Collaborative Online International Learning: Students and Professors Making Global Connections

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Abstract

Collaborative International Online Learning (COIL) interactions create multiple innovations for cross-cultural development among professors and students. Recently trained through grant funding in the latest COIL theory and innovations, two faculty teams at Xavier University and the Universidad Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, in Lima, Peru developed new COIL course initiatives at their respective universities. This article outlines the process of implementing COIL courses, and reports the impact of such courses on student perspectives with regards to language development, motivation to study Spanish and intercultural competencies. The program description addresses course curriculum, creation of joint course objectives, task design and student artifacts. Finally, the authors reflect on the challenges and successes of using technology to facilitate global education.

Introduction

Educational institutions have been called upon to prepare students for the challenges of a global work force, with technology and creative curricular design potentially playing a crucial role in meeting the demands of globalization (Moore & Simon, 2015; Stearns, 2009). Virtual cross-cultural experiences can help by providing students access to equitable and affordable educational opportunities in order to enhance global learning (Blake, 2013; Ceo-DiFrancesco, 2015; and Schenker, 2013). Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) addresses
Fostering Connections, Empowering Communities, Celebrating the World

des educational challenges by offering multiple innovations for cross-cultural development among professors and students, without learners and instructors leaving their campuses (McKinnon, Smith & Thomson, 2015). COIL is not an educational theory. It can be viewed as a method utilized to virtually link two institutions in order to encourage cross-cultural interactions among students and professors. COIL provides a structure of best practices for developing an international course component with partner institutions across the globe. According to the SUNY COIL Center, COIL is defined as “...globally networked learning and virtual exchange,...a new teaching and learning paradigm that promotes the development of intercultural competence across shared multicultural learning environments” (SUNY COIL Center 2015).

Advancing Internationalization through COIL, a grant funded by the American Council on Education and SUNY COIL, was awarded to three universities nationally in March 2014 (Rubin & Guth, 2015). Recently trained through this funding, two faculty teams at Xavier University and Universidad Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, in Lima, Peru developed new COIL course initiatives, engaging their respective universities. The current study outlines the process of implementing COIL courses, and reports on the impact of such courses on student perspectives with regards to language development, motivation to study Spanish and intercultural competencies. The program description addresses course curriculum, creation of joint course objectives, task design and student artifacts. Finally, the authors reflect on the challenges and successes of using technology to facilitate global education.

Review of Literature

As the world becomes more interconnected, educational challenges to develop individuals who exhibit intercultural competence is increasingly more important (Byram, 1989; Branche, Mullennix & Cohn, 2007; Brewer & Cunningham, 2009; Gurung, 2009; Kramsch, 1993; Liddicoat & Scarino 2013; Stearns, 2009; Wilkinson, 2014). Ideally these goals could be achieved through a study abroad experience for all students in order to be exposed to a new cultural lens in an immersive experience. However, although many study abroad programs exist, the reality is that few students can enroll in long or short-term study abroad. Barriers such as financial issues, work responsibilities, and family commitments prevent some students from participating in short or long-term study abroad programs (Institute of International Education, 2013). Many U.S. students exhibit a lack of knowledge with regards to world geography, global languages, history and current events in comparison with their peers worldwide (Stearns, 2009). This lack of knowledge translates into students who are less prepared to function in a global society.

According to ACTFL’s Position Statement on Global Competence, “Global competence is fundamental to the experience of learning languages whether in classrooms, through virtual connections, or via everyday experiences” (ACTFL, 2015). Language learning plays a key role in the globalization process, due to the fact that languages and cultures are inextricably connected (Byram, 1991; Kumaravadivelu, 2008; Moeller & Nugent, 2014; Risager, 2006). Indeed, the vital role of culture in language learning challenges world language educators to move beyond a presentation
of culture as a fixed set of memorized facts, generalized beliefs or a check list of typical attitudes and values. According to Bennett, Bennett, and Allen (2003) one of the major challenges of teaching culture is that educators still uphold “…the disadvantage of defining culture as something out there—a body of material to be explored and eventually mastered—as opposed to an interactive process between learners and cultural contexts” (p. 242). A definition for intercultural competency, however, continues to be negotiated (Moeller & Nugent, 2014). Instead of focusing on a singular competency, Bennett (2008) defines intercultural competencies as consisting of the following core competencies:

- Mindset (cognitive competencies): include culture-general knowledge, culture-specific knowledge, identity development patterns, cultural adaptation processes, and cultural self-awareness.
- Skillset (behavioral competencies): include the ability to empathize, gather appropriate information, listen, perceive accurately, adapt, initiate and maintain relationships, resolve conflict, and manage social interactions and anxiety.
- Heartset (affective competencies): include curiosity, initiative, risk-taking, suspension of judgment, cognitive flexibility, tolerance of ambiguity, cultural humility, and resourcefulness (p. 18-21).

Although one definition of intercultural competency does not exist, the continued processes of globalization cannot be ignored, and the need for individuals to exhibit greater flexibility, openness to differences and a willingness to engage in intercultural encounters is critical.

According to Moore and Simon (2015) educators need “…to teach students to think in nuanced ways about their own multilayered, shifting global contexts and to recognize the value and viability of worldviews different from their own” (p. 2). Today’s students need to examine beliefs, stereotypes and values, and to develop the capacity to negotiate, collaborate and interact in a positive way with their peers from various perspectives and backgrounds (Bartolome, 2002, 2004; Byram, 1997, 2008; Deardorff, 2006; Garcia, 2004; O’Dowd & Waire, 2009; Wilkinson, 2012). Learners begin to challenge their beliefs, assumptions and habits of mind. This kind of critical reflection changes what students believe, how they act and who they are (Weimer, 2014), leading ultimately to the process of the development of intercultural competence and transformational learning. Dean and Montoya (2014) claim that “Global perspectives and practices present learning experiences that take students beyond their comfort zone, pushing them to reexamine and reinterpret their own behavior as well as their initial impressions regarding the social realities of others. Students need to ask questions and become researchers for their own inquiries, and educators must open the doors of the classroom and lead their students out” (p. 34). In doing so, students learn to accept and celebrate differences and similarities (Byram & Flemming, 1998; Byram, Nicholas & Stevens, 2001), and, as they engage in collaborative tasks and activities, they can negotiate a middle ground that both sides can accept.

Students can begin to explore the world virtually through new curricular models. The online environment provides distinct advantages by linking students located in different parts of the world and by offering effective and multiple means of facilitating collaborations (Belz & Kinginger, 2002; O’Dowd, 2014; Thorne,
2010. According to Kern et al. (2004) educators are offered opportunities to “…
use the internet not so much to teach the same thing in a different way, but rather
to help students enter into the realm of collaborative inquiry and construction of
knowledge, viewing their expanding repertoire of identities and communication
strategies as resources in the process” (p. 21). Virtual connections offer a unique
opportunity for language educators to integrate global learning, social justice,
and intercultural communication into course design. Student cross-cultural
interactions provide the basis for deep reflection and analysis of one’s own and
others’ perspectives and the impact of those perspectives on daily communication,
decisions and actions. The deep level of critical thinking and negotiation required
for collaborations encourages students to construct a new reality as they consider
other perspectives and alternatives to their personal way of thinking and doing.
The objective of intercultural communication, according to MacDonald and
O’Regan (2007) is “to empower people, to raise their awareness about exploitation,
manipulation, prejudice and abuse, and to move them to act upon this awareness
—we want to provoke a transformational response” (p. 269).

By leveraging technology and establishing links between cultures, academic
institutions, educators and students, COIL courses provide a model for increasing
students’ global awareness and cross-cultural development that can be executed
without the expenses or barriers that exist with international travel (Rubin &
Guth, 2015). In the COIL model, students are enrolled in separate courses, each at
their home institutions, and receive grades from their respective professors. The
courses may pertain to different disciplines or different courses within the same
discipline. They are collaborative in the sense that faculty have constructed an on-
line module within each course which shares student learning objectives, learning
tasks and even a culminating project. Modules can last between four weeks and an
entire semester and may be a component of a face-to face environment, a blended
course, or a fully on-line course. They may employ a combination of synchronous
and asynchronous, or, depending upon the academic calendars of the institutions,
the time difference between the two countries and the student learning objectives
for the modules, the intercultural interactions may be only synchronous or
asynchronous (Rubin & Guth, 2015). “Such courses convey deeper understanding
of ideas and texts, while also providing students a venue in which to develop their
cross-cultural competence, as well as their teamwork and problem solving skills.
These initiatives also provide a valuable internationally-focused professional
development opportunity for faculty and staff” (SUNY COIL Center 2015).

Utilizing the COIL model can create positive interdependence fostered
through collaboration. Proponents of collaborative educational models have
utilized the terms cooperative learning, collaborative learning and group work to
define students working together on activities to achieve a common goal (Cooper,
Robinson & McKinney, 1993). Based on social constructionism, the theory that
students construct meaning through interaction with others, thus deepening
their own understandings, supports the notion that collaborative efforts can
accomplish more than individual student efforts (Nilson, 2010; Stage, Muller,
Kinzie & Simmons, 1998). Research on collaborative learning has determined that
students who participate in a course where collaborative learning is implemented experience better conceptual understanding, greater persistence, deeper learning, increased engagement, superior class attendance and effective problem solving skills (Johnson, Johnson & Smith, 2014). When collaborative techniques are employed in language classrooms, students become more active in the learning process. Collaboration requires social skills that can be modeled and practiced through multiple tasks and activities when collaborative tasks are infused into course design.

During a COIL module, students are communicating with and creating products collaboratively with students from other countries. COIL tasks often involve the exchange of products that the students construct through the use of technology, for instance photos taken of their surroundings or a video representing a particular concept pertaining to their culture. Tasks are hands-on, interactive and experiential in nature. Kim and Lyons (2003) have found the most effective teaching models tend to be those with a hands-on, experiential learning component that positively impact students’ levels of knowledge, skills and awareness. The concept of experiential learning suggests that students comprehend information when they are actively engaging in experiences related to the concepts are learning (Scales, Roehlkepartain, Neal, Kielsmeier, & Benson, 2006). Experiential learning promotes learning as a change in mental associations or behavior due to a specific experience (Ormord, 1990).

The COIL model proposes collaboration across disciplines, departments, and colleges, and sets an example for collaboration across diverse environments and circumstances. In order to put the COIL model into practice, the purpose of the current study is to report the process and outcomes of implementing two COIL courses at a Midwestern university. The overarching research questions are: (1) To what extent will implementing COIL courses have an impact on students’ perceived gains in language development and motivation to study the Spanish language? (2) What growth with regards to intercultural competencies do students report as a result of participation in COIL courses?

Methods

Context

Two COIL courses facilitated links between Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio and Universidad Antonio Ruiz de Montoya in Lima, Peru. The COIL modules occurred in January and February of 2015. The two pairs of professors collaborated for three months to prepare the COIL modules and communicated regularly via Skype and email throughout the six weeks of the modules. One COIL module paired a Multicultural Literature course in the United States with a Peruvian Literature course in Peru. The students read four common Peruvian texts (specifically a short story, a vignette, a poem, and a rap) and then produced a variety of responses. The professors were interested in understanding students’ responses to the common texts in light of their location and understanding of the Peruvian literature and history. Shared learning objectives were created during a face to face meeting to gain specific COIL training. They included the following:
• Students will be able to identify and collect examples of the other language in their everyday lives;
• Students will be able to reflect on the presence of the other language in their lives;
• Students will be able to apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts, drawing on prior experience, interaction with other readers, knowledge language, and understanding of textual features;
• Students will be able to read a wide range of print and non-print text to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of Peruvian cultures in order to acquire new information, respond to the demands of society and the workplace, and for personal fulfillment.

Students did not necessarily share a common language, as this was not a prerequisite for the course at either institution. Working in small groups, learners were challenged to negotiate meaning of texts within the confines of their shared knowledge of each other’s languages.

The second COIL module paired a second semester intermediate Spanish course in the United States with a philosophy and ethics course in Peru. Shared learning objectives, devised by the Spanish and Philosophy colleagues, included the following points:

• Students will be able to apply linguistic skills and culturally appropriate language to engage in authentic interactions with U.S. and Peruvian peers.
• Students will be able to identify ethical dilemmas and potential solutions.
• Students will be able to discern basic nuances of contemporary ethical perspectives.
• Students will be able to collaborate as they reflect upon current ethical issues in today’s global society.
• Given a variety of text types and technology options, students will present in Spanish on topics related to contemporary global social issues.
• Having compiled research in Spanish, students will argue a position on a contemporary global social issue.

The faculty engaged students in a Spanish immersion environment that intersected two cultures. As students described the positive and negative aspects of their own cultures, compared ethical challenges and examined perspectives through a new lens, they discussed ways to identify commonalities and to create possible solutions to global social issues. The courses shared a graphic novel in Spanish along with interactive tasks that encouraged students to examine commonalities regarding their social realities.

All four faculty members decided to share a common learning management system housed at the U.S. university which, due to a recent adoption, was new to all parties involved. The courses included synchronous and asynchronous collaborations through discussion boards, wikis, and live conferences housed in the learning management system, in addition to additional tools such as email and Skype.

Participants

The participants (N=25, 17 females) were enrolled in an Intermediate Spanish II course and a Multicultural Literature course at a private Mid-western university.
The average age of participants was 21, with a range of ages from 18 to 38, due to the fact that the Multicultural Literature course included seven graduate students. The rest of the students were undergraduates, including 15 freshman, two sophomores and one junior. Four students listed previous study abroad experience. Only one student had never studied the Spanish language. The rest of the participants were divided, with 11 commencing Spanish studies in high school and 14 beginning at the university level. One participant did not provide language background information. Finally, the average self-reported grade point average of the participants was 3.35. See Table 1 for a complete description of the participants.

Table 1. Background of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Rank</th>
<th>Freshman 15</th>
<th>Sophomore 2</th>
<th>Senior 1</th>
<th>Graduate 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>Males: 8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Language Study</td>
<td>None 1</td>
<td>High School 11</td>
<td>University 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Study Abroad</td>
<td>No 22</td>
<td>Yes 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Role of Language

Language, literacy, and culture were the focus of our sense of purpose and direction for the COIL courses. In keeping with the Ignatian and Jesuit educational tradition, the process of language learning as an intellectual pursuit is valuable in itself as it contributes to the formation of persons who are increasingly aware of their own as well as others’ cultural orientation biases. The COIL courses continued that long tradition of Jesuit educational philosophy, which stresses the study of languages other than one’s native tongue as an important humanistic and humanizing element.

Language learning strategies are an important component in the language acquisition process. However, university students often do not apply strategies effectively and adequately to develop proficiency. According to recent estimates by the U.S. Department of Education, “more than five million school-age children in the United States (more than ten percent of all K-12 students) are English language learners” (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2006). Curricular integration that includes international virtual experiences can help faculty better internalize, model, and provide authentic contexts for second language learning. The inextricable connection between language and culture provides a compelling rationale for the integration of global learning, social justice, and cultural communication into course design. This is critical because, as
Matsumoto (2009) states “Dealing with culture is a major challenge not only on a local scale, but also on a global scale, and it can mean the difference between war and peace” (p. 9).

In the spirit of true collaboration, the two teams of faculty members addressed differences in linguistic competencies in order to facilitate positive student interaction. The two literature courses did not share a common language nor was knowledge of English or Spanish a prerequisite for the course. To address these differences, each professor grouped the students with at least one person with some proficiency or background knowledge in the other language. Additionally, the students were provided lists of cognates and basic language learning websites. During synchronous exchanges, students had the option of chatting in writing since reading allowed more time for processing and using translation tools. Moreover, the first two assignments included students producing visual representations rather than print response, which provided time for students’ comfort to increase and anxiety to lessen during the collaboration.

In the case of the Intermediate II Spanish course, students were challenged linguistically to communicate in an immersion environment. Specifically, during the synchronous collaborations, interacting online with a native speaker one on one and entirely in Spanish was a new experience. To assist these students, the Spanish professor conducted role play activities in Spanish for students to practice conversational expressions and strategies. The Philosophy professor emphasized supportive verbal and non-verbal communication strategies with his Peruvian students in order to foster a collaborative and supportive environment. Examples of these strategies included making eye contact, smiling, avoiding interruptions, supporting linguistic gaps and making positive interactive comments to keep the discussion moving forward.

Structure of Collaboration and Task Design

Generally the structure of the COIL module allowed for some real-time course activities in each country. Assignments included asynchronous interaction with partner university students through discussion board posts on the learning management system. Students reflected on the posts in preparation for class synchronous interactions in order to compare cultural perspectives. Structured tasks guided the synchronous interaction so as to support linguistic deficits and cultural differences. Finally, students wrote reflections following each synchronous interaction on the discussion board.

Both courses began with an on-line asynchronous icebreaker activity which students posted on the discussion board of the learning management system. Students were instructed to review the information that their colleagues posted and to write comments and questions. Professors set specific expectations by posting their own introduction and by discussing proper protocol for discussion board posts and interactions.

Students enrolled in the Spanish and Philosophy courses produced one minute introductory videos for the icebreaker activity. Clear instructions guided the video content, along with the introductions posted by each professor. Guidelines can be viewed in the sample below:
**Ice Breaker**

Nota: Es recomendable escribir tu trabajo en Microsoft Word en donde puedes incluir las tildes ortográficas. Entonces, puedes copiar y pegar tu trabajo en Canvas. Acuérdate, no tienes que compartir información personal si es incómodo para ti.

Para conocernos mejor

¿Quién eres? ¿Cómo eres? Para ti, ¿qué palabra mejor te describe? Utiliza la palabra que escoges para el título de tu presentación en el foro.

Prepara una autobiografía corta, ‘Un día en la vida de______’, y produce un video para presentarte al grupo. No te olvides de incluir la siguiente información:

- Nombre
- Descripción personal
- Clases y Especialización
- Intereses y pasatiempos
- ¿Por qué tomas este curso?
- Una cosa interesante sobre ti
- Una palabra que mejor te representa y explica por qué la seleccionaste
- ¿No conoces la tecnología?
- Utiliza estas instrucciones para hacer un video (Links to an external site.)

[**Ice Breaker**]

It is recommended that you write in Microsoft Word in order to include accent marks. Then you can cut and paste your work to the discussion board. Remember, you do not have to include any personal information that is uncomfortable for you.

To get to know one another better

Who are you? What kind of person are you? In your opinion, what word best describes you? Utilize the word you have chosen as the title for your presentation on the discussion board.

Prepare a short autobiography entitled ‘A Day in the Life of ______’, and produce a video to introduce yourself to the group. Do not forget to include the following information:

- Name
- Personal description
- Classes and major
- Interests and hobbies
- Why are you taking this course?
- One interesting thing about you
- A word that best represents you and explain why you selected it
- Don't know technology?
- Use these instructions to create your video.]

Student enrolled in Peruvian Literature in Lima and Multicultural Literature in Cincinnati began their course collaboration with the creation of photo collages.
They were instructed to find examples of the presence of the language of the partner university in their own country. These collages were uploaded to the learning management discussion board for viewing by all students. Students wrote reflections on the presence of the other language in their culture, followed by a synchronous discussion with their international partners.

**Photo Collages**

**Task 1.**
Students were asked to create a collage that demonstrates the presence of the other language (English in Lima and Spanish in Cincinnati) in order to recognize the value it has in the other cultural environment.

**Task 2.**
After examining all of the collages, students answered this question:

*Is the presence of the other language in your lives a limitation or benefit for your culture?*

Your response should be between 300-400 words. We will use this response to discuss with our international partners.

Additional collaborative tasks included posting and reflecting upon photo representations of both positive and negative aspects of the students’ cultures, constructing concept maps of key terminology, creating photo collages as responses to common texts, composing a bilingual rap based on a justice theme and comparing photo collages of the presence of the non-dominant language in the students’ country.

**Data Collection**

Data were collected throughout the COIL project. Students completed a pre and post survey constructed by the researchers regarding cultural competence related to their knowledge of Peru, global citizenry, linguistic self-assessment and intercultural competence. Question types included both Likert scale and open-ended items. The questionnaires can be found in Appendices A and B. Student artifacts from both courses were collected regularly through posts on the learning management system’s discussion board. Professors maintained notes throughout the planning and implementation of the program.

Although 25 participants began the study, results are shown for 23 students, due to the fact that two students did not complete either the pre or post survey. Students self-rated pre and post surveys in the areas of cultural competence, such as their understanding of the following aspects of Peruvian culture: popular culture, family norms, history, politics, poverty, education, and religion. In addition, students rated their change in language competence during pre and post treatment periods, including their listening comprehension, speaking skills, accurate grammar usage and breadth of vocabulary. Participants rated their pre and post global citizenry competence, which included socioeconomic and educational responsibility, global competence, global civic engagement, and Jesuit philosophy.
and education. Finally, students rated their intercultural competence by answering a series of statements related to cultural attitudes using a Likert scale of 1-5.

The post survey included fourteen additional questions related to program outcomes. Students self-rated their growth based on COIL course participation on a Likert scale of 1-5. We grouped these questions into categories pertaining to motivation, language post assessment, confidence and comfort speaking the Spanish language, cultural difference awareness and overall course assessment.

Statistical data analysis

For the pre and post survey we calculated the mean change across subjects in each questionnaire response and then performed a one-sample T test to determine if there was a significant mean change using a test value of zero. For the post only survey questions, we assessed whether the mean answer on each survey question was significantly different than the neutral answer. The test value was 3 on a scale from 1 to 5.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Data from the open-ended survey questions were analyzed using analytic induction, a process in which initial coding categories are identified from patterns within the transcripts (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Coding the data helped to identify the prevalent information found within the student pre and post surveys. By using qualitative grounded theory, we created the codes as the data were studied (Charmaz, 2004). First, data underwent microanalysis, a detailed line-by-line analysis to identify categories and relationships among these categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This “line by line coding forces you to think about the material in new ways that may differ from your research participants’ interpretations” (Charmaz, 2004, p. 506). Through open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) we determined possible patterns and categories. We began, as Charmaz (2004) suggests, with initial codes that ranged widely across topics and then moved to more focused coding in order to sift through all of the data.

Categories of Analysis

In qualitative analysis, it is common for stacks of data to be reduced to a small number of core themes (Patton, 2002). This creative synthesis is a necessary step of qualitative analysis and consequently this content analysis yields core consistencies and meanings. We became immersed in the data, reading it multiple times.

The researchers coded separately and then shared the codes each had found in the data. We thought it was important to read survey results along and against others in order to better identify prevailing themes and patterns. We therefore, never coded one survey at a time. Surveys were grouped in no particular order. Consequently, we first coded separately, which generated approximately 34 codes such as similar values, learning about culture, and social problems. At that point, the researchers met to share the codes that were generated individually.
We compared the code lists, highlighting similarities, and analyzed them to create categories for more focused coding. The categories and subcategories we created were as follows:

- Social Justice Issues
  - Peru
  - United States
- Personal Growth
  - Language Skills
  - Language Motivation
- Perspectives
  - Cultural Similarities
  - Cultural Differences

After we began the process of coding, we used our own notes as a place for memo-writing in order to examine the various codes and raise them to categories. “Memo-writing helps you to elaborate processes, assumptions, and action that are subsumed under your code. When memo-writing, you begin to look at your coding as processes to explore rather than as solely ways to sort data into topics (Charmaz, 2004).

**Results**

*Student Artifacts*

In the literature courses, students began their interaction by posting photo collages of the presence of their partner university’s language in their own country. A sample collage can be viewed in Display 1.

**Display 1.** Photo Collage: Presence of English.
Once students posted their photo collages and viewed others’ work, they reflected upon the presence of the other language in their society. During these reflections, students realized the nature of the world and their place in it, “...as a fresh breath of air from our Americana-bubble world. I feel so outside myself when I travel abroad, or interact with people from different cultures—mostly because I am pushed beyond my self-imposed limitations.” Another student described the photo collages as a “...a great reminder of a world so much more alive and unmeasurable, different and established, beautiful and unfamiliar, intriguing and (oddly enough) calming, that I begin to remember my place and value in this world. I remember that I still have so much to learn.” Intrigued by the COIL experience, a student mentioned “…that I get to share my life and space with people different from myself. And that is refreshing.”

The Spanish and Philosophy courses discussed the significance of abstract terms in their own courses and then shared perspectives regarding the concept of individualism. Students brainstormed the terms in pairs during a synchronous session and subsequently created a word graphic utilizing an online application. The graphics were uploaded to the discussion board for other pairs to view and comment. Sample word graphics can be found in Display 2.

Display 2. Word Graphics.

Students in the Intermediate Spanish course increased their vocabulary through this interactive, scaffolding activity with native speakers. Both groups of students examined similarities and differences in perspectives and cultural values as they collaborated to complete the word graphic.

Moreover, the literature courses listed their thoughts on specific terms prior to and following the reading of a Peruvian literary selection of a woman’s memoir and poem about the impact of war on women. This task enables students to not only reflect upon the literary work, but to notice language terms and to compare cultural perspectives.
Display 3. Comparison of Terms by Peruvian student

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before Reading</th>
<th>After Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woman: strength/fuerza</td>
<td>Woman: strength/fuerza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminist: stress/estrés</td>
<td>Feminist: determination/determinación</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage: Monogamy social</td>
<td>Marriage: Support/Apoyo Contract/Contrato social de monogamia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work: Way of helping/Forma de ayudar</td>
<td>Work: Struggle/Lucha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine: Pink/Rosado</td>
<td>Feminine: Strong/Fuerte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Struggle: Fight/Pelea</td>
<td>Struggle: Fight/lucha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexuality: Intercourse/Relaciones sexuales</td>
<td>Sexuality: Intercourse/Relaciones sexuales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home: Where you can be at peace/Donde puedes estar en paz</td>
<td>Home: Where you can be at peace/Donde puedes estar en paz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power: Strength/Fuerza</td>
<td>Power: Strength/Fuerte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War: Standing up for what you believe in/Defender aquello en lo que uno cree</td>
<td>War: Death/Muerte</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An examination of this display from one of the Peruvian students showed evidence that some of the word associations stayed the same, but many changed after the reading. Students shared their word associations with their group members and then had the opportunity to comment on them via online asynchronous discussions.

Survey Results

For the pre and post questions students increased their scores between the pre and post assessments for the cultural competence, language competence and global citizenry. Conversely, for the category of intercultural competence, we found that the change was not significant. Details of these statistical results are listed in Table 2.

Table 3 shows the statistical results of the post only survey questions. Most of the questions had mean answers that were significantly greater than the neutral answer of 3. All but 2 were significant at a p-value of .05 uncorrected for multiple comparisons. After correction for multiple comparisons eight of the fourteen questions had mean scores significantly greater than the neutral value.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Change in Cultural Competency, Global Citizenry and Language Competence

<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P-value</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in Language Competence</td>
<td>3.071</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td>.60326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in Global Citizenry</td>
<td>3.146</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.89130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in Intercultural Competence</td>
<td>-1.204</td>
<td>.242</td>
<td>-.07670</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=23; df=22; test value=0
### Table 3. Post Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p-value uncorrected</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I have been more motivated to learn the language through participating in this course.</td>
<td>3.761</td>
<td>.001*</td>
<td>.7174</td>
<td>.322 – 1.113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Due to this experience, I am more motivated to further my Spanish competency for use in my future work or career.</td>
<td>6.092</td>
<td>.000*</td>
<td>.8261</td>
<td>.545 – 1.107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I feel that my language skills have improved.</td>
<td>4.380</td>
<td>.000*</td>
<td>.6522</td>
<td>.343 – .961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I feel that I can speak with more fluency now than prior to my participation in this program.</td>
<td>1.860</td>
<td>.076</td>
<td>.4348</td>
<td>-.050 – .920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. My comprehension of spoken Spanish has improved due to this program.</td>
<td>2.522</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>.6087</td>
<td>.108 – 1.109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I feel confident speaking Spanish after participating in this program.</td>
<td>1.030</td>
<td>.314</td>
<td>.2609</td>
<td>-.264 – .786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I feel more comfortable speaking in class now that I did before I participated in this program.</td>
<td>2.208</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>.4783</td>
<td>.029 – .927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I feel more comfortable speaking with a native speaker now that I did before I participated in this program.</td>
<td>2.517</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>.5217</td>
<td>.092 – .952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I feel confident that I can conduct virtual meetings in Spanish in a work environment.</td>
<td>2.105</td>
<td>.047</td>
<td>.3913</td>
<td>.006 – .777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. This program has made me more aware of the needs, interests, and abilities of Spanish-speaking communities.</td>
<td>8.657</td>
<td>.000*</td>
<td>1.1739</td>
<td>.893 – 1.455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. This program has changed the way that I interact with others of cultural background different from my own.</td>
<td>5.564</td>
<td>.000*</td>
<td>.9565</td>
<td>.600 – 1.313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Due to this experience, I would like to study abroad.</td>
<td>5.391</td>
<td>.000*</td>
<td>1.0435</td>
<td>.642 – 1.445</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13. In general terms, I rate this experience: 5.978 | 0.000* | 0.9565 | 0.625 | 1.288
14. I would recommend this program to other students. 5.391 | 0.000* | 1.0435 | 0.642 | 1.445
N=23, df=22, test value = 3. * p < 0.05 corrected for multiple comparisons

Discussion

This study sought to assess the efficacy of the COIL model for engaging students in language learning with a strong intercultural component. Three of the four language and cultural competencies measured before the COIL course showed significant improvement by end of the course. A fourth survey category, targeting intercultural competence, showed no significant change. The pre-COIL average score for this measure, however, was significantly above 3 on the Likert scale from 1 to 5. Thus, assessment of intercultural competence for this group of subjects may have been limited by a ceiling affect, with not much room for improvement between the pre and post surveys. Additionally, the program itself had a duration of only six weeks. Perhaps a longer COIL program would show different levels of change.

Survey questions posed only at the conclusion of the COIL course generally showed a positive response. In particular, the broader questions regarding cultural outlook, motivation for further study, general improvement of language skills, and rating of the course experience (questions 1-3 and 10-14 in Table 3) had average responses significantly above the neutral score of 3 on the Likert scale of 1-5, after correction for multiple comparisons. Questions focused on student self-assessment of Spanish language ability either trended positive (questions 5 and 7-9 in Table 3) or could not be distinguished from neutral (questions 4 and 6 in Table 3). These results suggest that while a single COIL module of only five weeks may not result in large gains in perceived second language competency among students, the marked gains in motivation for further study and cultural sensitivity are promising for future success in language acquisition.

Several categories reflecting student growth and transformation emerged from the qualitative data. Students demonstrated an increased awareness of social justice issues at in the United States and in Peru. Pertaining to global realities, one student recognized the importance of learning at a deeper level. “It gave me a new perspective on other cultures and how sometimes things seem beautiful and fine on the surface but can actually have many internal problems.” Culture was a central focus of the course, as students learned the benefits of communication with others in order to gain a sense of cultural norms and social issues. As one student wrote, “I learned more from speaking with them directly than looking at it on the internet. I learned more about the social problems in their country: things that people who live there would only see.” The student recognized that learning from a native speaker who was living within the culture allowed more opportunities for deep learning and understanding than researching culture on the internet or reading information in a textbook.
Students demonstrated personal growth in both Spanish language skills and the motivation to continue their language learning. They noted improved abilities to speak and understand the language and the ability to hold a conversation in Spanish. As one student stated, “I was able to hear the inflection and depth behind the words spoken by the Peruvians which helped me understand the language better.” Another student expressed a new motivation for language learning: “I struggled with understanding them sometimes so it makes me want to learn more and improve my Spanish.” Students' qualitative comments regarding the benefits and improvements to their language skills were positive.

One student recognized the importance of videoconferencing in preparing him for the workplace, “I am now comfortable using Skype or any other video conference to talk to others, which is a global reality of communication in the workplace.” Identifying the connection between the technical skills the student was developing and future workplace expectations may increase student motivation to engage in a COIL program.

Moreover, qualitative data from students following the COIL modules demonstrated self-reported personal growth in the core competencies of intercultural competence as defined by Bennet (2008). For instance, one student explained her development of skillset, mindset and heart set by “respecting the opposite culture, I waited for a reaction. I was friendly and smiled. I showed genuine interest and I compromised.” Another student defined the competencies in the following way.

The ability to empathize, listen, and manage social interactions were very important during our video conferences and group discussions. It took patience and the will to speak to someone who many not now a lot about your culture. I had to be very open-minded during the experience to gain knowledge from our peers, especially the language and learning about their culture. Showing genuine interest and curiosity seemed to be attitudes that the students considered important for the experience. One student claimed she learned the importance of being a good listener. Another spoke of cautiously listening. “I became more curious when they brought up a term or item I didn't know about. Having them talk a lot about their culture I was very cautious about listening especially with their accents.”

Students demonstrated a shift in perspectives, recognizing clear cultural similarities and cultural differences. Students frequently commented on the similarities and/or differences that they recognized between the two countries. For example, one student said, “Being able to see the similarities/differences helped me to understand different cultures better.” Another believed, “That the US and Peru are not so different after all.” More specifically, one student explained, “The Peruvians are passionate about food, family, music, and art. Catholicism is prevalent. We have very similar values.” Contrasting and comparing helped them understand the other group as well as their own culture.
Challenges and Limitations

Faculty developed specific competencies along with the students. Notes in faculty logs reveal the realization of the importance of flexibility, open-mindedness and professional trust as the course syllabi and common student learning objectives were developed. Particularly important in the planning process was the consideration of the collaborative nature of the endeavor, especially while creating common learning tasks, whether synchronous or asynchronous, as well as making decisions regarding what technology applications to utilize in the implementation process.

Moreover, power differentials needed to be taken into account continually, as preconceived notions regarding course and task design always had to be set aside in an attempt to cultivate a collaborative spirit. Faculty quickly realized the importance of weekly meetings during the implementation of the courses in order to discuss student reactions, troubleshoot cultural misconceptions and to clarify communications and future learning tasks.

When implementing a new pedagogy, timing was everything. The academic calendars of the two institutions overlapped for only the five weeks at the commencement of the U.S. university Spring semester. We learned the difficulties of beginning the course with a COIL module without any lead-time to prepare students in the areas of cultural sensitivity, interpersonal communication and virtual technologies. All four colleagues agreed to offer the COIL course collaborations again for the following semester, but preferred the U.S. fall semester in order to extend the pre-module course preparation with each group of students and to allow for a longer COIL module.

The greatest obstacle to the course implementation process pertained to a lack of sensitivity of the technology staff to adequately address minor connection and application issues without allowing assumptions and stereotypes to threaten their ability to find appropriate solutions. While technology staff from both universities had reviewed and listed their technology capabilities, such as bandwidth, clearly a session for information technology staff to meet and perform trials of software and hardware would have been beneficial prior to conducting synchronous sessions with students. Furthermore, including staff in a preparation session on intercultural sensitivity may assist in lessening their tendencies to feel threatened by the new processes of global realities or the tendency to lay blame for technology issues on the ‘other’ university.

Due to the small sample size it is important to interpret the results as unique to this study as these results are not generalizable. This effort was intended, however, to provide preliminary assessment of the impact of the COIL program based on the first two courses offered and will form the basis of a broader study that will include a larger sample size and more faculty trained in COIL methodology.

Conclusion

The results of this study provided insights into the impact of the COIL model on students’ progress toward intercultural competence. In light of the significant
barriers to greater participation in study abroad for some students, this study offers alternative curricular models in the form of COIL courses to enhance students’ growth in the areas of global citizenry, language and cultural competence. However, there is much to consider when planning and implementing such a program. Though such courses are not developed effortlessly, the learning experience for both students and faculty is a low-cost option for growth that might prove to be even more substantial if the COIL modules were extended over a longer period of time. The progression toward intercultural competence is crucial for today’s students to function productively and harmoniously in tomorrow’s ever increasing global society. Providing international opportunities for learning, such as COIL, may help set students up for that type of success.

References


Appendix A

Initial Questionnaire for COIL Initiative

Section I. General Information:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Age: ____________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>Junior</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Previous courses in Spanish, other languages or global studies: _______________________

Previous study abroad: ______________ GPA: __________

Expected grade in this course: _____

Section II. BEFORE TAKING COIL course

A. Cultural Competence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(10=highest rating, 1=lowest rating)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rate your current understanding of the following aspects of Peruvian culture:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop Culture 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familial norms 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civilization 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Language Competence

Rate your current ability with regard to the following aspects of the Spanish language:

| Listening Comprehension 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| Speaking skills 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| Accurate Grammar Usage 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| Breadth of Vocabulary 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
C. Global Citizenry

Socioeconomic/Educational Responsibility
Rate your current interest in social progress in foreign countries (Examples: Malnutrition, Water sanitation, Literacy)
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Global Competence
Rate your current interest in international perspectives and affairs.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Global Civic Engagement
Rate your current desire to volunteer or engage in international service work.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Jesuit Philosophy/Education
Rate your current understanding of the impact of Jesuit mission and identity.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Section II. Rate your agreement with the following statements.

Please comment next to each aspect according to the following scale:
5=strongly agree  4=agree  3=neither agree nor disagree  2=disagree  1=strongly disagree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Rating of 1-5</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I tend to wait before forming an opinion regarding culturally distinct individuals.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. I am open-minded regarding people from different cultures.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. I don’t avoid situations where I will have to deal with culturally distinct persons.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. I try to obtain as much information as I can when I interact with people from different cultures.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. I am sensitive to the subtle meanings of interactions with culturally distinct people.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Final Questionnaire for COIL Initiative

Section I. General Information:

Male     female     Age: ____________
Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior
Grad Student

Previous courses in Spanish, other languages or global studies: ______________

Previous study abroad: ______________ GPA: __________

Expected grade in this course: _____

Section II. After TAKING COIL course

A. Cultural Competence

(10=highest rating, 1=lowest rating)

Rate your current understanding of the following aspects of Peruvian culture:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
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<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pop Culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Familial norms</td>
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<td>History</td>
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<td>Civilization</td>
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<td>Politics</td>
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<td>Poverty</td>
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<td>Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>Rating of 1 - 5</td>
<td>Comments</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.</td>
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<td>2. I tend to wait before forming an opinion regarding culturally distinct individuals.</td>
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<td>3. I am open-minded regarding people from different cultures.</td>
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<td>4. I don’t avoid situations where I will have to deal with culturally distinct persons.</td>
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<td>5. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.</td>
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<td>6. I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.</td>
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<td>7. I try to obtain as much information as I can when I interact with people from different cultures.</td>
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<td>8. I am sensitive to the subtle meanings of interactions with culturally distinct people.</td>
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<td>9. I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. I always know what to say when interacting with people from different cultures.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. I don’t like to be with people from different cultures.</td>
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<td>13. I cannot tolerate the values of people from different cultures.</td>
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<td>14. I cannot tolerate the ways people from different cultures behave.</td>
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<td>15. I would not accept the opinions of people from other cultures.</td>
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<td>16. I think my culture is better than other cultures.</td>
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<td>17. I am more motivated to interact with those of another culture and language background after participating in this course collaboration.</td>
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<td>Why or why not?</td>
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</table>
18. I feel that my language skills have improved.  
Why or why not?  
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

**B. Language Competence**  
Rate your current ability with regard to the following aspects of the Spanish language:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening Comprehension</td>
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<td>Speaking skills</td>
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<td>Accurate Grammar Usage</td>
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<td>Breadth of Vocabulary</td>
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</table>

**C. Global Citizenry**  

**Socioeconomic/Educational Responsibility**  
Rate your current interest in social progress in foreign countries (Examples: Malnutrition, Water sanitation, Literacy)  
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

**Global Competence**  
Rate your current interest in international perspectives and affairs.  
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

**Global Civic Engagement**  
Rate your current desire to volunteer or engage in international service work.  
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

**Jesuit Identity**  
Rate your current understanding of the impact of Jesuit mission and identity.  
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Section II. Rate your agreement with the following statements.  

5=strongly agree  4=agree  3=neither agree nor disagree  2=disagree  1=strongly disagree

19. I feel that I can speak with more fluently now than prior to my participation in this program.  
5 4 3 2 1

20. My comprehension of spoken Spanish has improved due to this program.  
5 4 3 2 1

21. I feel confident speaking Spanish now after participating in this program.  
5 4 3 2 1
22. I feel more comfortable speaking *in class* now than I did before I participated in this program.

5 4 3 2 1

23. I feel more comfortable speaking *with a native speaker* now than I did before I participated in this program.

5 4 3 2 1

24. Due to this experience, I am more motivated to further my Spanish competency for use in my future work or career.

5 4 3 2 1

25. I feel confident that I can conduct virtual meetings in Spanish in a work environment.

5 4 3 2 1

26. Due to this experience, I would like to study abroad.

5 4 3 2 1

27. This program has made me more aware of the needs, interests, and abilities of Spanish speaking communities.

5 4 3 2 1

28. This program has changed the way that I interact with others of cultural background different from my own.

5 4 3 2 1

29. In general terms, I rate this experience:

5 4 3 2 1

30. I would recommend this program to other students.

5 4 3 2 1

31. What benefits did you experience with regards to global realities?

32. What benefits did you experience with regards to learning the Spanish language?

33. What specifically did you learn about culture from this experience?