent would be laid much more on fostering real intercultural contacts, no matter the ways they may occur, than on fostering institutional connection for their tracking capability. We believe that social justice and intercultural awareness are the aims of the course. Techniques should help us to meet the goal for this course; technics should not downsize our pedagogy to make it more “article friendly”. As faculty members, we should acknowledge, and even welcome the fact that techniques will push us out of our comfort zone.

Section 5: Synchronous Technologies Used

20. Tools
Blackboard collaborate ULPGC : 2 synchronous sessions were scheduled (see the COIL Log). The tool was Blackboard Collaborate, the tool used at the ESC. The first session was scheduled during ESC student's regular real time online class requirement, this mean at 7.00 pm in New York and midnight in Las Palmas. ULPGC students logged in during their free (and night) time, on a voluntary basis. Nonetheless, almost all ULPGC students participated in the 2 sessions.
21. Server location
SUNY, ESC ULPGC : it was an ESC requirement.
22. Technical problems
NO ULPGC : no problem at all.
23. Frequency of use
At least 3 times during the course (introduction, midterm project discussion, and final project presentations) ULPGC : 2 synchronous sessions required and scheduled by both institutions. ULPGC students were not asked to demonstrate other synchronous contacts. They did so, but on a voluntary basis.
24. informal communication
virtual rooms were created for students to meet ULPGC : During our 2 training sessions we engaged our students to use the tool that best matched their needs and usual practices in order to connect with their US classmates.
25. Re-use
yes ULPGC : same answer as 21.

Section 6: Assessment Information

26. How?
<p>We used rubrics (for discussion and final projects) and self-tests</p> <p>ULPGC : our course was aimed at real intercultural awareness and therefore the whole experience was extremely worthwhile. Evaluation criteria were based on participation. Evaluated activities were</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) participating in writings forums (ESC topics)2) build 2 common presentations (advertising and final project). <p>Before starting the course, during the course and at the end of the course, students were also required to regularly record their ideas and perceptions both in the activities and online interactions with foreign students, as well as the cultural facts they could observe. It was a way of gathering information on the students' intercultural experiences and of keeping track of their progress and of any changes in their attitudes towards other cultures.</p>
27. Common assessment rubric?
<p>We did not collaborate in assessment formally, though, I knowt hat students provided each other a very valuable feedback that was clear from the dicussion posts, but also in collaborative projects</p> <p>ULPGC : unfortunately not. Each institution runs its own evaluation.</p>
28. Assessment outcomes
<p>There were obvious signs that indicated that students acquired intercultural communicative competence (at least to some extent), and more in-depth appreciation of the target culture</p> <p>ULPGC : The combination of two kinds of assessment, both direct and indirect, will hopefully help us understand students' ICC capacities, providing an empirical basis for future studies in three areas: tracking development, examining outcomes, and indicating areas for instructional improvement within the field of social justice through an online environment.</p>
29. Peer assessment
<p>Not formally, but we saw that students sometimes corrected each other</p> <p>ULPGC : Yes, we will definitely consider peer-assessment in a next course, above all as this kind of assessment is conducted on a regular practice in the English courses at our Faculty and as we gained some expertise in this field.</p>
30. Charter or guidelines for student interaction
<p>ULPGC : We did not develop any guidelines for student interactions. We built and taught our course keeping in mind that, as instructors, our most important goals were</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) to motivate students (especially because the course was on a voluntary basis, without any extra credit

of academic advantage)

2) to stress the importance of intercultural awareness in a globalized world. The fact that, in this specific situation, they took the initiative to use no institutional ways to contact with their US partners by themselves is for us the most evident sign of the success of the course.

31. Attrition

1 student (due to the wrong placement)

ULPGC : Very few students drop out after the first night real time session.

32. Is this typical for similar classes at your institution?

Yes

ULPGC : Yes, this is quite normal. Furthermore the rate of dropout in this course was less important than the average percentage in required courses where attendance is part of the requirement.

Section 7: Institutional Support

33. Type of support
Administrative (allowing to share the platform with Spanish university) ULPGC Institutional support : <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial: grant for travel expenses• Administrative: none• Pedagogical: none• Technical: none
34. Engagement with the international programs office
None (USA) ULPGC : The Vice-Dean for International Relations was part of the team. Prior to this course, she visited ESC twice and met the members of the Center for Distance Learning (CDL). She spoke with Meg Benke (Provost) and with Tom Mackey (Dean of CDL) about the possibility to have a framework agreement signed between the 2 institutions in order to collaborate on a formal basis and to participate together to ICT-based initiatives. See here (2010): http://www.slideshare.net/Florence.Lojacono/ftic-ulpgc-spain-visita-el-cdl-empire-state-college-ny
35. Importance given to globally networked learning
I hope so (USA), but I am not sure (USA) ULPGC: Internationalization is a key component of the ULPGC policy. Furthermore, internationalization matched with mobile learning (OpenCourseware included) is the way the ULPGC chose to face the needs of students engaged in a globalized world. The ULPGC is an Open University.
36. Commitment
I think first of all faculty, however the institution also supported Instructional designer ULPGC: The idea to apply to the COIL arose after the visit of the Vice Dean for International at ESC (Saratoga Springs). It was primarily a singular commitment on the part of the participating faculty Fellows.
37. Future iterations
I would love to offer it again, of possible. However, it is almost a double teaching load, and should be recognized as such. Next Fall, I am on sabbatical though. (US) ULPGC: We don't plan to offer the same course again, basically because we plan to build on this experience to learn more about synchronous and asynchronous communicating tools and to reframe our international syllabus accordingly, with both student's comments and our own analysis.
38. New globally networked courses

I hope very much, as I think this experience has been extremely rewarding and enriching for our students and all involved. (US)

ULPGC: our work will have, and already had, an impact on our teaching. What we learned from this experience can be used in F2F teaching as well. To motivate students, to engage them in significant common work, to foster intercultural awareness are our goals, online or F2F.

39. Response of chairs, deans, provosts or other administrators to the possibility of expanding this pilot course(s) into a broader program of globally networked courses

Though I am thinking a lot about our internationalization effort ,

I did not put forward any specific proposal, yet. However, in my opinion, if the institution would like to pursue these opportunities, we should develop a system of rewards, recognition.

ULPGC: We do hope to be able to expand this pilot course into a broader program of globally networked courses between ULPGC and other American institutions, not only around the issue of language learning but also by including aspects of collaborative translation projects between the two countries. Ever since its inception, the Process of Bologna (which has been taking place in Europe for the last 10 years) has given an extremely important place to internationalization and mobility (both physical and online). The Lifelong Learning Program published by the European Commission in December 2006 also invites Higher Education Institutions to promote this kind of mobility. It is thus the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria's intention to carry on encouraging such initiatives and to foster other programs of globally networked courses.

40. Institutional commitment to further developing globally networked courses

There was no discussion, at least not yet.

ULPGC: Through the Vice-precedent for International Relations, the ULPGC is ready to carry on granting scholarships to encourage researchers like Florence and Richard to further develop the work they have begun. This can take the form of financial help for mobility and help for publishing their research.

41. How to nurture the development of globally networked learning

Financial support

ULPGC: If we could have our framework agreement signed by our partner, this would open the way for further collaboration as this would allow us to apply for financial, technical and administrative help at our home institution.

Section 8: Reflections

42. Goals set
<p>When I proposed to develop this course, I had 4 major goals in mind:</p> <p>(1) to expand students' knowledge about culture(s) of the Spanish –speaking world and of the United States through the 'live' interaction with native speakers of the target language online;</p> <p>(2) to foster cross -cultural understanding and acceptance through engaging students in implicit debates on most controversial topics, including “natives”/”foreigners” dichotomy and immigration in its relationship to both American and European politics and globalization;</p> <p>(3) to develop respect for diverse members of world population, indispensable for the democratic citizenship in the era of globalization;</p> <p>(4) to prepare students for a teamwork with international partners, which is a highly desirable skill for the professional success in a globalized world in almost every area. (US)</p> <p>Goals ULPGC team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participate in all COIL activities• To set up the course and to teach it, as planned• To gain insight knowledge of cross-border team teaching• To develop our ICT skills
43. Goals achieved
<p>This course exceeded my expectations (US)</p> <p>Goals ULPGC team:</p> <p>- Participate in all COIL activities COIL course: we participated from June 2011 to December 9, 2011. COIL Course Log (13 ULPGC entries) - To set up the course and to teach it, as planned Done, Fall 2012 (15 week course)</p> <p>- To gain insight knowledge of cross-border team teaching Yes, we are now more savvy about the nuts and bolts of cross-border team teaching.</p> <p>- To develop our ICT skills We thought that the COIL course would be more ICT oriented, not written oriented. We participated to all activities until the course abruptly ended, our last posts remaining without any feedback. It was a pity not to take into consideration people who participated and to end the course in this way. We also expected the course to be much more interactive and not teacher-led. In June we ask to be able to edit the Glossary and to transform the teacher-led activity to a collaborative task, we did not receive any answer. As for the whole course, some activities were never finished (see the Glossary). No evaluation tool was provided for participants to evaluate the course which is very uncommon, above all in a US institution.</p>
44. Most unique aspect for students
<p>ability to communicate both synchronously (they especially liked this part, I think!) and asynchronously with students, who reside in other country(US)</p>

ULPGC: the whole experience was unique for our students, above all the fact of being part of another teaching structure. Academic diversity resulted to be pretty exotic and a drive for our students.

45. Most successful aspect(s) from a pedagogical perspective

discussions, oral sessions, collaborative projects (US)

ULPGC:

- The written interactions (forums)
- Team work within the ULPGC team (and this is very important as these are transferable skills that they can put into practice immediately in other courses)

46. Most problematic aspect(s) from a pedagogical perspective

time difference was the major challenge

ULPGC: Students were asked to put their work together and to present a single document. We found out that usually students from both institutions used to copy and paste their work on the asked format but didn't really engage in real discussion. The work was not always seen as a whole but as the addition of both parts.

47. Changes for future iterations

Did not think about it, yet. (US)

ULPGC: we would stress that the common work should be common and not the addition of the different parts. We would also stick on a tool as VoiceThread (at the last minute we had to change it for a traditional PPT) as the recording capability is a key aspect in a language course. We will not do long (more than one hour) oral sessions where each group presents their own work while the rest of the class is listening. Instead we would create different breaking rooms to let students free to share their comments in a more fluent way and to make the most of this common real time session.

48. Technical support

ESC: The role as instructional designer in a globally networked course is different. In this course, we worked with a bigger size of team; and when we were deciding which videos or which tools we want to adopt in the course, we need to confirm that students from both countries can have access to it.

ULPGC: No "official" instructional designer was enrolled in this project.

49. International programs person

ULPGC: The major difference between this course and a more traditional one (F2F and within the same class) was of course to deal with academic and geographical diversity (meaning: time zone, assessment, LMS, student's attendance and requirements).

50. Time commitment

The development of the course took almost 1.5. (from its conception). Twice as long as the regular online course

ULPGC: this course represented a great deal of time. We spent a lot of time preparing the application, more than in the reading part of the COIL course and in the COIL course itself. When it came to our common course, we spent about 3 hours each week and more at the final stage of the course. Plus the 2 real time sessions (1 hour each) and the 2 training sessions (2 hours each).

51. Was it worth it?

Yes, most definitely (US)

ULPGC: Yes, it was absolutely worth it. Considering implementing such a course in the future we may have to rethink the distribution of the tasks and the time for each of them, but we know that such a cross-border project always include a great amount of time.

Section 9: Course Collaboration Narrative

I honestly did not find any particular problems in this course. The major challenge we had was the time difference, but we found the solution, and worked a couple of Sundays. Collaborative activities were infused through the creation of tasks in three categories. First, information exchange will allow students to establish personal relationships with partners and will increase awareness of cultural differences. Sample tasks include students' presentations of themselves and their cultures to their future partners through cultural autobiographies, students' interviews of each other on certain cultural topics and a production of a virtual presentation (e.g. via Voice Thread) or a written report based on the interview process.

Second, in order to enhance practice of the intercultural skills of observation and to defy stereotypes, students were engaged in the tasks, which involved comparison and analysis. Activities in this group joint reading of Sandra Cisneros's *Casa en Mango Street*, and discussions of different intercultural issues, including most controversial ones related to politics, religion, environment, music.

Third, the development of intercultural communicative competence was fostered through collaboration in product creation. Sample activities include a creation of a blog or power point presentation by students in both classes on a topic of mutual interest (topics included family, education, food, etc.)

Section 10: Student Feedback

Though there are no anonymous comments. Here are examples:

"I thought the Encounters posts were excellent and allowed a great view into the opinions of the Spanish students. I don't know how I would improve on it. Group work, especially in an on-line environment has inherent difficulties." (US)

"I think it was very difficult to communicate with the Spanish students. Even after we communicated about our final exam, they decided to take a different route and tell us about it the day of the presentation." (US)

"I especially liked the interaction with US students and the comparison between both cultures." (Spain)

"There should be more interaction in groups, not just to do the projects. Although, it was a little difficult because of the time difference." (Spain)

ULPGC students:

What did you like best about this course?

- 1) I especially liked the interaction with US students and the comparison between both cultures.
- 2) I liked best the oral sessions, but I think we should have made more.

What specific things do you think could be improved in the structure or design of the course and learning activities?

- 1) Me gustaría que se nos corrigieran los "posts" a los estudiantes españoles, porque así sabríamos los errores que cometemos y mejoraríamos nuestro "writing".
- 2) I think the whole ANGEL tool is quite complicated and hard to understand. Maybe there would be necessary some kind of tutorial very well explained about this.
- 3) I would have done more oral activities to improve our pronunciation and less writing tasks.
- 4) The structure is not that bad, but it could be better. As I said, there should have been more oral sessions and less writings and readings. Moreover, it would have much more funny if the oral sessions had been in pairs and not in groups.

What changes would you suggest be made to the pacing or sequence of the content and activities for this course?

- 1) Lo mejor sería planear más interacciones entre los alumnos, en vez de la presentación de trabajos orales, porque de esta manera lo que hacemos es practicar como lo hacemos en clase y no aprovechamos la ventaja de estar hablando con gente que domina el otro idioma y de la que podemos aprender mucho.
- 2) I would not change the content of the activities. I would just include more comparisons between both cultures but the activities were quite well sequenced.
- 3) It could be perfectly improved just by organizing the project a little bit. This web is not well organized. At first we didn't know what we had to do and when

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