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Chapter 1

Innovation in Collaborative Online International Learning: A Holistic Blend

Katherine Wimpenny and Marina Orsini-Jones

Abstract This chapter outlines innovative models and case studies of Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) implemented at Coventry University (UK). The institutional drive towards the integration of COIL as part of internationalisation of the curriculum will be outlined, as well as a brief overview of the issues relating to the design and delivery of pedagogies for intercultural online learning. Staff incentives and capability development in facilitating students' engagement in meaningful intercultural interactions will also be considered. In particular, and through the sharing of case studies, this chapter will discuss the 'holistic blend' that COIL can offer. We will illustrate what students stand to gain beyond the immediate action learning of the online dynamic alongside face to face interaction. Such interaction includes the development of critical digital literacy skills, the acquisition of interactional online communication skills, and importantly, openness to knowledge pluralization. It will be argued that consideration must be given to where in the curriculum students should encounter COIL pedagogies and to how to synchronise and merge COIL within the wider course programme. This is to enable students to make sense of COIL as part of their wider internationalised curriculum and not to see it as an add on. Finally, further research recommendations for the design and delivery of COIL, based on the last decade of practices at Coventry University, will be shared.

Key words Collaborative Online International Learning - intercultural dialogue - action learning - critical digital literacies; knowledge pluralization

1. INTRODUCTION

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) around the globe are under pressure to strategic demands to internationalise their curricula (Higher Education Academy, 2014) and ensure that their students acquire intercultural capabilities as global citizens and as global graduates. Such capabilities include resilience, flexibility, the ability to relate to global others, and an awareness of global inequalities. Some of these capabilities relate to the world of work and are necessary to compete in the job market in an increasingly globalised workplace (Higher Education Academy, 2014; Jones & Killick, 2013; Killick 2015). Arguably more eminent capabilities relate to social justice and to an ethical understanding of the Other (e.g. Orsini-Jones, Lloyd, Gazeley et al., 2015). Supporting students' capability development in such areas has important implications concerning how universities design and deliver on their internationalisation ambitions. This includes the ways in which international and intercultural dimensions can be integrated into curricula, how staff expertise is steered by faculty, and how individual practices are resourced, and supported (Wimpenny, Beelen & King, 2019). As Leask (2015) contends, internationalisation must be an all-embracing institutional approach, reflected in strategy, training, institutional values, and culture.

International mobility has tended to be viewed as the most dynamic aspect of internationalisation within universities formal and informal curriculums. However, international student mobility cannot be the subject of focus without recognition of the potential negative effects

of mobility and internationalisation on students and staff, and on university teaching and learning practice (Fabricus, Mortensen & Haberland, 2017; Beelen, Wimpenny & Rubin, 2019). Conversely, Internationalisation-at-Home (IaH), which stresses purposeful international and intercultural dimensions in both the formal and the informal curriculum for *all* students has gained traction (Beelen & Jones, 2015). To a large extent this is in response to the fact that education abroad is limited to a minority of students. Rather, IaH looks beyond the mobility of a minority of students, emphasizing instead the resources to be utilised at a local level in the delivery of an internationally focused curriculum, including the embedding of intercultural communication (Watkin & Smith, 2018). In addition, the IaH curriculum can benefit greatly from advancements in technology which provide viable opportunities for staff and students to collaborate in teaching and learning experiences without meeting physically.

Since the late 1990s, approaches to e-learning have gone from piloting media content in classrooms to slowly sharing relevant articles and information through electronic mediums, to fully fledged lessons and degree programmes offered online (Marshall, 2012; Sadeghi, 2019; Buhl Andreassen & Pushpanadham, 2018). Technology is now central to the teaching process, with various degrees and forms of what is broadly referred to as e-learning taking place across the educational spectrum (Sangra Vlachopoulos & Cabrera, 2012; Wimpenny, Adefila, & DeWinter, 2018). E-learning provides opportunities to reach more learners, including those that have been disadvantaged by geography and socio-cultural issues and arguably enables learners to learn at their own pace and ‘any time/anywhere’ (Kukulska-Hulme, 2018). Yet, as Buhl Andreassen and Pushpanadham (2018) and Affouneh and Awad Rabba (2017) contend, to be effective, e-learning needs to be underpinned with an effective pedagogical approach to ensure there is not an overemphasis on the use of technology at the expense of the potential pedagogical advantages.

The use of the digital has resulted in the development of a range of initiatives within the home curriculum, for example, Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) approaches, which is the main focus of this chapter. In particular, we will discuss the ‘holistic blend’ of what COIL can offer, in terms of what students stand to gain beyond the immediate action learning of the online dynamic alongside face-to-face interaction, including development of critical digital literacy skills. Further, the need to consider where in the curriculum students encounter COIL pedagogies and how to synchronise COIL within the wider course programme will be discussed. Such emphasis and focus on how students (and staff) see COIL as part of the wider internationalised curriculum is required to enable students to make sense of and integrate their learning, rather than COIL feeling ‘standalone’ and / or an ‘add on’. Issues relating to the design and delivery of pedagogies for online learning will also be considered, including staff incentives and capability development in facilitating students’ engagement in meaningful intercultural interactions. Such interactions include the importance of knowledge pluralization, whereby students can make productive intellectual connections and apply their knowledge as part of enriching epistemic diversity for active education engagement pedagogies (Icaza & Vázquez, 2018). The chapter will conclude with recommendations for further research, offered in light of the experience of COIL implementation at Coventry University since 2011.

2. CONTEXT OF COLLABORATIVE ONLINE INTERNATIONAL LEARNING

Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) typically involves the co-development of a set of online tasks and/or a course module by two or more academic staff / tutors from different countries, where students from different parts of the world learn together on a common area of focus. COIL is also known through a number of other terms such as ‘virtual mobility’, (Villar-Onrubia & Rajpal, 2016). Where there is more of a specific focus on the intercultural aspect of the interaction, it is also sometimes referred to as Online Intercultural Exchange (OIE) ‘telecollaboration’, ‘virtual exchange’ or ‘e-tandem learning’ (Lewis & O’Dowd, 2016, p.3). In guarding against an overemphasis on the digital aspect, COIL has been described by Rubin (2016, p. 134) as, ‘not a technology, or a technology

platform, but a new approach to teaching and learning which provides faculty and students the ability to communicate directly and immediately with their peers far away.’

With emphasis on the benefits of an interconnected communicative learning environment, Siemens (2004) focus on connectivism can be usefully applied to theorise the impact of learning in today’s digital age, wherein critical decision making and interaction take place amongst people as well as with information sources. Nonetheless, alongside the inherent learning available within and across the ‘network’, we argue that COIL approaches might also be suitably underpinned by social constructionist learning theories. From a social constructionist perspective, and with acknowledgement of the digital space, emphasis is also placed on the learners’ active interaction and knowledge construction for meaningful learning impact (Chen, 2003). Attention is thus also focused on how learners engage with the learning community and make sense of their learning considering individuals’ experiences viewed in the context of history, social and cultural perspective and the political sphere (Gergen, 2003).

COIL provides students with opportunities to develop a series of attributes, qualities or capabilities that may enable them to address the challenges of living and working in contemporary societies as citizens and professionals, and to assume associated responsibilities (Villar-Onrubia & Rajpal, 2016). For example, COIL prompts students to develop problem solving skills whilst also requiring them to take responsibility for organising their own learning and that of others. Effective time management skills, and working to overcome obstacles, also provides students with space to become more resilient through greater awareness of how to negotiate and complete learning tasks with awareness of the needs of others (Dugdale, 2009; Wimpenny, Knowles, Ramsey et al., 2018). Importantly, COIL offers opportunity to promote openness to knowledge pluralization through diverse learners interacting and sharing knowledge perspectives. Thus, in considering the role of education in preparing students for a world that is increasingly interconnected, independent and diverse, online (international) (and intercultural) learning and communication¹ offer students multiple opportunities to learn how to form and maintain relationships, and work co-operatively with people across different backgrounds (Krutky, 2008). Whilst the use of technology to enable virtual exchanges and collaborative assignments between geographically distant classrooms is not new, particularly in the field of language learning and teaching (e.g. Furstenberg et al., 2001; Godwyn-Jones, 2013), efforts are increasing to scale up these kinds of activities introducing students to learning that seeks to address social relations and communications in the context of subject-specific know-how as well as transnational issues and concerns (Wimpenny et al., 2018).

2.1 COVENTRY UNIVERSITY AND COIL

The use of Internet-based digital technologies for the purposes of teaching and learning has been a feature of student life at Coventry University since the 1990s², with student portals and Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) being implemented for student use. Explorations of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and more creative forms of teaching and learning through programmes such as Second Life, as early examples of online engagement were explored and implemented from the early 2000s (see Savin Baden, 2010). The concept of COIL started to appear from 2011, with motivated lecturers experimenting with the available technology and making use of their international contacts, setting tasks that students could engage with at the partner universities yet could complete ‘at home’. These small-scale trailblazer projects, typically in engineering and the humanities, and at times with small numbers of students engaging, were promoted at university ‘roadshows’ to provide inspiration and motivation to academics across the campus. At the time of writing, in 2020, with global engagement a core component of strategic orientation, COIL is viewed as an integral component of the university

¹ Intercultural communication is used here to refer to the communication amongst learners from diverse backgrounds

² Coventry University were also leaders in pre-Internet technologies in the 80s. For example, machine translation (Transit/Tiger TELL) and BBC micros <https://www.brownsbfs.co.uk/Product/Thompson-AD/Transit-Tiger/9780340724699>

IaH initiatives. In the academic year 2018-2019 alone over 3,000 students engaged across 89 COIL projects, delivered in conjunction with over 90 overseas institutions from 47 countries³

Whilst internationalisation abroad via field trips, work experience placements and study visits for students is still a strategic focus at Coventry University (indeed the university continues to be a top overall provider for international mobility across HE in the UK⁴) COIL has become an institutional requirement for all courses, not only as part of the university's internationalisation strategy, but also as a core component of the Corporate Strategy 2021⁵ which has 'Intercultural and International Engagement' as one of its pillars.

In defining the approach adopted at Coventry University, the following four principles for COIL are that it (O'Brien, 2018):

1. Involves a cross-border collaboration or interaction with people from different backgrounds and cultures.
2. Requires students to engage in some sort of online interaction, whether it is asynchronous or synchronous
3. Is driven by a set of internationalised learning outcomes aimed at developing global perspectives and/or fostering students' intercultural competences.
4. Requires a reflective component that helps students think critically about such interaction.

To support internationalised teaching and learning activities, a dedicated Professional Services Centre - The Centre for Global Engagement (CGE) - was set up in 2010, (initially under the name International Experience and Mobility Service (IEMS), and then renamed to CGE in 2015) to support the development and delivery of COIL and other internationalisation activities across the university. In 2015, CGE developed a 'Wheel' of Intercultural Competences', to support undergraduate students entering the university to develop knowledge of these concepts, which is then systematically developed through outward mobility, COIL, Add+Vantage modules (University-Wide modules with an employability focus) and other extra-curricular IaH activities. The idea is that students will develop their global graduate skills during their study and put these into practice. For example, a unique feature of the CGE internationalisation provision at Coventry University is the involvement of overseas students in the delivery of language courses for other students and staff who engage in physical mobility to the country they have carried out a COIL project with.



³ <http://onlineinternationallearning.org/projects/>

⁴ <https://www.coventry.ac.uk/primary-news/coventry-continues-to-top-tables-for-international-student-experiences/>

⁵ <https://www.coventry.ac.uk/globalassets/media/global/09-about-us/who-we-are/corporate-strategy-2021.pdf>.

Figure 1: The Wheel of Intercultural Competences (CGE, 2015)

As of 2015/16, CGE collects data on all campus COIL exchanges for reporting purposes against the Corporate Strategy 2021. This centralized system has created a strategic approach to project management and capacity building of COIL initiatives. Further, CGE offers staff development training and guidance to academic staff and works closely with Faculty stakeholders to ensure effective delivery of projects and reporting. From 2019, CGE also now offer a COIL template via Moodle, which staff can customise for their COIL projects. This tool provides ‘off the shelf’ information for students to support their understanding and satisfaction of COIL, aids compliance and is used as a quality and reporting mechanism.

With regards to implementing COIL, faculty have the flexibility to tailor learning experiences to subject areas and student needs, and as such the university does not adopt a ‘one size fits all’ model. This flexible approach is seen to be of significant benefit to the student learning experience, allowing for the freedom to be creative, and a substantial range of examples of creative excellence in COIL exist. For example, a simultaneous telepresence performance of Shakespeare with Finnish and Coventry student actors performing together via streaming won the Hybrid Learning category at the 2018 Reimagine Education Awards, and was a winner of the Gold Award in the 2016 Arts & Humanities category.⁶ Further, with a remit to conduct research dedicated to examining and questioning ways in which comprehensive internationalisation can be achieved, not least in considering staff expertise and pedagogies of COIL, the Research Centre for Global Learning: Education and Attainment (GLEA) (wherein the first author is based) was established in August 2017.

3. THE PRACTICALITIES OF DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING COIL PEDAGOGIES

Although the educational content may be relatively easy to create, there are a number of practical considerations to consider when running COIL activity including issues such as subject area match and working across potentially different time zones. Communication means with the partners, for example, via synchronous and asynchronous activities, needs consideration. Examples of synchronous activity are real-time conversations, seminars and debates where both partners are able to contribute at the same time. Asynchronous interactions may be required where there are large time differences, and often include activities such as sharing pre-recorded videos and forum debates (Villar-Onrubia & Rajpal, 2016). Such asynchronous interaction enables students to take time to not only review content posted but to reflect and discuss their reactions and response to COIL activities. As Deardorff (2011, p.77) suggests, student reflection in relation to the subject area is an essential component of COIL activity, as well as meaningful ways in which student learning can be gauged and assessed as linked to specific intended learning outcomes.

With regards to consideration of the disciplines, producing and delivering COIL teaching and learning outcomes can be aligned to a subject area, but equally can benefit greatly from students working across interdisciplinary boundaries.

In relation to digital literacies, students may be expert at using social media in their social networks, but they do not always translate this use to their formal or informal learning spaces without support. The importance therefore of digital pedagogy, is to enable students to engage in intellectual exchange, find one’s voice, engender reflection, and be confronted in ways of working in the open and may also help students to rethink their learner role as active agents rather than passive recipients of information (Wimpenny et al. 2018).

Importantly, COIL should not be viewed as an add-on to existing pedagogy and curriculum, as this may result in students not seeing the relevance or connection of such learning to their developing disciplinary perspectives, and the communication and interaction processes with others. Academics therefore, need to be skilled in both how to design virtual learning and in how to facilitate effective virtual interaction,

⁶ <http://telepresenceintheatre.coventry.domains/awards/coriolanus-online-wins-the-reimagine-education-arts-humanities-gold-award/>

with the necessary intercultural knowledge, skills, resources and time required to scaffold learners' contributions and perspectives in order to stimulate students' reflection on their biases, privileges and assumptions (Kumagai & Lypson, 2009). It therefore follows that COIL requires an infrastructure of technical and pedagogical support for students and educators, and that specific attention should be given to the types of courses that stimulate creative ways of mentoring students, not least in their interactions and dialogue with others (Rogers, Mulholland, Derdall et al., 2011; Wimpenny et al., 2018). The design of such learning, is not simply a case of academic staff transferring teaching and learning materials used in face to face interactions onto online platforms. Nor should we assume that being able to facilitate communication in face to face exchanges, results in such skills being equally effective in virtual learning environments (Yang, Kinshuk, Yu et al., 2014). Indeed, an important additional value of effective COIL models is that they engage, develop, and support the internationalisation of teaching staff as much as they do that of students. Therefore, staff, as well as students, need to learn how to engage with COIL and be trained in its use. For example, there is work being carried out on the training of COIL teachers in Europe: the EVE (Erasmus + Virtual Exchange) initiative, that provides online courses on COIL facilitated by COIL (Virtual Exchange) mediators and awards EVE 'badges' to the tutors who complete the course <https://evolve-erasmus.eu/news/erasmus-virtual-exchange-launched/>. Recognising the need to train staff at Coventry University, COIL training is provided by the Centre for Global Engagement, and 'by expert users' such as the Associate Heads of School International.

Engaging the diverse viewpoints and epistemic knowledges of learners and academics within COIL therefore requires not only critical thinking, but also intercultural attitudes and skills such as valuing diverse perspectives and managing one's anxiety, as well as effective online interactional skills (Orsini-Jones & Lee, 2018). Indeed, this type of education practice can at times take academics outside their comfort zone (Wimpenny, et al. 2018). Working with and managing students' expectations, is informing in many ways, and lecturers need the necessary skills to appreciate and understand which educational (Yang et al. 2014), cultural (Lixian & Cortazzi, 2013) and language (Yang, 2013; Orsini-Jones & Lee, 2018) related processes are at work in online collaborations. Moreover, COIL practices prompt consideration of intercultural attitudes towards how such learning sits within the broader context of educational culture (Wimpenny, Tombs, Gordan, et al., 2015) and the politics of monocultural approaches to knowledge practices (Icaza & Vázquez, 2018).

4. COIL CASE STUDY EXAMPLES

4.1 The role-reversal COIL Threshold Concepts and Action-Research-Informed Pedagogical Approach

Numerous COIL projects have been carried out in the School of Humanities (and the former Department of English and Languages) since the academic year 2011-2012. Their distinctive pedagogical feature is that they have all been underpinned by a student-centred and, in some cases, student-driven (e.g. Lloyd, Cerveró-Carrascosa & Green, 2018) 'role-reversal' approach, where staff look at areas of troublesome knowledge (as defined by Meyer & Land, 2005) 'through the looking glass' of their students' eyes in a continuous series of action-research cycles (see Figure 2). This action-research-supported model of threshold concept pedagogy designed at Coventry University (Cousin 2009, pp. 209-212) embeds the involvement of 'expert students' in COIL projects. Students collaborate with staff to identify troublesome knowledge so that their peers can be supported in overcoming 'stumbling blocks' in their COIL intercultural learning journey.

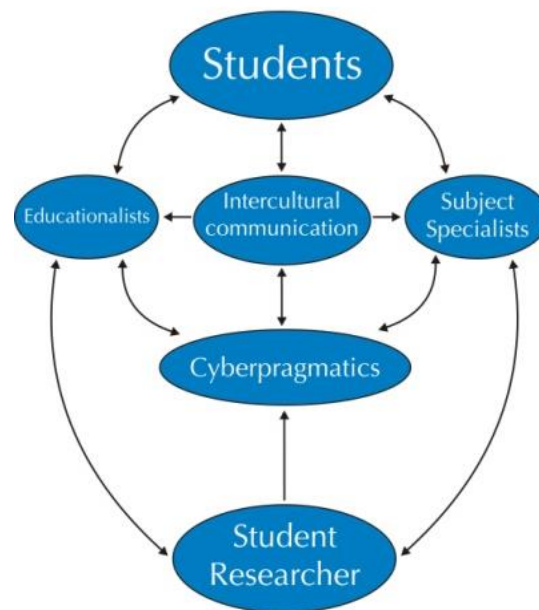


Figure 2. Role-reversal model of threshold concept pedagogy and languages and linguistics (Orsini-Jones, 2014)

The difficulties that students can encounter when engaging in COIL is amply documented in the relevant literature (e.g. O'Dowd & Ritter, 2006; Ware & Kramsch, 2005), as COIL takes students out of their comfort zone (of the more 'traditional curriculum') and serves to disrupt their expectations relating to their learning experience at Higher Education level. However, because of all the reasons previously mentioned here, Coventry University is committed to COIL pedagogy because of the positive transformational impact it can have on the students' experience, also evidenced in the literature (Shulteis Moore & Shulka, 2015; Orsini-Jones & Lee, 2018; Wimpenny et al., 2018).

An example of how an 'expert student' informed future iterations of an intercultural COIL project with Mexico (*MexCo*: Mexico-Coventry) is reported in Orsini-Jones et al. (2017c). This student, studying on a Bachelors of Honours degree in English and Creative Writing, took part in a COIL project in his first year of studies at Coventry University as part of module *Introduction to Studying English and Languages at University*. Subsequently he became a COIL 'expert student' in his second and final years. His reflections and input were of fundamental importance in the identification and ways to address 'troublesome knowledge' (Land & Meyer, 2006). In 2013-2014, his first year of studies, he noticed that some of his British peers were struggling with keeping the interaction going online in the discussion forums. During the focus groups with staff that were carried out at the end of the academic year, when asked why he was so effective at communicating online while some of his peers were struggling with it, he suggested that some of his peers needed more training in politeness conventions (Leech, 2014) which he had previously studied as part of sociolinguistics at school. He proposed that more active interventions should be put in place to support his peers further with: gauging the correct level of formality; developing the ability to switch between registers and genres; interpreting intended meanings; negotiating the balance between spoken conversation and written communication. As such, he suggested some guidelines for his peers when using English as the Lingua Franca for online communication with partners whose language of instruction or L1 (Language 1) is not English (Orsini-Jones et al. 2017c, pp. 219-220): An excerpt from his reflective feedback during the focus group is illustrated below:

Overall, I think what helped me maintain discussions, bearing in mind that I was communicating with people whose first language wasn't English and that the point of going on the MexCo forums was to talk to people, was: having an interest in learning about other cultures; having an interest in grammar and helping people with it; and, remembering that I was informally an ambassador for both CU and the UK, which meant I aimed *to be polite* and friendly towards other participants [our stress]

More attention was therefore paid to the discourse features of effective online interaction and cyberpragmatics in the design of the project for the following academic year, 2014-2015, and the student designed online interaction exercises in collaboration with staff for the British COIL participants in the subsequent year too.

Since the academic year 2015-2016, a new form of COIL project blend – BMELTET (Blending MOOCs into English Language Teacher Education with Telecollaboration) has been developed in the School of Humanities, where a COIL project is embedded into the curriculum together with a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC). BMELTET consists of the implementation of an hMOOC (hybrid-MOOC)-blend-model (Sandeen, 2013). Face-to-face teaching is delivered in conjunction with both a repurposed off-the-shelf MOOC (distance education) and a COIL project (also known as telecollaboration), supported by a dedicated Open Moodle website. The MOOC selected for the iteration of BMELTET discussed here is relevant to the MA and BA programmes involved (MA at Coventry University and BA at La Florida Universitatària in Valencia, Spain): *Understanding Language: Learning and Teaching* (designed by the University of Southampton with the British Council).

The integration of a MOOC into a COIL project means that the work on tasks carried out by the COIL partners is amplified on a global scale by the engagement with the MOOC worldwide community of practice, (see Figure 3, the community of practice plotted in the ZeeMap for the FutureLearn University of Southampton/British Council MOOC *Understanding Language: Learning and Teaching*, FutureLearn, 2018). Students engaged in this blended learning project (over 400 to date, from the UK, the Netherlands, China and Spain) have commented positively on how seeing the map gave them a feeling of being part of a global community of practice and that this felt empowering (Orsini-Jones et al., 2019, p.87) .



Figure 3: Zee Map plotting the participants on the MOOC Understanding Language – Learning and Teaching, October 2018 Iteration (Reproduced with permission from Kate Borthwick)

Furthermore, the repurposing of the MOOC for a blend that includes both face-to-face instruction and COIL, provides interesting opportunities of ‘flipped learning’ and an amplified ‘glocal’ (Bax, 2011) dimension to the learning experience. Participating students in the COIL partner institutions will, for example, view mini-lectures on Task-Based Learning on the MOOC before their face-to-face classes in their respective countries and start discussing the topic on the MOOC with the many participants there. Students will cover the topic in class face-to-face with their tutors, and then reflect either ‘live’ on Skype or asynchronously on the Moodle dedicated COIL forum discussion space with the COIL partners. This module also has the added dimension of the optional COIL-related field trip embedded within it. At Coventry University it was decided to implement this blend for students on the MA in

English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics course, as it is known that teachers' beliefs exert a strong influence on students' learning (Klapper, 2006) and many students appeared to have serious reservations about blended and online learning. Therefore, it was essential to equip students with the skills and knowledge necessary to operate effectively in education in the 21st Century. Students undertaking teacher education must be supported in developing an ability to critically assess their own beliefs in relation to practice (Orsini-Jones et al., 2018, p2) and BMELTET explores how the integration of an existing MOOC into ELT programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate level can impact on students' beliefs, while at the same time providing them with the opportunity to engage in reflection in an immersive and action-learning-driven way with a global community of practice in a holistic 'in'/'on' and 'for' action way (Orsini-Jones et al., 2018). During the academic year 2016-2017, BMELTET involved 121 students based in three different countries (UK, The Netherlands and China). The participants were, in the main, students reading for either an MA or a BA (Hons) in ELT/TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). The participating students were based in five different higher education institutions in three different countries: one in the UK, one in the Netherlands, and three in China. Thirteen different student nationalities were represented in the sample: Austrian, Bangladeshi, British, Chinese, Dutch, Ghanaian, Kenyan, Iranian, Malaysian, Nigerian, Russian, Swedish and Vietnamese. This heterogeneous sampling allowed for the collection of several perspectives relating to participants' beliefs and the research results illustrated that BMELTET had had a positive impact on students' understanding and discussion of both national and international perspectives in English language teacher education (Orsini-Jones et al., 2018). BMELTET aimed to address the following research questions (RQs) (Orsini-Jones et al., 2018, p. 15):

1. Can a blended learning curricular intervention project, based on integrating a MOOC into the curriculum, support the identification of ELT students' beliefs, with particular reference to learner autonomy, across five higher education institutions from three different countries?
2. Can the project lead to a transformation in the ELT students' beliefs about ELT?
3. What recommendations on how to integrate MOOCs into existing ELT courses could be made, based on the results of the project?
4. Can the use of blended learning help students on English language teacher education courses in Higher Education to acquire a holistic approach to the integration of technology into their learning and teaching?

RQ4 above deliberately addresses the marginalisation of technology in the professional development of English language teachers. Most key theoretical texts on ELT used in language teacher education (e.g. the bestselling Richards & Rodgers, 2014) do not appear to address the online dimension, its affordances and how transformative effective engagement with technology can prove to be for teachers' agency. BMELTET aims to illustrate that teachers' cognition, triggered by active learning with a MOOC/COIL blend, can be empowering for ELT practitioners, can help them develop critical digital literacy and thus support them in the troublesome journey across the uncertain terrain of autonomy in language learning and teaching, as autonomy had previously been identified as a threshold concept for them by 'expert students' (Orsini-Jones et al., 2017a; 2017b and 2017c). Jiao, for example, (2018) argues that autonomy is particularly challenging as a concept for students who, like himself, come from a teacher-centred Confucian learning tradition. He was one of the MA in ELT 'expert students' who based his dissertation on BMELTET in the academic year 2017-2018. Table 1 below illustrates what courses the students were enrolled on and whether or not the COIL interactions was assessed.

Table 1: Module and Respective Institutional Assessment - BMELTET

University	No. of students	Degree course	Example key course/module learning outcomes	Assessment (Summative=S; Formative=F)

CU	36	MA in English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics	Analyse the suitability of needs of specific English language learners in specific English language learning contexts (national and international) and discuss the teaching and learning approaches most appropriate to their situation.	S = 50% module mark 'Seen' in-class test with question requiring reflection on COIL project and its impact on the student's beliefs as an ELT teacher. Optional essay title on one of the topics covered on the BMELTET project.
HU	26	BA Honours English Teaching	Critically appraise theories and practice of language learning and teaching	F = Portfolio of practice entry on BMELTET and its impact on the student's beliefs on ELT.
XJTLU	14	MA TESOL	Contrast and compare different approaches to online and blended learning and flipped classroom	F = Reflection on asynchronous exchanges
SISU	39	BA in English Pedagogy	Evaluate MOOC pedagogies for ELT	S = 20% module mark Report on the evaluation of MOOCs for ELT
ECUST	6	MA in Applied Linguistics	As above	F = As above

The feedback from the participating students (obtained via online surveys, interviews, the analysis of their postings in Moodle discussion and of their answers in relevant assessed tasks) appeared to indicate that the project had been successful in addressing the four RQs. Participating students engaged in the English language teaching topics covered in the MOOC and then discussed them in Moodle with their international partners. In relation to the discussion regarding digital contexts of teaching, two sub-trends emerged in the forum exchanges: the first one related to appreciation for how much could be gained by engaging with a global and digital community of teaching practice, for example⁷:

Participant 1 (HU), Moodle posting from 11/12/2016

In the MOOC, the discussion forum added extra value as compared to my blended learning experience as I really learnt from the many postings of other participants.

Participant 2 (HU), Moodle posting from 16/12/2016

I thought it was really cool about the MOOC that people all over the world could comment on your ideas and even add in some ideas of their own. It gave me, as a student teacher, a lot of tips to work with students face to face but also via the internet. It gave me a fresh perspective on how to deal with online learning and how to make the best of it for students and for myself as a future teacher. Technology is our future so we have to learn how to work with it and how to make sure your students can adapt easily towards the future and technology is a big part of that! I enjoyed this course and it will be likely I do one again.

The second 'sub-theme' related to how the BMELTT project raised awareness of specific teaching contexts and the need to teach intercultural awareness. Two participants from China (participants 13 and 6 /SISU) shared powerful remarks about the dominance of English on the global linguistic arena (echoing remarks made in the post-MOOC survey): Participant 13 (SISU), Moodle posting from 14/11/2017

⁷ Please note that all comments are reproduced verbatim here.

English is taught as a foreign or second language in many countries, this is the inevitable result of globalization. Many universities around the world offer courses through the medium of English to meet the needs of the global community. As far as I am concerned, this can help students adapt to the society and further connection with the world. But every coin has two sides, this teaching methods does not take into account the individual differences of students. What's more, some universities pay too much attention to English, but ignore the mother tongue. This is not conducive to the heritage and development of local culture.

Participant 6 (SISU), Moodle posting from 20/11/2016

There are many traditional festivals every year in China. While in these years, more and more people especially children celebrate western festivals, such as Christmas, Halloween, April fool's day. It is difficult for our children to recognize what is tradition, why they are different. This may affect our culture's inheritance. Learning a language, we must get to know some cultures of their country. If we blend them together with our own's, the disadvantage is obvious.

The exchanges above illustrate how BMELTET supported students engaged in teacher education to explore multiple perspectives on teaching and learning and provoked some interesting reflections. The transformational impact of the project is evident in the quotation below (*verbatim*):

As a student, I have studied for about 20 years but I have never experienced this kind of learning before. In China, teachers always take control of the whole class, they decide what we learned every day and check our homework. Most of us study to pass the exam or to make our parents happy in order to go to a good university to get a good job. Most of the students never enjoyed the process of learning. [...] Taking part in MOOC changed my perception of online learning. I used to think that online learning is not effective because it is not in class who wants to spend time what this and doing all of this activities. Students need to be controlled in order to learn. After I tried to learn in MOOC, I found that some of the videos are very interesting and not hard to understand. Communicating with others on MOOC is also interesting. If someone asked me about something, I could explain to them, I would also learn something new and understand better. This all proved that learner autonomy are effective in learning. Besides, each week's MOOC related to what we learned in class and help us understand better. (CU13 Interview)

As the students' journeys and learning experiences from BMELTT illustrate, becoming interculturally aware and digitally proficient teachers was enabled both by the social collaborative learning aspect of COIL and by the MOOC blend with it.

4.2 Graduate preparedness for complexity

An example of COIL within the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, which was formally researched with funding from the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (2014 – 2015) (Wimpenny, Lewis, Gordon et al., 2016), involved three countries (Coventry University (CU) in United Kingdom, University of Cape Town (UCT), South Africa and PXL Limburg University, Belgium (PXL). The focus of the collaboration was to improve graduates' preparedness for practice in the field of mental health and beyond, not least due to the increasingly complex global landscape of occupational therapy practice along with growing evidence that graduates were not sufficiently prepared for the challenges of an uncertain world (Wimpenny & Lewis, 2015).

215 undergraduate students were involved in the COIL project across the three university occupational therapy programmes, with students allocated to twenty international discussion forums. The students were linked to the discussion forums via a final year module on their respective course programmes. Each institution selected a final year module most appropriately suited to 'house' the international learning opportunity. Table 2 provides details of the modules in which the discussion forum was situated, an example of a key-learning outcome for that module, and the forms of assessment that students undertook.

Table 2: Module and Respective Institutional Assessment

University	No. of students	Module	Example key learning outcomes	Assessment (Summative)
CU	155	354OT Employability and Entrepreneurship	Critically appraise and debate the national and global context and the future direction of the profession	(100%) Develop and produce a career narrative using digital storytelling software
PXL	16	AJ2104 Enabling Environments	Critically appraise occupational therapy in the contexts of our work in 'enabling environments', from both the clients' and therapists' perspectives	(40%) critical reflections and contributions to the discussion forum and module sessions (50%) group work task critiquing functioning teams (10%) oral report and peer evaluation
UCT	29	AHS4119W Occupational Therapy Research and Practice Management	Appreciate the scope of and the relationships between the universal management functions of controlling, leading, planning and organising in occupational therapy practice contexts Describe and critically appraise the principles and procedures of organizational development	(100%) Written exam paper

Twelve graduate occupational therapists in their first post were recruited from across the three universities by a range of means, including approaching practice education coordinators, and through the university Alumni. Each graduate donated a 10-minute Vodcast⁸ about a complex case scenario from their first year of practice that included the following:

- Taking risks, seeing and making use of opportunities to extend professional reach
- Integrated and responsive care
- Demonstrating professional artistry and competence, through coping effectively with situations of complexity and uncertainty with clients
- Being visible and influential with others, and in the delivery of cost effective practices with a necessary understanding of professional discourse for contemporary occupational therapy practice
- Generating knowledge relevant to global health practice issues

Each Vodcast had an accompanying word document (with translations available in Dutch/Flemish/French/German). Table 3 presents the graduates involved and the practice settings they represented across the three countries.

Table 3: Graduate Vodcasts

Graduate	Country	First post / community service setting
Females (2)	SA	Rural hospital, northern Kwazulu Natal Rural hospital, Eastern Cape

⁸ A vodcast is a video stored in a digital form (using a mobile device, or other recording equipment) to enable it to be broadcast over the Internet.

Males (1)	UK	Forensic hospital
Females (3)	UK	Community Mental Health Acute inpatient mental health Contemporary setting
Females (4)	Belgium	Psychiatric Hospital settings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Individual Placement & Support (IPS) ○ Drug & Alcohol team ○ Day centre ○ Peripatetic team

The project used an Open Moodle platform to enable the international delivery of teaching and learning. Whilst this was an open platform it had the facility to be locked after a short registration period to ensure confidentiality of participants. The platform housed learning materials such as the graduate Vodcasts, graduate and student donated resources, website links, and other module resources. In order to engage with the site, students simply had to log on with their unique user name and password from any mobile or laptop device that had access to the Internet. The expertise of a learning technologist enabled development of a site for the project which was populated with website links to the three countries, news feeds, a photograph gallery, Google maps, as well as other module resources. Learning technologists from PXL and UCT were also on hand to support their respective staff and students.

The discussion forums were facilitated by the graduates who donated the Vodcasts, along with academic support from module tutors across the three institutions. In these forums, over a six-week period, students explored a minimum of two scenarios, considering their response to the challenges faced when promoting professional perspectives within interagency, multidisciplinary team working. This pedagogical approach was designed to complement, and supplement students' current educational experiences on the respective modules; to encourage students to think creatively, engage in individual and group reflection, problem solving, and develop innovative ways to deliver international culturally-sensitive services. Figure 4 provides an example of prompts used with the students to facilitate international dialogue and exchange.

Figure 4: Example weekly prompts for students on the online discussion forum

Week One: Enrolment and Group Cohesion

- Introduce and participate in warm up activities online
 - Add a picture to the international gallery
 - Say hello online and introduce yourself. Share something unique about you or a story about your name
 - Say something about your hopes / aspirations for the international element of the module

Week Two: Scene Setting

- Introduce the scenario(s)
- What are the key points to consider here in relation to professional perspectives? What are the key points in each scenario (min 1 online contribution per scenario)?
- Think about the service setting – where are the potential assets and hindrances/challenges in taking forward occupational therapy in relation to the service user's care within the team and in liaison with other agencies. The focus here is not about the actual case-based intervention but how do you challenge/change/be creative/visible / influential in problem solving and negotiating occupational therapy service delivery within the service/setting/context and to be able to effectively advocate for the service user(s)/communities. List these and contribute to discussion around them (min 2 online contributions per scenario).

Week Four: learning from others and action planning

- Share your plans for creative professionally-orientated problem solving within multidisciplinary team work in your scenario(s). What are your anticipated outcomes? How will you know what works for whom, when and why? (Minimum 2 online contribution per scenario)
- From your international collaboration identify two key points that have

informed/supported/developed your thinking/problem solving/creative approach to tackling these difficult situations in relation to (wider) team challenges (min 1 online contribution per scenario).

Using case study methodology, and with ethical approval, both qualitative (reflective diary entries and interviews) and quantitative data (the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) (Chen & Starosta, 2000) were captured pre and post the six-week discussion forums.

In terms of the key findings, the learning was seen to provide students with a real-world opportunity to consider professional issues from a global perspective, aiming to facilitate students' confidence as occupational therapists in a global context, considering contemporary mental health practice. The focus was therefore not only to enable the exploration of theory underpinning the current context, but to up-skill students with practical means of contributing to their future mental health practice.

Complex scenarios donated by graduates from their first year of work provided students with clearly valued first hand content from the world of practice. Working in international groups offered students opportunities to interact with other students' cultural models, leading to the disruption of their respective ways of thinking, and to the generation of new discourse.

As students engaged with one another and encountered difference in fellow student perspectives and epistemologies the challenge to generate active dialogue or to reach productive consensus was evident. Indeed, it was interesting to observe how students coped with the situation of being with others in a learning situation having to manage the 'not knowing' and how they were able to be responsive within situations of uncertainty – a main aim and purpose of setting up the learning experience. In addition, as none of the PXL students were native English speakers, they expressed initial trepidation about being able to participate in the online conversation. To help problem solve this issue, PXL staff organised weekly participant meetings enabling students to overcome their initial fears, to express their difficulties and to encourage and help each other to engage in the new issues proposed.

Using online discussion forums to discuss professional perspectives, and across different countries and cultures, was a new experience for all in many ways. Whilst the Coventry University students were used to communicating their learning through online learning platforms, the anticipated practices and skills of international online discussion required a new and different skill set. Nonetheless, from analysis of the ISS pre and post test data it was evident the students felt more engaged and confident in intercultural communication after they had participated in the module, and that their intercultural sensitivity subsequently increased, with a significant difference in students interaction engagement and interaction confidence.

Setting up this innovative international online forum involved a great deal of work across the partners, led by Coventry. That said, the study revealed that COIL offered a powerful means of students' ability to exchange ideas, professional knowledge, time-management and problem solving skills, appreciate cultural diversity, reflect on their intercultural awareness and the sensitivity required to be tolerant of diverse perspectives. It was also evident through the study, that more opportunity is needed within the curriculum to enable students to wrestle with uncertainty, risk and educational challenge, and to replace their feelings of doubt and insecurity with improved agency, in order to be able to manage the 'not knowing', to tolerate complexity, and be resilient (Wimpenny et al, 2016).

5. SYNOPSIS: COIL AS A 'HOLISTIC BLEND'

As evidenced in the case study examples above, COIL can be used to promote students learning across a multi-faceted skillset including respect, self-awareness, critical cultural adaptation and relationship building. The findings of our studies include how the students' experience of COIL is found to impact on their intercultural sensitivity within their disciplinary practices through the promotion of peers' cultural approaches, epistemic knowledge and through a process of discovery and adaptation. Also, students appreciate how a subject area can be explored through many different ideas and forms of media, pushing them out of their comfort zone, inspiring them to work with the ideas and techniques of others, and exposing them to new practices and new cultural openings.

COIL enables students to develop sensitivity to different intercultural contexts and knowledge perspectives in the way that real-world industry has to operate in work practices across different countries. This finding is supported by Wimpenny et al.'s (2016) research regarding COIL benefits in preparing graduates for complexity by providing students with learning spaces to develop resilience and be responsive within situations of uncertainty. Further, as Orsini-Jones et al. (2018) studies explored, COIL can be utilised to develop the critical digital literacy capabilities of students engaged in language teacher education in a COIL/MOOC blend that aims to support students to reflect in a holistic and immersive way on their teacher beliefs on online and blended learning.

COIL is an ideal approach to encourage students in teacher education in particular, but in other subjects too, to reflect on their learning 'in action' (Schön, 1983) while carrying out their collaborative international tasks, 'on action' (ibid.), with reflections on what happened during their COIL experience 'for' action, thinking about their future practice (Orsini-Jones, et al., 2018). The engagement with international partners also provides students (and staff) with opportunity to re-think their beliefs, be open to diverse epistemic knowledgies, and approach tasks embracing multiple perspectives. Furthermore, by engaging with COIL, students also acquire linguistics skills relating to cyberpragmatics (Yus, 2011), that is to say the ability of engaging online in an effective and respectful way within a global community of practice.

6. CONCLUSION

With the development of technology, and the strengthening of international collaboration and connectivity, COIL has become a valuable approach to pedagogy as part of internationalising the curriculum, with scope for diversity of practices across all subjects, and not just within the arts and humanities, which earlier exemplars of COIL have reflected (*see* Shulteis, Moore & Sunka, 2015).

In the process of pursuing internationalisation, COIL can provide opportunities for students to become digitally literate global citizens, preparing graduates to live in and contribute responsibly to a globally interconnected society (HEA, 2016). That said, COIL can be challenging for all stakeholders concerned, not only in taking both students and staff out of their comfort zone, but also in disrupting expectations of what learning in HE is about. Designing and delivery COIL thus requires due care and consideration, not only the pedagogical approaches to be considered for meaningful learning gain, but also in subject content to be modified. Furthermore, the importance of the intercultural dimension is to be emphasised, not only in students being able to engage with peers in discourse across different geographies and worldviews, but encouraging students to develop critical skills to understand forces shaping their discipline, and to have accepted viewpoints challenged (Zimitat, 2008).

This chapter has aimed to provide a background and context to the practices of COIL at Coventry University with international partners. As well as the practical considerations of COIL pedagogies, we have shared research based practice examples of innovative approaches to COIL being carried out, with particular emphasis on the holistic blend of learning students and staff stand to acquire from engaging in such learning spaces. We also are aware there is still much to learn from researching our practices in collaboration with international partners. Such research involves examining how COIL is embedded within the wider internationalised curriculum, including how COIL offers greater scope for inclusivity beyond physical mobility. We also need to understand more about how best to incentivise and support staff in the design and delivery of COIL practices, including the facilitation skills required as part of intercultural learning, co-existence and diversity. We suggest COIL can support the decolonisation of the curriculum, by presenting multiple viewpoints and opportunities for post-national perspectives, thus further research into how COIL can support decolonisation practices is required. A final recommendation is research into new models of COIL, building for example on COIL/MOOC blends. In particular, an area of interest is in the use of COIL pedagogies and methodologies for engaging learning communities beyond HE, and into our wider cities and communities.

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