

Virtually Connecting Peers & Intercultural Competency

Action Research

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Introduction and Problem Statement

Students do not need to interact with their international peers to be more competent in intercultural issues, or do they? How do students feel about the experience or the lack of experience? Some instructors see the value in having their students interact with their peers abroad, while others find that students can achieve the same understanding without the interaction.

My passion is other cultures and learning about other cultures. While in college, I longed for interaction with my international peers, yet I never received any interaction until I went on my first study abroad to Germany. The experience was amazing, yet I wondered if there was any way that students could achieve that fulfillment of interaction without leaving their home country. If so, then I would be saving the students lots of money.

When students do connect, how can faculty see if the connection benefited the student? How can faculty know their end goal was achieved? This research sought to enable faculty with the ability to evaluate how well the connection achieved its goals.

In a previous project, I assisted three faculties in connecting their students. Three universities were involved: two in the Midwestern United States and 1 in Central Mexico. One faculty member was interested in connecting future courses and courses together. The courses involved teaching a language as a second language; all students were teachers or wanted to teach.

One of the faculty members did not feel that their students benefited from the interaction. Additionally there were issues with the tool selected as it was a tool that was discontinued during the study. Some students felt the experience was beneficial while others did not. Students from the class where the instructor did not see a benefit were the students who also did not see a benefit.

The current study was modified based on the experience of the prior informal study in the following ways: the tool selected is not a tool in beta, there are only two instructors involved, I was one of the instructors rather than just a technician available for technical support, the instructors involved selected the readings for the students before the semester started and before the activity was added to either course's syllabus, and students were allowed into the tool a week early to test out the tool. What remained the same was that the international university is in Central Mexico and the university here in the U.S. is in the Midwest.

Purpose and Intended Audience

The purpose of this research was to: (1) show that I could perform research and investigate a topic in order to graduate in the Master's of eLearning at the University of Colorado Denver; and (2) to research my most recently developed educational passion: virtually connecting peers internationally to increase intercultural competency.

The intended audience was: (1) my colleague in Central Mexico with whom I plan to co-author research articles regarding the research performed on this topic as well as co-present at conferences on this topic; (2) other faculty members interested in starting a connection between their students and other international students; (3) students in the ILT program in the Research course: INTE 6720 E01 & E31 Research Info-Learning Tech at UC Denver; and (4) board of faculty for entrance into doctorate program in Boulder where I hope to continue my research on this particular topic.

Research Questions

The main question that the research will focus on was: what are student-reported outcomes of virtually connecting with international students in an educational setting? The goal of this question was to allow students to open up about their experience (good or bad) and explain if they feel that the activity was beneficial.

The supporting research questions were:

- What educational similarities and differences, between themselves and their peers, do students report after the international virtual interaction?
- What do the students suggest are the benefits of community based learning?
- How do students feel towards diversity after virtually working with their international peers?

These supporting questions helped faculty to determine if the activity is beneficial for their students. Both questions allowed for an open opinion from the students.

The original project that I started back in 2010 was really the initial part of my research, but in an infant stage. I was just starting to form a thesis idea. My internal questions at the time were:

- Is it possible to connect students from one college in the U.S. with students in an international college?
- Are there any benefits to making this connection?
- Will students feel there is a benefit to the connection?
- Will students learn diversity through the connection?

Context of the Study

The students of the study were at a Midwestern community college in the U.S. and at a university in Central Mexico. In the summer of 2010, I took a hybrid course in Central U.S.

where the on campus portion took place at in Central Mexico. This established a connection between me and some of the instructors there at the university in Central Mexico. The university in Central Mexico is a beautiful campus that originally was a German school before the university in Central Mexico bought the property. It reminded me very much of my study abroad in Germany and perhaps was one of the main reasons for my initial thoughts of connecting students with their international peers. I very much enjoyed my study abroad experience in Germany and at the university in Central Mexico and I was hoping to create a similar experience for students who were unable to leave their country to travel abroad.

The Midwestern community college course was the first course that I had taught and its focus was on the college experience and on how to become a good college student. My students were in AAA 109 - Advanced Academic Achievement. In their textbook, there was a chapter on diversity: "Cultivating Relationships and Appreciating Diversity". As soon as I saw that chapter and the lack of homework and materials with that chapter, I began to wonder if I could give my students a real experience with cultivating relationships and seeing diversity first hand by connecting with their international peers.

No other section of AAA 109 was connecting with another student body. I taught another section that was not connecting due to a condensed schedule. I was able to compare the diversity week between the 2 sections this semester and see if there is any differences in the standard diversity paper that I am requiring for both sections that particular week. The diversity paper was the only assignment that both sections share that week. It was based on a Pechu Kucha that I created for the Creative Design Course: INTE 6710 at UC Denver.

The section that I connected with the university in Central Mexico was a 13 week course and the other section was only a 10 week course. We had 10 chapters to cover with a lot of required activities. For this reason the 10 week course was only be assigned the Pechu Kucha to be followed up with an essay and a discussion on the text for that week while the 13 week course would also be assigned to interact with their international peers in Mexico.

The students at the university in Central Mexico were taking a course on Community Learning in English. The students at the university in Central Mexico were at a high level of English and looked to hear from other students about Community Learning. This discussion actually would give them a live practice at Community Learning as both student groups will be learning from one another.

My students were freshmen in college while the students at the university in Central Mexico have already taken many English courses. What my students lacked in college experience, the the university in Central Mexico students already had and could perhaps share their experiences with my students so that the students could relate to their international peers. Between the student bodies, I felt that both groups had a lot to learn from one another.

The instructor at Midwestern community college was new to teaching and the instructor at the university in Central Mexico had been teaching for several years. The literature that the

students read was a chapter on “Cultivating Relationships and Appreciating Diversity” by Amy Baldwin. The discussion board was in Edmodo.com and the discussion took place in English.

There was an introductions discussion where the students from both universities introduced themselves and talked about their college experience so far. The following week, there was a 2 part discussion: (1) think about the need for a second language within a college community and talk about what diversity looks like in their own college community; and (2) how might students learn in a community based learning environment including the concerns about community learning environments.

Procedures

The following sections were the procedures for the research:

- Site selection and sampling
- Data collection instruments
- Data analysis plans
- Schedule
- Ethical procedures
- Impact
- Checks for rigor

Site selection and sampling

Students from both universities participated in the discussions and the reflection paper in English. The data samplings are student work.

Data collection instruments

Students were surveyed before their interaction with their peers and once again after their interaction. The survey contained Likert-scale questions in addition to open-ended opinion questions. Both surveys are anonymous and participation was optional.

Additionally, students were required to complete a reflection paper in English where they will respond to the following questions:

1. What did you learn from your peers?
2. Did your peers surprise you at all? If so, how?
3. What did you like about the experience?
4. What do you wish was different in the experience?

The two discussion boards were analyzed to see how the students interacted.

Discussion board

Virtually Connecting Peers and Intercultural Competency

In the first discussion week we asked students to introduce themselves in the following ways:

- Talk about your college experience so far.
- Describe your career.
- Mention why you are in college. What motivates you to be in this community?

Students were to post their thoughts in EDMODO in 100-200 words by midweek, then, read their classmates posts. By the end of the week, they were to respond to at least two posts from their classmates.

In the second discussion week, we asked students to participate in the discussion on one of the following topics:

1. Appreciating Diversity based on the chapter from Amy Baldwin. Most specifically thinking about the need for a second language within a college community and what diversity looks like in their own college community.
2. Article 1: All human beings are free and equal in dignity and rights by BBC World Service. Specifically how might students learn in a community based learning environment/what are concerns about community learning environments?

Students were asked to respond to the following questions for the applicable reading:

Reading 1:

1. Describe the different types of people and their roles on campus. List the benefits of cultivating relationship in college.
2. Explain the importance of appreciating diversity.
3. How do you understand the process of resolving conflict in college relationships?

Reading 2:

RIGHT 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood".

1. What are some examples that are true for this Human Right in your college experience or community? For example, all students from BUAP have the right to use STU (cheap transportation). Children have the right for education, etc.
2. What are some examples that are not true for this Human Right in your community?
3. How can we help our community to be aware of cultural diversity to lessen stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination?

Students were to post their initial response to the discussion questions by Wednesday each week and then respond to their peers by Sunday at midnight. Initially we had planned to have the students break up into small groups of 4-5 per group. We found that both of our classes were not participating in their classes apart before the exchange took place and noted that during the first week the students were participating better as a large group. For this reason, we changed our plans and had the students remain together for the second week. U.S. student participation in the discussion was better in Edmodo than in the U.S. D2L discussion boards before the exchange took place.

Data analysis plans

Data was analyzed from the current study and compared to the results of the previous study. The discussion board was analyzed through categorization and coding as described by Koshy.

Research Question	Primary Data Source
What are student-reported outcomes of virtually connecting with international students in an educational setting?	Survey before, reflection paper after, Discussion Board
What similarities and differences do students report after the international virtual interaction?	Survey before, reflection paper after, Discussion Board
How do students feel towards diversity after virtually working with their international peers?	Survey before, reflection paper after, Discussion Board

Additionally, I was able to compare the work of the students at the Midwestern community college on their diversity paper following up the Pechu Kucha. This comparison might show a difference between the section that interacted with their international peers versus the section that did not have that interaction.

Schedule

The following schedule was followed for the research:

Action	Time Frame
Contact instructor in Central Mexico for interaction	November 18th
Decide which class in Central Mexico would interact with students in the Midwestern U.S.	November 18th
Decide lesson & chapter to connect students	December 28th - January 21st
Decide activity for connection & tool	January 23rd - 24th
Build lesson plan & Rubric	January 24th-26th
Notify students via syllabus	January 31st
Allow students into Edmodo to test tool	February 8th - 18th

Complete Draft of Action Research Proposal with Data Collection Methods	February 15th
Receive feedback on Draft of Action Research Proposal with Data Collection Methods	February 17th
Update survey questions as needed	February 16th
Draft email to students; finalize survey questions	February 17th
Update Action Research Proposal with Data Collection Methods	February 19th
Survey students before interaction	February 17th-22nd
Introductions Discussion - First post	February 20th - 22nd
Introductions Discussion - Final posts	February 20th-26th
Discussion on Readings - First post	February 27th - 29th
Discussion on Readings - Final posts	February 29th - March 4th
Conduct literature review	February 20th - March 4th
Survey students after interaction	March 4th - 11th
Reflection paper from students	March 4th - 7th
Write Draft Literature Review	March 4th - March 6th
Receive feedback on literature review	March 8th
Complete Final Draft Literature review	March 10th
Collect data from surveys and reflection paper	March 11th - 23rd
Compile & Analyze data	March 24th - April 1st
Write Data Analysis	April 2nd - April 6th
Receive feedback and update as needed	April 6th - April 11th
Draft of Action Research Report	April 11th - April 24th
Complete Final Action Research Report	April 24th - April 28th

Ethical procedures

All participation in discussions and the reflection paper was compulsory. All data received from the discussions, surveys, and reflection paper remained anonymous. Participation in the surveys in English (all students will have near native English skills) was voluntary and a statement of consent of the use of the data from the survey was provided to the students before they completed the survey. The surveys and the reflection paper enabled the students with the opportunity to share their opinion on the international interaction. Students were asked to complete a consent form granting permission or denying permission to use the data collected from the discussions while keeping anonymity of the students.

No names of the student participants were shared at any point, although the instructors knew the students names. The names of the universities and the names of the instructors are confidential.

Impact

Students had a discussion on their textbook each week, therefore the discussions will have minimal impact on their coursework. The Midwestern community college students were required to complete a short essay each week and the reflection paper also had a minimal effect on their coursework. Students were asked to voluntarily participate in the surveys. Since it was their choice and the surveys were short, it was expected to have been a minimal effect on their coursework.

The comparison between the section that was not interacting with the students at the university in Central Mexico and the section that was interacting with the students at the university in Central Mexico would show any possible negative feedback in the impact of the course. This comparison would guide possibilities for future connections with the university in Central Mexico between this course and one of their courses during the week on diversity. Based on the schedule of the course alone, students would not be able to take part in this connection if they were taking a section less than 13 weeks long. There was simply too much material to cover under 13 weeks.

Checks for rigor

The viewpoints of both the students in Central Mexico and the students in the Midwestern U.S. would be considered equal and therefore will be a *diverse case analysis* as described by Stringer (Stringer, 2007).

Multiple sources would be utilized in the literature review and the data will be compared against the prior study from Fall 2010. This satisfies the *triangulation* as described by Stringer (Stringer, 2007).

As the researcher, I would be creating a blog during the interaction to discuss my thoughts of how the interaction is taking place. With this *persistent observation*, I would be able to analyze the interaction not just from memory, but from my notes, and from the discussion thread

(Stringer, 2007).

During the research, I would evaluate what is *transferable* to future studies and interactions (Stringer, 2007). Not every aspect of the study will apply to future course connections, but I hope to find aspects of the study that can be transferred to future studies.

The research would have *confirmability* in that two instructors will have access to the data at all times and will document their findings of the study (Stringer, 2007).

Summary

This research was a continuation of a research project I started back in fall of 2010. Initially I conceptualized that students would have a strong desire to connect with their peers internationally, like I did. I also perceived that setting up the connection and assisting with the discussion would be similar to setting up a discussion as normal. What I found was that it was a much harder project and that the students didn't appreciate just being connected.

The prior project I performed helped me realize that the students needed more structure in their connection, a better tool for the connection, and a solid purpose for the connection. Similar to a team agreement, an agreement needs to be setup between the instructors involved as a form of a contract so that both instructors understand the connection that is taking place and to help enforce a timeline as needed.

This current research was designed based on the prior experience. The discussions were more structured, the tool was tested and was one that I have utilized as a student, and the students have a solid purpose for the discussion: to discuss diversity and community based learning according to readings already selected.

Before I continue, I would like to define my role as a researcher and explain my abilities to research this topic are relevant to my field. I was a Master student in the eLearning department at the School of Education, thus why I was and still am so heavily involved with eLearning and virtual tools. My studies provided me with exposure to various eLearning tools and enabled me to see tools in action before utilizing them in classrooms with students. My undergraduate was in International Studies, thus explaining somewhat my interest in Intercultural competency, but more emphasizing the need to connect with international peers. I was the right person for this research topic because I have a passion for eLearning, intercultural competence, and connecting students with their international peers. In my final semester of studying, I took a research course that guides me through my research topic; therefore, although I was new to research, I had scholarly support to assist me through all the necessary stages of research.

Literature Review

The intent of the research is to see what benefits were found, if any, once students are connected with their international peers in a collaborative discussion about diversity and community based learning.

In general, I found that the articles support the concept of connecting students with their international peers. Most of the studies proved to be positive. Failed communication seemed to be the common theme amongst the studies that had poor or negative outcomes. The studies linked intercultural competency requirements to the research performed in the articles. Many of the articles referenced the same evaluation methods and people creating the definitions or evaluation methods, which encouraged me to consider these methods as sound and methods to be utilized in my research.

These findings provided me with evaluation methods for my research that I plan to use to analyze my data. They also provided definitions of intercultural competency. Additionally, although online discussion forums seemed to be the most popular in the research, there were other options for connecting the students that were provided and those may be great ideas for future research.

Search questions

For the literature review, I searched literature for answers to the following questions:

- Are international connections in other fields other than language learning?
- What student opinions are reported after international connections take place?
- How is intercultural competence defined?
- How is intercultural competence achieved?

These questions come from my research questions in that I was looking for some similarities between my research and current literature:

- What educational similarities and differences between the student participants are reported after the international virtual interaction takes place?
- What do student participants see as benefits of community based learning?
- What is the feedback from students about diversity after virtually working with their international peers?

Search procedure

In my initial project back in 2010, I found 2 articles and a seminar at a conference on the tool that I was going to be using and did not consider using literature about international exchanges. I wonder now if I had found any literature back then, would the project have gone differently? I also wonder now what might I be missing that I will look back upon and wish I had researched.

Before beginning my search, I was provided with two articles from my instructor that were written by C. N. Gunawardena who was assisted by other authors. These articles provided the

most information related to my research topic. They also reported more feedback directly from the students. Both articles were retrieved from the Auraria campus library. While one was readily available online through the library, the other was physically at the library and I had to scan the document to create images for the article so that I could reference the article electronically as needed. In addition to the 2 articles from the instructor, I am also utilizing 2 books from the course on research methods as a means of guiding my research process.

Then I began my search using Google Scholar. I searched for articles containing “intercultural competency”, “intercultural competence”, and “international exchanges to improve intercultural competency”. I found a total of 8 articles. Most of the articles I found were regarding language subjects and focused on the benefits in language building through international exchanges. I was able to find many articles though that I believe have been useful in my research. Since my topic involved two topics that have a lot of literature, it was easy to find literature overall. The troubles I found involved the gap in literature which is explained later.

I was unable to find any resources at the Auraria library under “Skyline” when I used the same key word searches as I did for Google Scholar. When I searched JSTOR with the same key words, I was able to find 10 articles that apply to my research in some way. Many of these articles were very applicable to my research both in intercultural competency and in eLearning tools utilized to connect international peers.

Literature Review Findings

Below are the findings of my literature review based on major categories that I found in the articles and studies. I attempted to correlate the literature reviews to my research to show how the literature reviews would be used in my study. Many of the articles provide methods of evaluation and/or definitions.

Intercultural competency

In order to first understand how to increase intercultural competency, one must first understand what intercultural competency really is. There are many definitions out there, but I have chosen Tamrakar's: “in general terms, one's ability to deal effectively and appropriately with diversity is referred to as intercultural competence (ICC). Intercultural competence today is at the core of research in the fields of communication, psychology and education” (Tamrakar 2008, p. 63). I found little literature on intercultural competency from other fields other than language learning, yet his research shows that intercultural competence is spreading into other fields and I would be interested to hear how much he found it in other fields than language learning.

In my research I will be looking at the similarities and differences reported by the students. This falls into the study of intercultural competencies according to Tamrakar: “the concept of cross-cultural competence tends to compare two cultures using similarities and differences

whereas the concept of multicultural competence focuses on several (usually more than two) cultures existing side by side and deals with their basic psychological processes” (Tamrakar 2008, p. 64). The comparison is a major part of the intercultural competency.

Marchis, Ciascai, and Saial provide a visual graph of what makes up intercultural competency. The graph is very simple, yet useful in that it shows that the two cultures form their competency together. Competency is separate from the cultures and then at the end the two: competency and culture become connected. (Marchis, Ciascai, & Saial 2008, p2)

In an earlier definition, Skutnaab-Kangas and Phillipson explain what cultural competency is: “Cultural competence (cuo) can be analyzed in terms of three components or constituents, cognitive, affective, and behavioural” (Skutnaab-Kangas, & Phillipson 1983, p. 61). This definition leads into the present day intercultural competency definitions described by Marchis, Ciascai, and Saial: “Rakotomena (2005) formulate the intercultural competencies as a set of competencies necessary for a successful interaction in a group of persons from different cultures. Intercultural competencies are based on

- knowledge about culture in general, own cultural and other cultures in particular
- capacities: behavior, adaptation, conflict management, negotiation capacities,
- competencies: flexibility, open mindness, intelligence, empathy, interdependence, optimism, tolerance
- psychological and emotional resources: motivation, pleasure of risks, stress management capacities” (Marchis, Ciascai, & Saial 2008, p2).

In my research, the students might achieve all levels of competency, but the focus will be on the first competency of learning the other’s culture about college education and community based learning. We were looking at each intercultural competency definition provided above. Ideally we would find that we were able to achieve intercultural competency.

In Liaw’s study, she also showed that there were four types of competencies and she was able to show how her students met those levels of competencies in her study. “The students’ e-forum entries demonstrated four types of intercultural competences: (A) interest in knowing other people’s way of life and introducing one’s own culture to others, (B) ability to change perspective, (C) knowledge about one’s own and others’ culture for intercultural communication, and (D) knowledge about intercultural communication processes” (Liaw, 2006 p 49). What I like about Liaw’s work is that she provided the type of competency, a description of how the competency is achieved, and then a direct example from her students’ work. She bases her intercultural competency types on Byram’s competency theory from 2000.

Liaw created a table to show how her student’s achieved these levels of intercultural competency (Liaw, 2006 p. 57-58). I would like to use a similar table to see what level of intercultural competency is present in the discussion board exchange. Providing student examples beside the category and description is extremely helpful.

In addition to acquiring intercultural competence through interactions with people both virtually and in person, students can still experience intercultural competence through literature, especially when lacking physical means of travelling for various reasons. Burwitz-Melzer explains that students can be provided with literature about a foreign culture or provided literature from the foreign culture and they can experience the differences of culture simply by reading. For example, one can learn about the daily life of a person from Peru by reading a story of a child's life in Peru. This might give the student the ability to understand the daily interactions that take place, but it would not provide the student with the knowledge of the tastes of food for example (Byram, Nichols, & Stevens, 2001).

Based on Burwitz-Melzer's findings, I hoped to see that students achieved some level of intercultural competence through the readings that we selected. This would hopefully be noted through the discussion posts of the students, the post discussion survey, and/or the reflection paper. Ideally the students would reference the literature in their discussion post and the reflection paper.

Globalization

Intercultural competence is needed due to globalization, which takes place in all areas of the world. We are gradually becoming more and more interconnected. In Baumgratz study, she talks about how Europe is ahead of the United States in this aspect because there are many cultures in one small area. In that sense, it should be easier to globalize than for the United States who professes to have one common language. Relating Baumgratz study to my research, there may be students who are newer to multiculturalism because of the mono-linguistic history of the United States. However, we may see some of the students relate because of the Hispanic history in the United States. In that sense, although there are different cultures, they have been closely aligned similar to the European cultures.

In reality the United States does have multiculturalism within its own borders. As the United States interacts more with other cultures, we see more multiculturalism. This increase leads to the need to communicate effectively, as Tamrakar describes: "with the steep rise of multiculturalism, there is an increasing need for people to be able to deal effectively and competently with the diversity of race, culture and ethnicity" (Tamrakar 2008, p. 63). Globalization has created a need for multiculturalism and thereby a need to understand how to communicate with others from another culture than your own. Globalization drives us towards intercultural competency.

We will only continue to see more globalization in the future as well as an increase in intercultural competency. "We think that as the Internet spreads, studies examining cultural issues in the online learning environment will become increasingly important..." (Gunawardena, 2001 p 36). I believe this statement holds true. We will continue to see cultural issues arise in education as our world becomes smaller.

Through globalization and intercultural competence, openness of sharing knowledge across borders arises. Davis and Cho's study sought "intercultural competence; particularly

openness to a new academic area and culture and flexibility to accept and adapt new knowledge, customs, and cultural values” (Davis & Cho 2005, p. 16). This is very similar to what I seek for my students but with a different subject matter. While they pursued language learning skills, my students were learning about diversity and how to appreciate it while the students in Mexico learn about community based learning techniques so that they could apply those techniques into their skills of teaching English.

An interest in other cultures can arise when the students are given a chance to interact. Davis and Cho’s study also showed a gradual increase in student participation over the years. Although this is the first actual year of research, I hope to find some comparison between the project I assisted with back in 2010 and the current research project. I also hope to continue to perform this study in the future and see if participation increases over the years. This growth rate could indicate an increase in globalization overall. “There is also evidence that educational technology can support and enhance an intercultural learning, with increasing participation each year...” (Davis & Cho 2005, p. 16)

It is interesting to note that the lowest level of reported benefits came from the online group. However, this same group reported the highest level of student retention or recruitment for the future. The study did not express if the high level of recruitment came from the reduced cost of the interaction, which appears to be the most likely factor. “Most benefit came with longer study abroad, but this was limited to few students from each of the six universities (20); and the least benefit was to participants in online reading groups, with over 130 participants. As will be seen in the illustrations given later, there is a significant interaction between the three strategies because the online reading group is also an important mechanism to recruit students to overcome the logistical and financial challenges of a sojourn abroad. The findings will now be presented in more detail before we discuss the role of technologies to facilitate our intercultural doctoral community” (Davis & Cho 2005, p. 11).

Multicultural collaborative learning environments

After seeing a need for intercultural competency, brought on by the increase of globalization, there was a need to determine the collaboration methods to be used in an multicultural learning environment. The logistics of the connection consisted of the collaborative learning tools, multicultural learning environment, and co-construction of knowledge. All of these aspects needed to be realized in order for the connection to be successful. The tool needed to be selected for specific reasons that fit the collaboration methods being used, knowledge could be compiled, and the community needed to establish rules for their shared learning environment.

Structure unifies the study bodies and creates boundaries. Woods explains that the learning environment needs to be structured in such a way that is conducive to both disciplines whenever there is an interdisciplinary interaction, as such is the case in my research. In her study, it has been proven that students will learn something from the other discipline, but in order to maximize the learning experience, there should be a plan set in place to

determine what should be learned from the other discipline so that it can be planned into the environment structure and lesson (Woods 2007). In our study, the U.S. participants were to learn more about diversity and the Mexican participants were to learn more on community learning, although both student groups can learn about both subjects.

Once it has been determined what is to be studied, how the information will be studied comes into play. Marchis, Ciascai, & Saial performed a very interesting study on various uses of media to connect students internationally. In their study, they utilized many collaborative methods, but found that the students struggled somewhat with the new aspect of the collaboration type, not with connecting with their international peers. Marchis, Ciascai, & Saial concluded their study with: "Pupils seem to be really interested in different cultures, there is no racism among them. They like to work with different media, but they are not used to be creative. Thus at the beginning it is very difficult for them to participate in this kind of activities. They know a lot about intercultural issues, they usually know how a good intercultural relation should be, but also they admit that in many situations it is difficult for them to put in practice those knowledge" (Marchis, Ciascai, & Saial 2008, p. 47). I find the lack of creativity to be an interesting issue. What I noted so far in my research is that students are not used to working in an educational setting with different tools, even if they utilize those tools in their personal life.

In addition to learning methods, activities need to be planned in order to stimulate the student participation. Marchis, Ciascai, & Saial provide a list of their activities as lesson plans and then explain how they evaluated the student work. This provided an excellent understanding of their project. It also provided the direct examples, one of which I was surprised to see because it was the use of comics (Marchis, Ciascai, & Saial 2008). In the future, I would like to look at other activities to connect other than discussions.

Upon the creation of the structure of the learning environment, the learning methods, and the activities, the focus needs to be given on how the students will co-construct their knowledge on the subject being studied. According to Gunawardena, there are several phases of co-constructing knowledge: Sharing/comparing of information, dissonance (discovery and exploration of dissonance or inconsistency among ideas, concepts, or statements), negotiation of meaning / co-construction of knowledge, testing and modification of proposed synthesis or co-constructions, agreement statement/application of newly-constructed knowledge (Gunawardena, 1997 p. 413-414). While our discussion was not likely to reach all those stages based on the short time frame of the discussion as well as the lighter topic of discussion, we were likely to see some of these stages. Gunawardena's study provides an excellent method to evaluate data from online discussions and to see what phases were achieved in the discussion.

As a part of co-constructing knowledge, negotiations take place. Baumgratz' study states: "we put the stress on negotiation because the process of integration into a foreign environment is not one-sided; it should be one of cross-cultural communication, negotiation of meaning and of values" (Baumgratz 1995, p. 444). The concept is that just one side is

constructing the knowledge. Even in our situation where students were perfecting their learning of the other language, both student groups could construct knowledge, not just the native speakers.

As with any communication, there are times when those who are communicating find that they agree or disagree with another person. Gunawardena performed a study on how groups co-construct their knowledge together through agreement/disagreement on a particular topic. One might think that such negotiation only takes place when people are in disagreement, but that is not the case; "...tacit negotiation was continually occurring even when participants were apparently in agreement" (Gunawardena, 1997 p. 413).

Through negotiations and co-constructing knowledge, students can find themselves transformed by the experience. Davis and Cho explain that bridging the cultures is done through a "transformative process" and through "open-minded(ness)". These attributes enable the student participant to cross over to the other culture and receive a more profound understanding of the "other". Completing the bridge is when the student participant expresses changes in their perspective, even if the change is minuscule.

When a student is willing to understand the other culture, they are more likely to receive more from the experience of the exchange. "An open-minded person tends to have cognitive flexibility in adapting new ideas and willingness to change. He or she is more likely to tolerate ambiguity of an unfamiliar situation. Openness contains several characteristics. The openness refers one's attitudes to new thinking. An open-minded person is receptive to different ideas and seeks to extend understanding of new and unfamiliar fields" (Davis & Cho 2005, p. 5). "Some scholars define intercultural competency as a process rather than an outcome of study or experience. Taylor (1994) defines intercultural competency as a transformative process whereby the stranger develops adaptive capacity, altering his/her perspective to effectively understand and accommodate the demands of the host culture" (Davis & Cho 2005, p. 4).

Students can increase their awareness through open communication with another culture. In the study performed by Rogers, Graham, and Mayes, they ask how students became aware of cultural differences. They also explain that students showed an increase in awareness. In their study, they asked students to report cultural differences that they noted (Rogers, Graham, Mayes 2007). This related somewhat to our research question on diversity where we ask students to provide feedback on diversity after the discussion interaction.

Ideally students in our study would report changed perspectives and/or seeing a difference between their culture and that of the other culture. A change in perspective would also be nice to see. Such reports might be identified in the discussion board, the survey, or the reflection paper.

Communication

Communication involved the establishing communication guidelines, contextualizing communication, group communication, and failed communication. In my research, I would like to see all aspects of communication reported in the literature review, apart from failed communication. If failed communication was noted, I hoped to find methods to eliminate it.

Intercultural communication can be broken down into a communication model. Griffith and Harvey provide a communication model in their study called the Intercultural Relational Communication Model. The model involves cultural understanding, communication competency, cultural interaction, communication interaction, and relationship quality (Griffith & Harvey 2001). What I find most interesting in this model is the focus on communication and culture. If communication rules are established, then communication competency can be met by all student participants. Although we did set rules in our study, we could focus a little more on communication competency before the exchange takes place for the future.

In order to be successful in communicating, guidelines needed to be established. This happens in any communication environment, not just intercultural communication. Tamrakar provides examples of such guidelines that help to create a shared learning community. Netiquette needed to be considered. Rules should be established and agreed upon before the interaction takes place. This proved true in our research where I posted the assignment in our communication tool and the instructor in Central Mexico said it confused the students as she had not gone over the assignment yet. Silences need to be addressed. In some cases silence is acceptable, but in others it can be considered rude. Student participants need to be made aware of when silence is acceptable. Humor does not cross all barriers. Some jokes may be offensive or simply not understood (Tamrakar 2008, p 70-72).

Once the guidelines are set, there are a couple stages of communication that can be noted. Tamrakar lists two stages for the shared community: ethnocentric and ethnorelative. He breaks both phases down further and defines the breakdown. According to Tamrakar the ethnocentric phase has three parts: denial, defense, and minimization. He breaks the ethnorelative phase down into acceptance, adaptation, and integration (Tamrakar 2008, p 73-75).

Tudini's study showed that negotiation can help prevent failed communication. Interestingly enough, the online students fared better than the on campus students at their rate of negotiation. "This benefit is evident in the off-campus students' enthusiasm for chat interaction as manifested in their linguistic production and initiation of negotiation sequences that were greater than those of the on-campus students" (Tudini 2007, p. 596.)

Although the studies I found that provided examples of contextualizing communication were based on language learning, I did see a correlation for my research. The student participants from both Mexico and the U.S. would be able to contextualize college education expectations and career/college goals for the other country based on the student responses. There are several reasons why the subject of college education was a focus. College education could be perceived as different for both countries, yet both student participants are in college. The

discussion would enable both student participants to contextualize the concept of college education and setting career/college goals in the other country, compared to their own.

Once the guidelines are established and the communication has a contextual setting, then groups could be formed. Originally we were planning to split the discussion up in groups, thinking that they would open up better in the discussion board. We realized quickly that groups were not more beneficial. Students were utilizing the main discussion board, although we had a separate discussion board setup for the introductions. Students were so new to using the tool that they seemed to participate better when left to discuss in the main discussion board.

Group work though can be beneficial and we will look to Gunawardena's study in the future to see how we can possibly create groups in future discussions. Gunawardena's study found that group participation was affected by: language, power distance, gender differences, collectivists vs. individualist tendencies, conflict, social presence, time frame, and technical skills (Gunawardena, 2001 p 3). For our study, time frame and technical skills were the biggest impact on group forming. Students in Central Mexico met with their instructor weekly or biweekly during the exchange and were not able to walk through how to participate. Students in the Central U.S. were online students and thus did not walk through how to participate, but learned through video and through email assistance with the instructor as needed.

A successful group can be identified and for my research, we considered all the students together as one group. Gunawardena explains what a successful group is. I used this definition to determine whether or not the two student bodies were a successful group. "Successful groups require open communication, mutual supportiveness, effective conflict management, discussion of strategy, and the appropriate weighing of individual inputs into group decisions (Gladstein 1989)" (Gunawardena, 2001 p 4).

Outside elements affect group work. Gunawardena is correct in that groups are affected by the following: ..."(a) group atmosphere, (b) the relationships that develop between group members, and (c) the communication system that is established. Analysing these three areas can explain what is happening in a group in terms of process (Robinson & Clifford 1974)" (Gunawardena 2001 p 4). I looked at this form of analysis while performing the data analysis on the discussion board interactions.

Even with established guidelines, a contextual communication setting, and designated groups, there is a risk of failed communication. Failed communication can take place in many ways. O'Dowd explains that "...the intended pedagogic and linguistic aims of online interaction are repeatedly missed, and projects may end in low levels of participation, indifference, tension between participants, or a negative evaluation of the partner group or their culture" (O'Dowd 1996, p. 1). Skutnaab-Kangas, & Phillipson define failed communication as "disruptive communication" (Skutnaab-Kangas, & Phillipson 1983, p. 43).

One issue that I saw already in the Central U.S. participants before the international discussion was a lack of participation in the course. This seemed to carry forward into the discussion as well, but the lack of participation was less in the international discussion than in the domestic discussions.

Student Reported Differences

After the interaction takes place, students report differences between their own cultural group and the group that they are interacting with. The following differences were reported by Gunawardena: the feeling of equality, the need for conflict, the lack of gestures, the feeling of being judged and judging others, the ability to provide sound responses. I wondered what differences might be reported in our study as it was conducted over a shorter period of time and possibly with the discussion being on a lighter subject matter. This however cannot be confirmed without data analysis.

Gunawardena provides a manner in which to categorize differences that are found between the groups. There are three main categories: physically concrete differences, socioeconomic differences, and socio-learned differences. I will be utilizing this method in the data analysis portion of this research.

Mexican participants reported feeling less judged and judgemental. "The Mexican participants also seemed to believe that too much social presence may be detrimental to the achievement of objectives. They said that when you can see someone, you judge them by what you can see. In the online environment you have to focus just on what the other people say and how they say it. A Mexican participant commented:

'I found a difference when I studied for my program in a traditional classroom and online and this difference is that in a sense the Internet or the online way becomes more democratic because we tend much to judge the person as we see them and in the Internet we give more value to what persons are contributing to the group'" (Gunawardena, 2001 p 19).

Mexican participants also reported feeling more comfortable with the online discussion because they had the ability to research their responses before posting for all to see, thereby allowing them the feeling of equality in the discussion and increased their feeling of preparedness. "Mexican participants think that asynchronous CMC has more advantages because participants have time to find research on which to base their answers: 'I think the asynchronous way has more advantages because you have more time to think through your ideas and reflect about them'. In the USA group, participants felt that each of the time frames had its advantages" (Gunawardena, 2001, p 19).

Mexican participants felt that conflict was unnecessary in discussions while U.S. participants felt that it was necessary. This could be a big issue in some discussions as it causing conflict could be seen as aggressive unwanted behavior while avoiding conflict could be seen as evasive and timid. If not watched carefully, either side could be offended by the actions of the other participants.

"While USA participants observed that conflict is necessary to get opinions rolling, Mexican participants did not see open conflict as a necessary aspect of group work, since the tendency was to agree with and support other participant views. The focus groups conducted in Mexico showed that Mexican participants tend to avoid generating conflict online, giving more priority to the activities. In a collectivist culture, group conflict is tackled in an evasive rather than confrontational manner. In a collectivist society the person is less inner-directed, more controlled by the need to maintain face. The difference in the perception of 'conflict' in relation to group work may account for the difference observed in reliability of the Storming scale. Therefore, we need to examine further the construct validity of the concept of 'conflict' in the two cultures" (Gunawardena, 2001 p 34).

Mexican participants felt that online discussions equalized the status quo while U.S. participants wondered if they were understood without visual gestures. Empowering both groups to feel confidence in their connecting skills is critical for the participants to feel understood and to feel that they are communicating well with the other group. "For the Mexican participants the medium of CMC equalised status differences, while USA participants were concerned that the lack of nonverbal cues led to misunderstanding (Gunawardena, 2001 p 35).

Additionally Gunawardena provides a method of categorizing differences found in groups. Three categories are broken down further into attributes. First detectable differences are separated from undetectable differences, which are then broken down into 2 categories. Of these two undetectable differences, I would say that the first category is realistically attributes learned by sharing a common society while the second category is acquired through the social status of the person and their family.

"The model (used) differentiates between two sources of cultural differences - readily detectable attributes and underlying attributes. Readily detectable attributes are those which can be easily recognised in a person, such as age, gender, or national/ethnic origin. Underlying attributes are divided into two categories. The first category, Underlying Attributes I, represents cultural values, perspectives, attitudes, values and beliefs, and conflict resolution styles, which are closely correlated with readily detectable attributes. Shaw and Barrett-Power note that Hofstede (1980) and others have shown that nationality and ethnic origin are significantly related to cultural values and perspectives. The second group of attributes, Underlying Attributes II, includes socioeconomic and personal status, education, functional specialisation, human capital assets, past work experiences, and personal expectations. These attributes are less strongly connected to nationality/ethnic origin, age, or gender of work group members. Shaw and Barrett-Power used Tuckman's (1965) model to explain the process of group functioning (Gunawardena, 2001 p 5).

The student feedback was very interesting in the Gunawardena study. I was looking forward to seeing the student feedback in the survey and in the reflection papers. I hoped to see the quality of feedback that Gunawardena received, regardless of the opinions provided.

Ware and Kramsch provided another excellent study to show the differences between the student participants. Although their study focused on language learning, their study involved online discussions with a requirement for the students to post at least two times a week. The online discussion format was very similar to our study and their study did such a good job of showing the differences in students, that I hoped to show student differences in a similar method (Ware and Kramsch 2005).

Quality of literature

The articles that I found were peer reviewed and/or published in scholarly journals. All the sources are accessible electronically and provided tables and graphs with data from their studies as well as student participation examples. Two of the articles were recommended by the instructor of the research course, thus why I strongly trust these resources. In general there were between 10-50 participants in the studies I found in the literature, which is also where my research falls into.

The most recent study I included in my literature research was from 2010. The oldest article is from 1983. Although it may seem too old to use, I found it interesting as it seems more of the initial stages of connecting students virtually.

Although most of the literature reviews were based on qualitative research, there were a few based on quantitative research. Many of the articles provided methods of how to evaluate their research. Additionally they provided tables and examples of their research, enabling me to utilize some of these defined methods of research to analyze my data.

Gap in literature

There seems to be a gap in the literature reviews. What if I'm not teaching a language course or trying to improve speaking, but I still want to connect my students? Although Tamrakar explained that intercultural competence is in many fields, little of the literature is written by instructors who teach something other than a foreign language. Tamrakar saw a gap as well, for he stated: "much research still needs to be done in this field (eLearning)" (Tamrakar 2008, p. 69).

This I feel is exactly why my research was needed. I felt that making these international connections for the benefit of increasing intercultural competence can be done in other subjects than just language. For example, what if a course on Advanced Academic Achievement connected with a course on Community Based Learning, would there be an educational benefit to the connection? They would get the viewpoint of a foreign country and receive the benefit of understanding the learning process in another country.

Summary of literature review

The literature review has provided me with clear definitions and examples of intercultural competency. Additionally, the literature provided me with methods on how to evaluate intercultural competency in the online discussion. Additionally, I found student reported opinions in some of the studies which will enable me to compare somewhat with the student feedback we receive in this study.

A concern that I found is failed or disruptive communication. Such communication can take place and I seek to avoid such issues in my study. Although the literature explained that failed communication takes place, there was little reference on how to prevent it or eliminate it once it takes place. This seems to be a potential struggle as the students will be interacting through discussion, or communicating online.

Through my literature review, I found that there were little international connections in other fields. Although I did find a gap in literature, I felt that it shows that my research is needed as research on intercultural competence is typically performed to increase the language learning abilities of one's students. It is still fairly new in other subjects, such as introduction to college.

The literature provides hope for future studies, such as my own as well as future research that I may be able to perform involving connecting students through other media than online discussions. Based on the literature I found, I hope to continue my current research to evaluate trends. Furthermore, I hoped to find other research topics that I may perform under intercultural competency and connecting students virtually.

Data Collection

In the following section, you will find information on how the data was created, what methods were utilized to retrieve the data, what was found in the data, the reliability and validity of the data retrieved, a comparison between the data results and the literature review, the limitations of the data retrieved, and a data collection summary.

Background

The goal of this research project was to virtually connect students with their international peers in order to increase their intercultural competence. This was done by connecting students from a community college in the Midwestern U.S. and students at a university in Central Mexico. In order to achieve this goal, both student bodies participated in an online discussion, to complete a reflection paper, and they were asked to complete an optional survey with the following questions both before and after the study:

The supporting research questions are:

- What educational similarities and differences, between themselves and their peers, do students report after the international virtual interaction?

- What do the students suggest are the benefits of community based learning?
- How do students feel towards diversity after virtually working with their international peers?

The data was collected through Google Docs forms, Edmodo discussion board, and the Desire2Learn dropbox. The data collected for this research was created by the student participants in the study. The data referenced in this data is anonymous and is only included if the student provided their consent through a consent form. The student provided opinions via short answers in a survey. They were asked to complete a reflection paper with their opinion on the experience. The discussion was their opinion, thoughts, and literature comparisons on the readings.

Data Analysis Methods

The Pre-discussion survey and post-discussion survey provided mostly quantitative data and the data was easy to retrieve with the use of the Google Docs Form and Google Docs Survey Data Charts. I pulled these charts for the data and considered what possibly caused the responses. In order to find possible causes of the responses, I compared the responses to the discussion board comments and the survey comments to find common themes.

The reflection paper and discussion provided qualitative data, in addition to a few questions from the surveys. Nine students consented to us using their discussion posts as data in our research (two students responded twice). Only one student consented to us using their paper as data in our research. Before the discussions opened we provided the students with a test area to get used to Edmodo. Only 2 Midwest U.S. students participated and only 1 Central Mexico student participated in the test discussion.

I analyzed the discussion board by using Liaw's method of analyzation through a table (Liaw, 2006). Additionally, I pulled the reading level of the discussion board to find out where our students were. This will be great information for future discussions. Also, I listed what the students actually reported or commented on in comparison to their peers. I summarized common themes found for the survey questions and common themes found in the discussions as well as differences of opinions.

For the reflection paper, I listed what the student had written and also provided a reading level analysis of her paper and her first paper in my course. I sought to draw out her main points. She showed improvement in her writing, but this does not conclusively show that interacting with peers increased her writing skills.

Data Findings

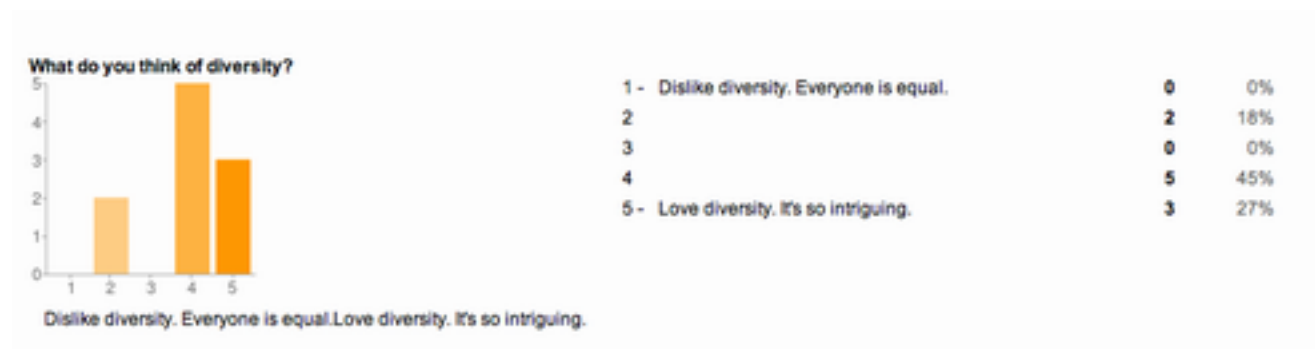
Before the discussions opened up, some students voluntarily completed the pre-discussion survey. Seven students responded to the optional survey: two from the U.S. and five from Mexico. Below you will find student reported expectations before the discussion took place.

Then you will find student reported feelings towards diversity, their opinions of diversity, reported feelings towards community learning, their opinions of community learning, globalization/student reported similarities, readability level, failed communication, co-constructing knowledge, contextualizing communication, student reported differences, reflection comparisons, and comparison to prior study in fall 2010.

Student expectations before the discussion

Before the discussion, students were asked what they thought of diversity. Most of them reported that they loved diversity, although 2 viewed diversity negatively. Below is a graph showing the results of the question.

Thoughts on diversity pre-discussion:



The first question was about how the students felt towards diversity before virtually working with their international peers. The comments in general were favorable anticipation for the discussion. Two U.S. students responded to the question about diversity before the discussion. Although diversity was deemed valuable, one student noted that it could “cause problems”. The other student seemed to be looking forward to the project as they love “getting to experience new cultures and traditions and meeting/ making friends from different places.”

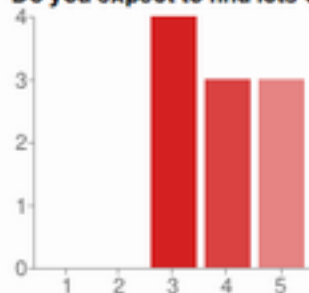
The students in Central Mexico expressed interest in learning about other and interacting with their international peers, although there was some apprehension to meeting others which was really a hesitance of the unknown. Some of the comments that were made showed interest in interacting with their peers, such as the following comment: "I feel very excited about this diversity, I think it is very important for the society and life so we can learn from each other...". The comment that I found most interesting is: "I do not know what to expect because I know how my classmates and friends in my country thinks and I think people from other countries do not have the same ideas and I am scare(d) because they may believe something wrong of us. AT the same time I so exciting. I want to make many new friends". This comment showed the enthusiasm of making connections, but also a concern for personal feelings.

Virtually Connecting Peers and Intercultural Competency

The next question was about the differences between the two student groups. Before the discussion, the students expected to see more differences between themselves and their peers. Below is the chart with the results of the question.

Expected differences pre-discussion:

Do you expect to find lots of differences?



No. We are all basically the same. Yes. We live in different countries.

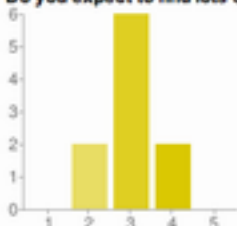
1 -No. We are all basically the same.	0	0%
2	0	0%
3	4	36%
4	3	27%
5 -Yes. We live in different countries.	3	27%

Before the discussion, students were asked what sort of differences might they expect to see between themselves and their peers. The students reported that they were not sure what to expect. One U.S. student thought there may be age differences, while another U.S. student expected to see differences between political views, traditions, languages, personal values, and personal background. Students from Mexico expected to see customs, idiosyncrasy, cultural, background, education would be different. One student from Mexico mentioned that they believed their "economical background is different so our e(x)periences in life are very different". Another student made a wonderful statement that "there are many different things we can find but also many similarities. (from natural habits of daily life, to different experiences in our academic life)".

Students were asked if they expected to find similarities. Most responded neutrally to the question, as if they were uncertain what to expect. Below are the results of the question.

Expected similarities pre-discussion:

Do you expect to find lots of similarities?



No. We live in different countries. Yes. We are all basically the same.

1 - No. We live in different countries.	0	0%
2	2	18%
3	6	55%
4	2	18%
5 - Yes. We are all basically the same.	0	0%

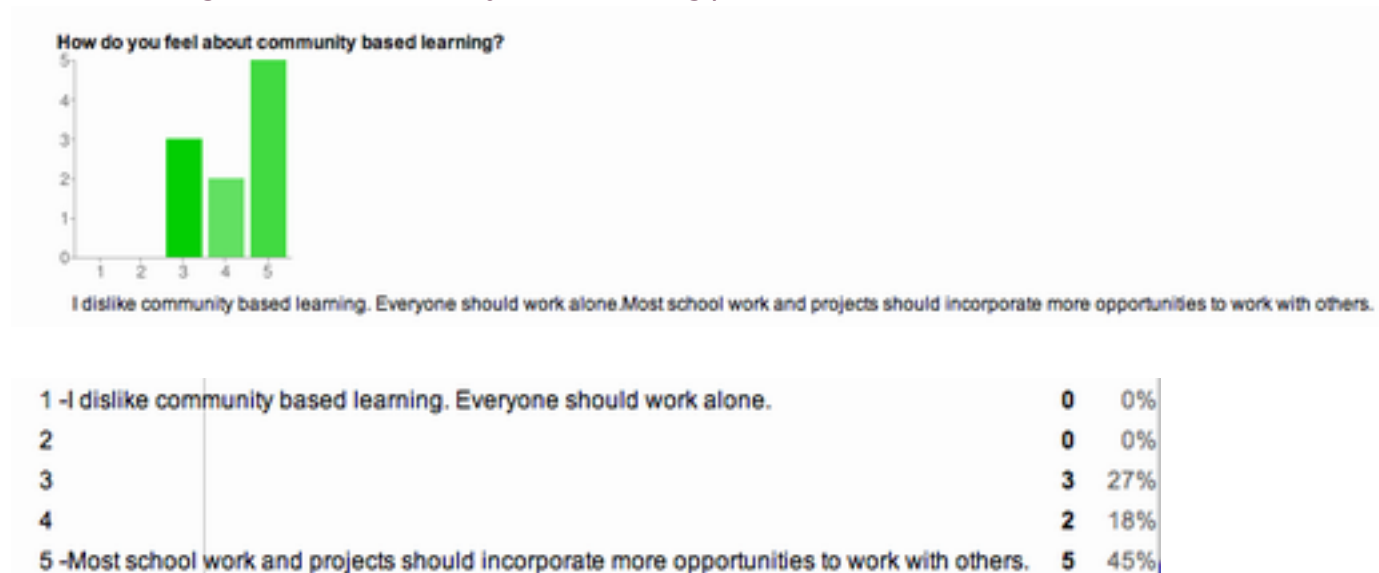
Students didn't know what to expect for similarities. Both student groups thought they might see similar goals. One student thought that the student bodies may have similar ideas about diversity and communities. In fact, one student from Mexico said: "I think that some similarities is that we have a goal in the life, maybe finish (omitted extra "i") our major and

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become better people that can help our society". A student from Mexico suggested that the students do have similarities with education. Another student from Mexico thought there might be music differences. One U.S. student perceived that the student groups were similar with a different language. A student from Mexico said : "I really believe that most of the students will agree that we're having good experiences that will last for the rest of our lives".

Students appeared to feel positively towards community based learning even before the discussion took place. No one selected that they disliked community learning. Below are the results of the question.

Student feelings towards community based learning pre-discussion:



Next, students were asked what they know about community based learning. The students from the U.S. and one student from Mexico knew little about community based learning, but were looking forward to knowing more. One student from Mexico explained that community learning is: "...is an approach of learning that help students to work together with the community in order to solve a problem. students will put into practice the knowledge they received in the school so their learning would be more significant". Another student from Mexico described community based learning as: "a project with the purpose that we as students could help our community but with the knowledge that we acquire in school, it help that all that you learn be a meaningful learning and the most important that benefit your community".

The students were asked what outcomes they expected to find from virtually connecting with your international students in an educational setting and what they found afterwards. Students from both groups were looking forward to interacting, meeting new people, and learning about the other culture.

One student from the U.S. was looking to see what life was like in Mexico. Another student from the U.S. was hoping to see the differences in teaching styles and the way students learn

in different countries. Finally, a student from the U.S. said: "I expect to be able to become more open minded and see the world through my international peers eyes as well as my own and vice versa for them. Then we could come to understand the world around us and how it works in other countries".

Students from Mexico were also looking forward to the experience. One student mentioned that they foresaw an opportunity of envisioning a new career for themselves. Another student was hoping to find similarities and that the U.S. students would see more similarities than differences between the student groups. The students in Mexico also expressed the desire to become more intercultural.

Student feelings toward and thoughts on diversity

After the discussion, students were again asked about their feelings on diversity on an optional survey. Six students responded: three U.S. students and three students from Mexico. The responses were again in general expressing appreciation for the experience, but there was one U.S. student that felt negatively towards diversity. Few differences were noted by the students.

A U.S. student was grateful for the experience and said in the post - discussion survey: "...I am thankful for the opportunity to do these discussions. It has reminded me of the value of my fellow human being". Another U.S. student also said that they enjoyed the discussion: "I feel great its a great experience that we should learn from, i believe everyone should get to know people from different cultures and really should get the time to know each other and learn from each other".

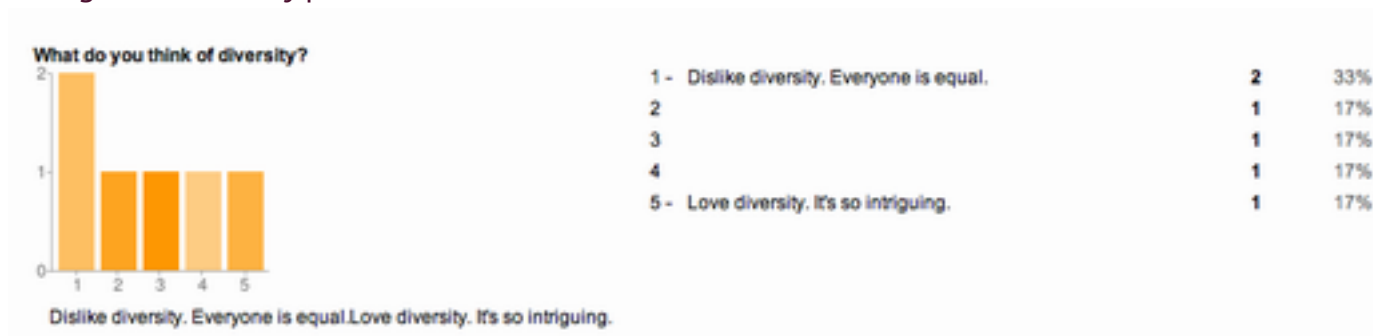
The three students from Mexico expressed that they valued the experience. They also explained that they saw little differences between their culture and the U.S. culture. One student reported that they learned from the discussion: "Now, I know more about certain cultures and languages". Another student said that they felt "happy to be in college and to have the opportunity to share my ideas and experiences with people from other countries". One student summed up their experience nicely: "I realize that there are not many differences, among (Central Mexico) and (Midwestern U.S.) Students, probably because the countries are not really far. However it is very interesting knowing new people though our thoughts are sim(omitted m)ilar, we have different ways to express them".

Only one student had a negative perspective on diversity. This student participated less in the discussion than their peers. In fact, they did not respond to other students. After the discussion assignment, the student commented on the post-discussion survey: "I have always known about diversity and never liked it, after working with international peers I still feel the same".

After the discussion, students were asked what they thought of diversity. The students showed a more negative response to their thoughts on diversity. Some of the students who responded to the post-discussion survey were not the same students who responded to the

pre-discussion survey. It is still surprising to see the more negative response to this particular question after the students expressed positive feelings to diversity in the post discussion. Students expressed that they saw little differences and I am wondering if “everyone is equal” is what the students focused on more in the response for the post-discussion which mirrors some of the responses to the feelings of diversity. In the future, the “Dislike Diversity. Everyone is equal.” option will be reworded to help separate out the difference between not liking diversity and feeling that there really are no differences.

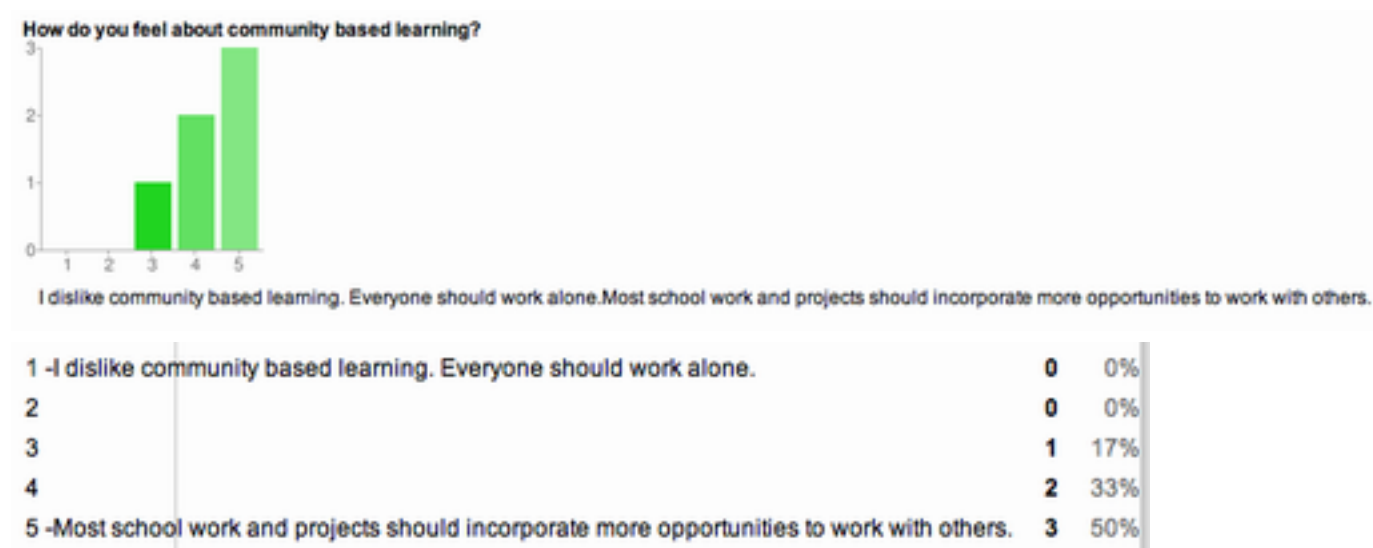
Thoughts on diversity post-discussion:



Student feelings toward and thoughts on community learning

The students reported that a stronger feeling towards community based learning after the discussion.

After the discussion:



After the experience, the students were more knowledgeable about community based learning. One of the U.S. students saw the benefit of working with others although physically separated from them. Another U.S. student found the experience to be socially stimulating. Students from Mexico found community based learning to be rewarding. One student commented that: “It implies a lot of hard work but at the same time it gives us a lot of satisfaction a feeling of proud, we realize that we can do something in order to change the

life of some people and although we are still very young we can do big things". Another student from Mexico said: "It is much more interesting than the traditional classes, it makes you a living part of the project instead of just getting theory".

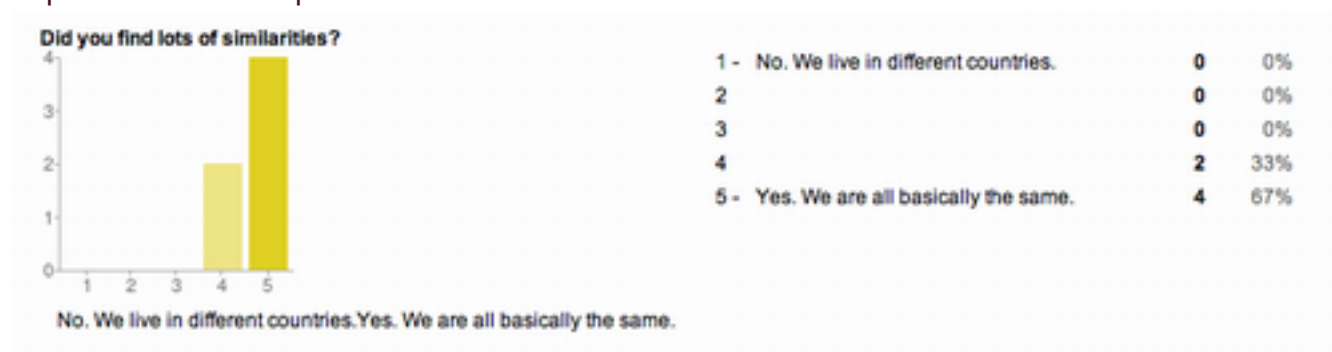
Intercultural competence

After the discussion, students reported feeling more comfortable with interacting with other cultures. One U.S. student said: "I fear the cultural differences less, and I am less concerned about communication barriers. I have less fear of the unknown you might say". A student from Mexico echoed the idea that communication became easier: "It made me comfortable to ask questions and made me more social in school too by talking to more people". Another student from Mexico noted how polite and respectful the students were towards one another.

Globalization / Student reported similarities

They reported more similarities after the discussion.

Reported similarities post-discussion:



Students reported after the experience that their student groups were very similar. Some of the reported similarities were: "that all of us are studying, making friends, knowing each other. Share our working at school. Discuss(s)ing about our projects" and "we have same thoughts, perspectives, and interests about helping the community (omitted extra space)". One student from the U.S. found that they had similar perspectives on issues. Another U.S. student said: "The similarit(i)es I found between myself and my peers are that we want to do something with our li(v)es and want to help people and make a difference". A student from Mexico said that: "We are in college because we have goals, because we want to be better people, we wa(n)t to help our communities and also because we want (t)o (r)evolve as people we want to have a better society and a better world if it is possible".

Readability Level

Below is the readability level of the discussion as ranked by "Test Document Readability", showing that the level necessary to understand the discussion was reading level of almost 11th grade in a U.S. high school, according to the Gunning Fog index, although other index levels ranked the discussion at a lower reading level. I ran this, not because of the students in Mexico, but rather my students who were taking my course to improve their writing skills.

The students initially had lower levels at the start of the course.

<i>Indication of the number of years of formal education that a person requires in order to easily understand the text on the first reading</i>	
Gunning Fog index :	10.45

<i>Approximate representation of the U.S. grade level needed to comprehend the text :</i>		
Coleman Liau index :	9.96	
Flesch Kincaid Grade level :	8.32	
ARI (Automated Readability Index) :	7.32	
SMOG :	10.59	

Failed Communication, Co-Constructing Knowledge and Contextualizing Communication

In the introductions discussion, students met superficially and did not have a lot of time or opportunity to really get to know one another better. Some of the students asked other students questions, but their questions were left unanswered. This may have been due to time or the lack of understanding of how Edmodo works. Both student groups had times where they did not respond to one another.

The discussion overall was rewarding and enabled the students to interact with their international peers. The students discussed two subjects: human rights and discrimination and the roles of people on campus and how that affects their education.

A student from Mexico identified teachers and peers as friends and advisors who support them through school. Another student from Mexico noted that the variety of personalities on campus enables students to learn how to treat others equally and to learn to be open to other ideas. Yet another student from Mexico noted that college is where you can open your world and look past what you learned initially to allow growth of new relationships. A U.S. student agreed with the other students and said that: "meeting and interacting with different people can help us build better relationships".

One U.S. student wrote that people here in the U.S. struggle financially, yet that people living in the U.S. often feel entitled to certain basic rights. One student from Mexico viewed that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights showed that humans should treat each other as brothers and they explained that this is not done, but should be. Another student from Mexico commented that human nature involves competition and therefore hinders the brother like treatment of mankind. When talking about discrimination, students from Mexico noted that we are all part of the human race and that we are all equal, yet unfortunately not everyone chooses to understand these basic human rights. One student from Mexico quoted Benito Juárez: "Respect for the rights of others is peace".

A U.S. student remarked that "...There is a large gap in America between the well-to-do and the not so well-to-do. The not so well-to-do are often treated as second rate humans simply because we do not have the access to the same resources...". A student from Mexico commented on how the citizens of the U.S. seem to have become more discriminatory towards immigrants in the past few years.

A student from Mexico spoke of the skin color and how the color of your skin "give(s) you personality". Once the skin color was mentioned, another student brought up the subject of sexual preference and how Mexico has "Machismo". The student stated that " Even us when we use words to insult someone making reference that he or she do not act like the society demand indicate that we are being sexist". A student from the U.S. compared sexual discrimination in the U.S. and how it can even be the opposite: "Often gays and lesbians themselves are guilty of discriminating against people that are straight in America. It just does not seem to matter anymore. Its like if one persons is different from another in any way there is discrimination".

Overall in the discussion, students showed more similarities than differences in their opinions and in their stories. Their feelings towards diversity were in general positive about diversity and negative about discrimination. Students also showed a tendency towards appreciating community learning where they can learn from their peers. The discussion ended well with one student writing: "...Likely we could carry this discussion for the span of our lifetimes, and we should...".

Student Reported Differences

In general, the findings from the surveys showed that the students saw more similarities than differences between them. The differences were thought to be economical and background, not educational goals or levels. Similarities were in educational goals, career plans, and opinions. The reported benefits of community based learning were an increase in awareness of the other culture, an openness in communication, and maintaining cordiality. Students expressed strong feelings towards diversity in general, except one U.S. student who showed negative feelings both before and after the discussion.

After the discussion, the students reported that they found few differences. No one chose the option of having found many differences. Below are the results of the question.

Reported Differences post-discussion:



After the discussion, students reported fewer differences. One student from Mexico noted that the students in the U.S. were more expressive of their feelings and ideas than the students from Mexico. As one student mentioned from Mexico, the students from both groups were in school for different degrees, but the students had similar thoughts.

One U.S. student noted that there is a major difference in the desire to learn languages. "They learn more than just their national language. Second, third even fourth and fifth languages are more important (omitted extra "i") than we realize here in the US". Following up on the subject of language, one U.S. student said: "I found no difference they spoke English and were well informed of what they were talking about". Another student in the U.S. explained that it is easier to "get into school and have or find help (in school)".

The student who consented to release their reflection paper reported having "learned many new things from the students in (Central Mexico), and from my own peers in my community." The student explained that she felt more similarities than differences: "Many of them have the same feeling as I do in Diversity, we believe that it happens to everyone no matter what race they are and sadly people allow that to happen. I also agreed with them when they said that we should all be equally treated and judged, how we should all be treated with respect." The student was surprised by how well their peers responded in the discussion. The student wished there was more time for the project to enable the students to interact more and get to know one another better. The student liked the experience overall and was grateful for the opportunity.

Reflection paper comparison

Unfortunately, only one student consented to us using the data from her paper. This student was in the U.S. The students in Mexico did not consent to the release of their data, nor did the other students in the U.S. Additionally, the students from the other section of the course did not consent to the release of the information in their paper. For the students that participated in the discussion, this seemed to be because there were too many things happening all at once in the discussion and there were too many consent forms in such a short time. If we extend the time frame for the study, it is likely that we will have more consent forms completed. The students in the U.S. course not participating didn't understand the interaction or any reason why they should consent since they were not a part of the

interaction nor did they see the discussion.

This study compared to prior discussion in Fall 2010

When compared to the prior discussion exchange back in 2009, the discussion this year was more productive and the students reported having a better experience. Only one U.S. student reported negative feelings towards diversity this time and that student reported hesitant feelings before the discussion took place.

In 2009, students from Mexico reported a better experience than those in the U.S. The U.S. students reported having an “adequate” experience, while the students in Mexico reported having a good - excellent experience. When asked if the student would participate in another interaction, students from the U.S. were less likely to participate again than the students from Mexico.

Students suggested using a different media for the interaction so that they could more easily identify who was writing comments. Google Wave did not easily identify the writer because it allowed the user to select any name, including numbers. This was one of the main drives to use Edmodo as it allowed the students to interact more like Facebook, a media that many students are familiar with and one that was suggested by a student in the discussion project back in 2009.

In 2009 one student suggested breaking up the student bodies into smaller groups so that the discussion was more organized. This was a strong consideration for us for this discussion, but we found immediately that our classes were different than back in 2009. The students in the courses this year interacted less and needed the robust discussion with all of the other students.

In 2009, students reported having a good understanding of how to participate in the discussion and having enough time to complete the discussion. The students were given two weeks to discuss their topic. Students reported a good response time to any issues they found with the discussion. The students found the discussion objective, articles, and cases to be good, but the students from the U.S. reported that the responses from their peers were lower than what they expected. In general students reported that the media selected was manageable for them to participate successfully in the discussion.

Reliability and Validity

Not only the perspectives of both student bodies were heard in the data collection, but also those with negative opinions of diversity. The student opinion were treated equally in this data findings report and represent the *diverse case analysis* as described by Stringer (Stringer, 2007). In order to use *triangulation*, I compared the discussion survey responses from this discussion exchange to that of the exchange back in 2009. Additionally, I compared my findings to other studies through the literature review.(Stringer, 2007).

Unfortunately I ran out of time to create a blog to observe the discussion. The instructor in Central Mexico and I did correspond via email about the discussion and we met via Skype to converse about the discussion and its progress. We made a list of things that we felt needed to be changed based on our observations in the emails and through Skype. The list we created has been provided in "Lessons Learned" in this paper. The use of email, Skype, and the creation of the "Lessons Learned" section show a *persistent observation* of the discussion (Stringer, 2007). Through the "Lessons Learned" section, I have created data that is *transferable* for future studies and interactions with international peers (Stringer, 2007).

Throughout the research project, both instructors interacting with the students had access to the data at all times, along with the literature review information. Additionally, the research project was shared in a graduate research course in the Midwestern U.S. (the course that the instructor from the U.S. was taking during this semester). All of the data collected resides in Google Documents with easy access for both instructors as Editors. The surveys are in Google Documents, as is the draft of this research document. Although the instructor in Mexico is not writing or editing the research document, she does have access to read the document and add comments to the document if she chooses. This easy access to the data provides for *confirmability* in that the instructors can comment on the data that is found and easily obtain information about the research project at any time (Stringer, 2007).

Comparison of Research to the Literature Review

According to Liaw's study, a table showing the levels of intercultural competence provides the data from the discussion and compares the data to the definition of intercultural competence (Liaw, 2006). Below is the table modified to fit my research:

<i>Category</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Example from students' writing</i>
<i>A. Showing an interest in the other culture</i>	<i>- I am interested ...</i>	<i>"I find it very interesting that you want to teach English to children. Do the children in your country often learn English as a second language? Is it required?" - U.S. Student to student in Mexico</i>

<i>B. Ability to see the value in other opinions</i>	<i>- I appreciate...</i>	<i>"I'm glad you really appreciate the opportunity of studying and becoming a better person. I know it can be difficult to choose what you want for your career but just try to find and do what you love! and if you make a mistake, don't worry we all make them, just learn from it and start once " - Student from Mexico to U.S. student</i>
<i>C. Showing knowledge of one's culture and another's culture</i>	<i>- Here is what I know...</i>	<i>"...you are correct. It is sadly a very common Social problem. There is a large gap in America between the well-to-do and the not so well-to-do. The not so well-to-do are often treated as second rate humans simply because we do not have the access to the same resources and the wealthy in this country" - U.S. student to student in Mexico</i>
<i>D. Understanding the process of communicating with those from other cultures</i>	<i>- Showing how to communicate</i>	<i>"Respect for the rights of others is peace" (Benito Juárez) We ,as the new generation of college students, have to put enfacise in the equality because it represents our values as Students." - Student in Mexico</i>

We utilized a discussion board for our interaction. Marchis, Ciascai, & Saial show various collaboration methods in their study and it would be nice to try to utilize some of those methods for future studies (Marchis, Ciascai, & Saial, 2008). I'm wondering if different methods might enable the students to interact more and build relationships with their peers.

Student reported a willingness to listen to the other student body, but they reported more similarities than differences between the cultures. There seemed little need for negotiation. According to the Griffith and Harvey model of communication, the students appeared to have

shown a cultural understanding of their own culture and they communicated that to the other student body so that the other student body also understood the culture (Griffith & Harvey, 2001). This discussion provided for an interaction of cultures through communication.

The communication guidelines were adhered to and provided for a pleasant communicative experience for all. The students contextualized both subjects and provided real life examples. I was not able to note any stages of shared community as Tamrakar describes. I believe this may have been due to the subject matter or the timeline of the discussion.

We did experience some failed communication, not in a lack of understanding, but rather in participation. Ware and Kramsch required their students to post at least two times a week (Ware & Kramsch, 2005). We required our students to post at least once and to respond to two other students. We found that the students did not always follow the guidelines. Some posted less or did not participate. What I did find was that the U.S. students participated in the discussion more than they participated in their internal discussions in the U.S. during the other weeks apart from their international peers.

Gunawardena lists what is necessary for a group to interact: atmosphere, relationship building, and a system of communication (Gunawardena, 2001). Edmodo enabled the students to communicate effectively, but it did take a little longer for the students to learn Edmodo than expected. Students did not build relationships as anticipated due to a lack of time. This may have affected how the students participated or possibly lacked participation. Given the students more time in the future may eliminate that issue.

Gunawardena explains there are two categories of groups: shared common society and social status. In our discussion, it seemed that we only delved into the shared common society and did not reach the social status level. Gunawardena also explains how a group is successful and according to the definition, I feel that our group was successful. The discussion showed open communication, support for other students, lacked conflict, and the students added to one another's comments (Gunawardena, 2001).

Gunawardena wrote about student reported differences between students in Mexico and the U.S. Some of those differences arose in my research. Students in my study from Mexico reported feeling equal in the discussions and having better communication. Students in the study performed by Gunawardena reported feeling equal, feeling that they could respond more soundly via writing while the same students noted that the U.S. students showed a need for conflict. The U.S. students in Gunawardena's study felt there was a lack of gestures (Gunawardena, 2001). I found it interesting that the students from Mexico in my study also reported better communication online and feeling more equal.

My research is unique in that my students are not learning a language and many of the students involved in the studies in the literature reviews are learning a language and thus the focus of their interaction with their peers is on improving their language skills. The focus on my research is on building the intercultural experience. The idea of the use of connecting

peers internationally is just starting to become alive for more subjects than just language learning. I seek to find ways to connect the students internationally in hopes that students will continue to connect and perhaps have other opportunities to connect in other courses.

Limitations

A major limitation of our study was a lack of student participation and a lack of student consent for the use of the data we received. Lengthening the time frame for the overall project may have allowed the students more time to respond to surveys and to participate in the project. Any future projects will be lengthened to help eliminate this limitation.

Additionally, I would like to continue this research in future years, so at the moment, this study is more of a pilot version of the future research. This coming fall, I will be teaching 3 sections and I would like to connect at least two of them to courses in Mexico and perhaps make one thing different in each course interaction. Ideally I would be working with the same instructor in Mexico for future connections and she has agreed to such connections.

There were many things that we want to change for future discussions as described in the “Lessons Learned” section of this paper. These are all also limitations to our current research. We found that if some things were changed, we would likely see a better outcome with more participation from the students and more connections between the students.

To find out more about what I would change if I could perform another research study or continue my research, see the section: “Lessons Learned” as it covers each limitations that we found in the study and what we considered to be viable solutions.

Summary

Overall students reported a better experience than the discussion interaction from 2009. Students in general reported positive feelings towards diversity and community based learning. Only one U.S. student reported negative feelings towards diversity, but they also reported hesitant feelings before the discussion. Most of the students expressed appreciation for the opportunity of the interaction or shared what they learned from the discussion. Many of the students wished that the discussion time was lengthened so that they could get to know their peers better.

Lessons Learned

Improving the connection between the student peers is a must for this study. By providing a video tour of both universities, the other group can better understand the other university and see where the students come from. Time was a major issue in this study. We found that the 2 weeks we allotted per discussion were not sufficient and that we should expand the

Virtually Connecting Peers and Intercultural Competency

timeline to 6 weeks or at least 1 month of online interaction. The shorter timeframe doesn't allow the students enough time to connect with their peers before the discussion.

Participation was up for the U.S. students, although not all students participated. Some of the students in Mexico did not participate either. We feel that opening the timeframe up more in future discussion would enable the students more time to participate and perhaps increase the rate of participation across both student groups. Deadlines were not met by either student body. Again, lengthening the time frame for the discussions should help solve this issue.

In order to increase participation, we are also extending the timeframe for the students to get started working with the tool. Some still didn't have accounts by the end of the discussion, so we'd like to lengthen the time frame so that the students have enough time to get into Edmodo and get started.

Scheduling the discussions to fit into the hybrid schedule would be ideal. The students in Mexico met the instructor once during the interaction and not all students were present in the instructional day. It would be best to find a time during the semester where the instructor met more with the students. For the U.S., the students need a start and end time close to or similar to their current schedule.

Students needed to be connected to the material more. First, the students need to understand the connection and review the materials more before interacting. By creating a stronger connection to the students and the materials, the discussions will likely be deeper. Another idea is to have the students discuss 2 questions on the article with their own class before discussing with their international peers. This will connect them with the article more and give them a deeper understanding of the article before conversing with their peers.

Communication rules need to be more established by announcing them more to the students. We found that several students asked questions to other students, yet their questions never received responses. This did not appear to be on purpose, but rather due to the lack of understanding of how to interact.

We noted that instructors should perhaps interact more in future discussions. Students seemed to like the interaction. Without the interaction of the instructors, the students seemed slightly lost. The discussion mode is online which if more independent than the students in Mexico (and even many of the students in the U.S.) were used to. Having the instructors interact more to show the students how to participate may improve the overall experience. In order to make the subject of diversity stick more with the students, I felt that I needed to incorporate this interaction into future assignments in the course to enable the students to see a purpose for the interaction more than just empowering them to connect to diversity.

Some students in Mexico had to pay for internet cafe. It would be ideal if we could find a grant to cover the cost for those students so that they could interact with their peers. We have not found a grant for this yet, but we are looking.

Rubrics are new to both instructors, yet both instructors greatly appreciated having the rubrics. They seemed to help guide the instructors for grading more as well as provide an example to the students. We did find that the students were new to rubrics as well and they needed a little more guidance on how rubrics work and what they can do to meet the goals of the assignments.

In the prior study back in 2010, one of the instructors often utilized a culture puzzle project to get her students to get to know one another and see one another's differences and likenesses. This might be a wonderful ice breaker for our students after initial introductions. It might also help unite the students more and prepare for the upcoming discussions. Such an interaction would enable the faculty or even the students themselves to select groups for the upcoming discussions.

Acknowledgements

This research was performed jointly by both the instructor in Central Mexico and in the Central U.S. The instructor in the U.S. was taking a research course and the professor for that research course provided guidance through the research process and research documentation, enabling this project to really take shape.

Notes

1 Student names were omitted in this paper to to preserve anonymity.

3 For more information on Edmodo, see the Edmodo web site (www.edmodo.com).


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Appendices

Appendix A - Survey before Virtual Connection



Virtually Connecting Peers & Intercultural Competency Survey

The following questions are meant to gather your opinion about diversity, connecting with international peers, and community based learning. Your response is anonymous and will aid research about community based learning and virtually connecting peers to create intercultural competency.

Which role do you have in the discussion?

☐ I am a student from Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (BUAP).

☐ I am a student from Community College of Denver (CCD).

What do you think of diversity?

1 2 3 4 5

Dislike diversity. Everyone is equal. Love diversity. It's so intriguing.

How do you feel towards diversity before virtually working with your international peers?

Do you expect to find lots of differences?

1 2 3 4 5

No. We are all basically the same. Yes. We live in different countries.

Virtually Connecting Peers and Intercultural Competency

If you expect to see differences, what might you expect to see between you and your international peers?

Do you expect to find lots of similarities?

1 2 3 4 5

No. We live in different countries. Yes. We are all basically the same.

If you expect to see similarities, what might you expect to see between you and your international peers?

How do you feel about community based learning?

1 2 3 4 5

I dislike community based learning. Everyone should work alone. I love community based learning. Most school work and projects should incorporate community based learning.

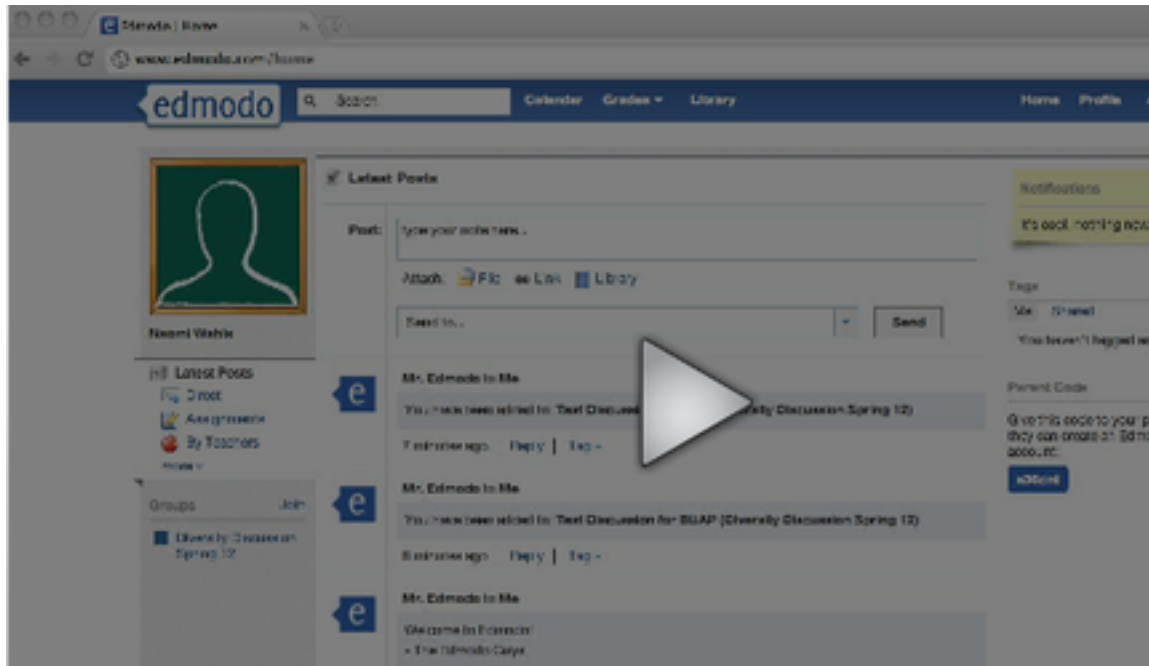
What do you know about community based learning?

What are outcomes do you expect to find from virtually connecting with your international students in an educational setting?

Submit

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/viewform?formkey=dG1QRnpuZ1FlVVbtTHF6LWJUTGMtSmc6MQ#gid=0>

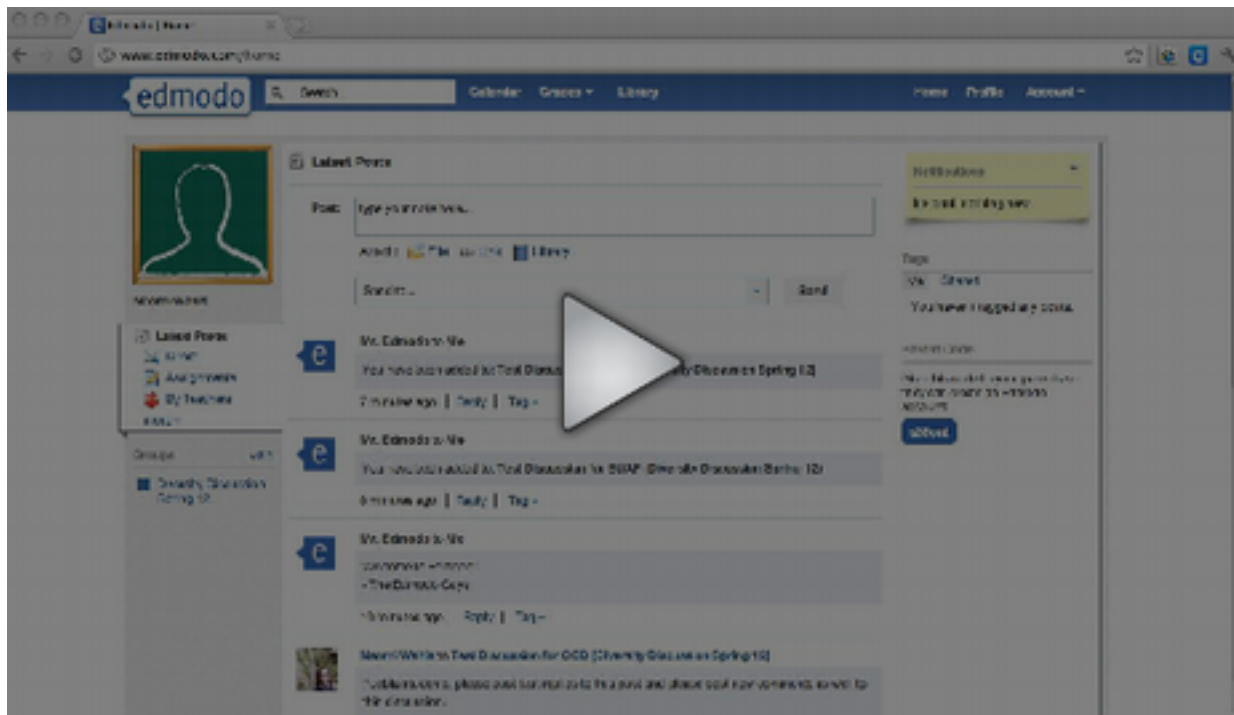
Appendix B - Video on how to get Edmodo account setup



<http://www.screencast.com/t/KfefVgij>


Appendix C - How to reply in Edmodo

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<http://www.screencast.com/t/d6ZrfhxmlOvd>

Appendix D - Consent form for use if discussion data



Consent form to use data from discussions and ensure student privacy

We are conducting an action research project on virtually connecting peers and intercultural competency and on community based learning. This research is also meeting the requirements for one of the graduate courses in which instructor Naomi is enrolled. This course and research will help Naomi to refine her practice while helping the students to connect with their international peers to ideally increase intercultural competency and to explore the opinions of community based learning.

Data from discussions will be analyzed. Student participation in the discussion in Edmodo will remain anonymous. Please respond below to show if you would allow the data from the discussion to be used in research while also protecting your privacy.

Thank you for your time.

* Required

Please provide your name. *

Do you choose to allow your discussion posts to be used in research? *

☐ My discussion posts and replies in Edmodo may be used in research. (You will remain anonymous.)

☐ My discussion posts and replies may not be used in research.

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/viewform?formkey=dGNUaGplczdlUnlTWEJfOHA3V0tJQ0E6MQ#gid=0>

Appendix E - Textbook

Baldwin, Amy. (2012). Cultivating relationships and understanding diversity. *The Community College Experience Brief*. 3rd edition. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

https://docs.google.com/open?id=0B_tzQvTRTg9BMDU5ZWY5YjktNWl3Zi00OGM4LTkxMjltNTM0YmlwMzYyMDIx

Appendix F - Community Learning Article

Article 1: All human beings are free and equal in dignity and rights

[Read this article in full](#)

Case Study: DISCRIMINATION BASED ON DESCENT IN INDIA

- In much of Asia and parts of Africa, distinct groups suffer from discrimination which is based on their descent.
- India has a total population of 1 billion people. Caste discrimination in India affects the largest number of people because 16% of the population - 160 million people - are at the bottom of the cast hierarchy.
- Despite formal protections in law societal norms continue to pose challenges to change.

Context

Caste is determined by one's birth into a particular social group. It is based on descent and is hereditary in nature.

In much of Asia and parts of Africa, caste is the basis of discrimination and exclusion of distinct groups.

Over 250 million people worldwide suffer from this form of discrimination which is an obstacle to the fulfilment of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

Communities affected by caste include the Dalits in India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, as well as the Buraku people of Japan, the Osu of Nigeria's Igbo people, and certain groups in Senegal and Mauritania.

Background in India

In India, the nearly 3,000 years old caste system is imbedded in the Hindi religious culture.

Indian society was originally divided by categories of work or varna. This system developed into more complicated divisions of society - castes.

Dalits, formerly known as 'untouchables', are viewed by many as separate from or below the caste system. Despite attempts during the last 100 years to break down caste barriers, the caste system is still a dominating feature of Indian society.

Legal Framework

Under the Indian Constitution, discrimination on the basis of caste is illegal.

In 1989 the Indian government enacted legislation to combat discrimination based on caste when it passed the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

Virtually Connecting Peers and Intercultural Competency

The government has also enacted legislation which provides quotas for people from low castes in politics and government jobs.

The Indian Constitution reserves a proportional number of seats in both Union and State assemblies for Scheduled Castes. Despite these formal legal protections, in many areas, Dalits are either unaware of their legal rights or don't have the resources to seek redress, thus discriminatory treatment continues.

In India, Dalits, now known by the Indian government as Scheduled Castes, make up 16% of India's population.

India's Poorest

Status as a Dalit affects every dimension of an individual's life. Dalits are among the poorest of Indians.

Their status is frequently the basis for violence, including land encroachment, murders, attacks, rapes and arson.

They suffer from wage discrimination, infringement of the right to vote and run for elections, discrimination in schools, disproportionately high drop out rates and levels of illiteracy, dehumanising living and working conditions, impoverishment and malnourishment.

They generally do not own land and are often relegated to separate villages or neighbourhoods and to low paying and undesirable occupations such as street sweeping and removing human waste and dead animals.

They are often not allowed to use the same wells or attend the same temples as higher-castes.

Dalit women are affected by the burden of both caste and gender and even farther removed from legal protections.

Dalit Voices

In Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state, the Dalits have a strong political presence and parties representing their interests are central to forming the state government.

In May 2002, the leader of the low-caste dominated Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), Mayawati Kumari, was sworn in as the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh.

According to BBC's Ram Dutt Tripathi, for the first forty years of elected governments in Uttar Pradesh, every single chief minister belonged to upper caste communities.

He said, "It was only in 1977, with the election of a lower-caste chief minister, that these [Dalit] communities were able to see a link between power and decisions that directly benefited them."

One Dalit voter in Uttar Pradesh claimed, "What we want is izzat" (dignity in Hindi). Now Ms Mayawati struggles to reconcile Dalit demands with those of the broader population.

Equality Movement

Dalit movements have been fighting casteism since the 1920s.

Today the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights, a movement led by Dalit human rights activists works to protect and promote the human rights of Dalits.

The Campaign seeks solidarity from authorities in countries where the caste system continues to marginalise the Dalit population.

It addresses the governments of particular countries as well as the International Human Rights bodies of the United Nations.

The work carried out by the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights, to end caste discrimination, has been significant.

Despite resistance from the Indian government about putting the issue of caste on the agenda at the World Conference against Racism in Durban, the National campaign on Dalit Human Rights as well as other advocates were successful.

Their contributions to the conference in Durban helped raise the international profile of the issue.

Human Rights Resolution

In August 2000, the United Nations Sub-commission on the Promotion and protection of Human Rights passed a resolution on Discrimination Based on Work and Descent.

The resolution, aimed at addressing the issue of caste, reaffirmed that discrimination based on work and descent is prohibited under international human rights law.

The Sub-commission also decided to further identify affected communities, examine existing constitutional, legislative and administrative measures for the abolition of such discrimination, and make concrete recommendations for the effective elimination of such practices.

Appendix G - Post International Exchange Survey



Post Discussion - Virtually Connecting Peers & Intercultural Competency Survey

The following questions are meant to gather your opinion about diversity, connecting with international peers, and community based learning. Your response is anonymous and voluntary. It will aid research about community based learning and virtually connecting peers to create intercultural competency.

Which role do you have in the discussion?

- ☐ I am a student from Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (BUAP).
☐ I am a student from Community College of Denver (CCD).

What do you think of diversity?

1 2 3 4 5

Dislike diversity. Everyone is equal. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Love diversity. It's so intriguing.

How do you feel towards diversity after virtually working with your international peers?

Did you find lots of differences between you and the students from the other university?

1 2 3 4 5

No. We are all basically the same. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Yes. We live in different countries.

What differences did you find between you and your international peers?

Virtually Connecting Peers and Intercultural Competency

Did you find lots of similarities?

1 2 3 4 5

No. We live in different countries. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Yes. We are all basically the same.

What similarities did you find between you and your international peers?

How do you feel about community based learning?

1 2 3 4 5

I dislike community based learning. Everyone should work alone. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Most school work and projects should incorporate more opportunities to work with others.

After interacting with your international peers, what did you discover about community based learning?

What outcomes did you find from virtually connecting with your international students in an educational setting?

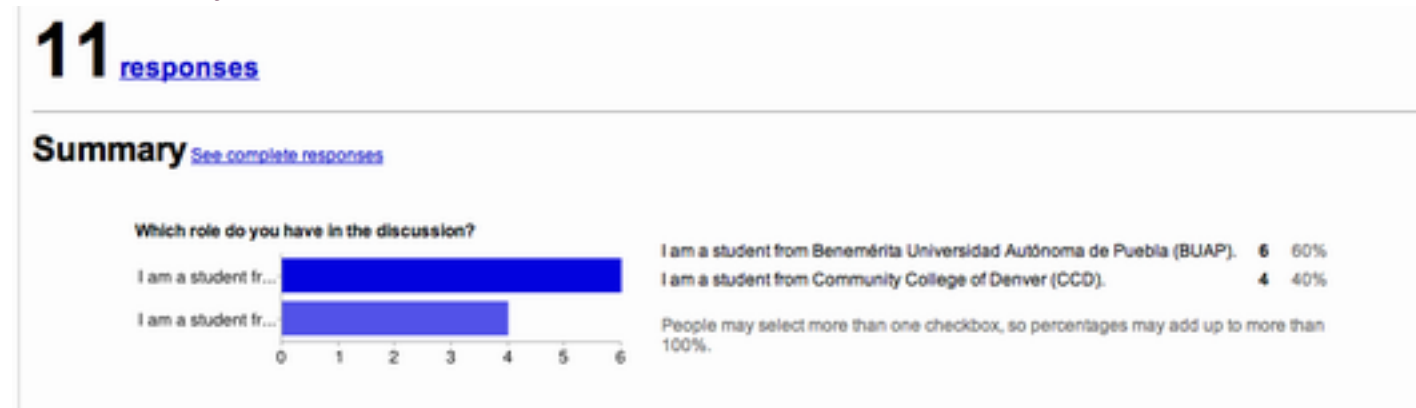
To receive extra credit points, please provide your name.

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/viewform?formkey=dHN1TmxRbmZOMWM3bWZaWlhDODVTY3c6MA#gid=0>

Appendix H - Results of Pre-discussion survey

More students from Central Mexico completed the survey than from Midwestern U.S.

Some students joined the discussion late.



1.) How do you feel towards diversity before virtually working with your international peers?

"I feel there are some instances where diversity can and does cause problems. I also feel that diversity is important and even crucial in other instances." - Midwestern U.S. student

"I am ok with diversity. As long as everyone is treat equal." - Midwestern U.S. student

"I am aware there are many cultures different to mine, and everyone has its own characteristics, I would love to know others and learn about them." - Central Mexico student

"I think that it is important specially in my major because the language and the cultural diversity are strongly related, so i think that it is important to interact with people in order to learn a language." - Central Mexico student

"I think that everbody is different but despite the fact that most of time we can find some things in common. I think that the most important is respect each oder and understadn that everybody is different." - Central Mexico student

"I absolutely love diversity. I've gone to a K-8 catholic school, a Jesuit high school, and a (Midwestern) Public high school and there was so much diversity. I loved getting to experience new cultures and traditions and meeting/ making friends from different places." - Midwestern U.S. student

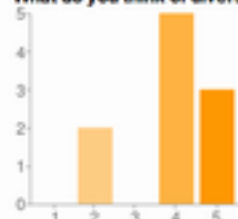
Virtually Connecting Peers and Intercultural Competency

"I feel very excited about this diversity, I think it is very important for the society and life so we can learn from each other. If we were all the same there would be no importance of being with other people because we wouldn't find anything new. On the other hand, we have to be careful of not getting into discrimination. So, It is really a pleasure to share this diversity in this group and learn from our international peers and viceversa." its so comfortable to me be in this expiriences and know everyone as individual :D" - Central Mexico student

"I do not know what to expect because I know how my classmates and friends in my country thinks and I think people from other countries do not have the same ideas and I am scare because they may believe something wrong of us. AT the same time I so exciting. I want to make many new friends" - Central Mexico student

2.) What do you think of diversity?

What do you think of diversity?

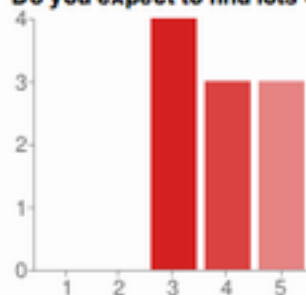


Dislike diversity. Everyone is equal. Love diversity. It's so intriguing.

1 - Dislike diversity. Everyone is equal.	0	0%
2	2	18%
3	0	0%
4	5	45%
5 - Love diversity. It's so intriguing.	3	27%

3) Do you expect to find lots of differences?

Do you expect to find lots of differences?



No. We are all basically the same. Yes. We live in different countries.

1 -No. We are all basically the same.	0	0%
2	0	0%
3	4	36%
4	3	27%
5 -Yes. We live in different countries.	3	27%

4) If you expect to see differences, what might you expect to see between you and your international peers?

"I do not know what to expect." - Midwestern U.S. student

"Maybe age differences. I didn't expect to find people my age attending school." - Midwestern U.S. student

Virtually Connecting Peers and Intercultural Competency

"Different costumes, and idiosyncrasy." - Central Mexico student

"First of all the language we are Spanish native speakers so is kind of difficult for us to interact with other people in English also I think that our economical background is different so our experiences in life are very different." - Central Mexico student

"I believe that culture, background, education, customs are so different." - Central Mexico student

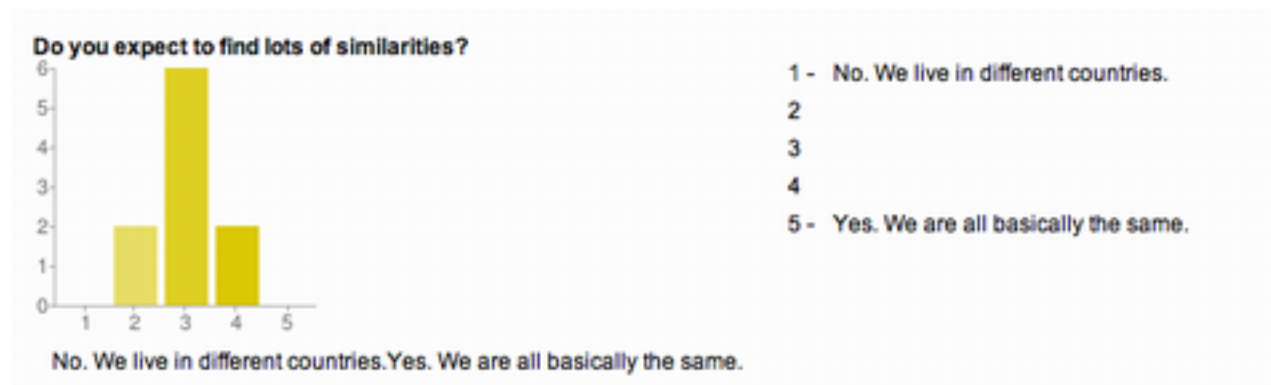
"Well i expect to see differences between political views, traditions, languages, and how we all were raised and what our values are." - Midwestern U.S. student

"Taking into account that we live in different countries and we have different cultures, there are many different things we can find but also many similarities. (from natural habits of dialy life, to different experiences in our academic life)." - Central Mexico student

"well culture, different ways to speak and talk some fun with them" - Central Mexico student

"May be the most important is the differences in thinking. It may created a fantastic opportunity to explore a different culture" - Central Mexico student

5) Do you expect to find lots of similarities?



6) If you expect to see similarities, what might you expect to see between you and your international peers?

"Again, I do not know what to expect." - Midwestern U.S. student

"We are both striving for similiar goals." - Midwestern U.S. student

Virtually Connecting Peers and Intercultural Competency

"We all live in the same world and we may share the same perspective to the diversity, and community." - Central Mexico student

"we both are commitment to study hard in order to have a good life style, we are having fun in College and also we have learn a lot from that experience" - Central Mexico student

"I think that some similarities is that we have a goal in the life, maybe finish our major and become better people that can help our society." - Central Mexico student

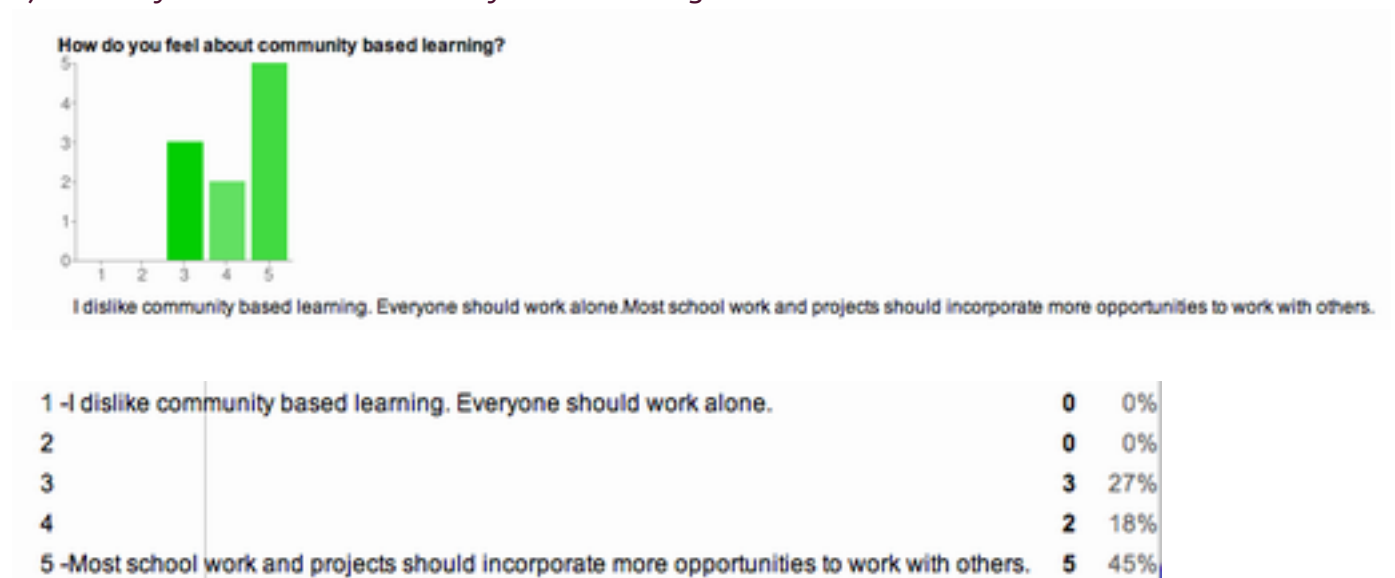
"well i know some things might be the same like high school experiences, elementary school experiences, and some things with growing up. Everything would just be set in a different language with different customs and values." - Midwestern U.S. student

"I really believe that most of the students will agree that we're having good experiences that will last for the rest of our lives." - Central Mexico student

"maybe the same music the same artist and movies could be" - Central Mexico student

"I am not sure. perhaps all believe in the equality" - Central Mexico student

7) How do you feel about community based learning?



8) What do you know about community based learning?

"I do not know much about community based learning but I look forward to working with students from other countries." - Midwestern U.S. student

"I am not very knowledgeable." - Midwestern U.S. student

Virtually Connecting Peers and Intercultural Competency

"It is the development of a project in which we can apply what we are learning to help out community. It makes the learning ask more significant and involves team work." - Central Mexico student

"It is an approach of learning that help students to work together with the community in order to solve a problem. students will put into practice the knowledge they received in the school so their learning would be more significant." - Central Mexico student

"Community based learning is a project with the purpose that we as students could help our community but with the knowledge that we acquire in school, it help that all that you learn be a meaningful learning and the most important that benefit your community." - Central Mexico student

"I know that its similar to group projects and discussions. That's about it." - - Midwestern U.S. student

"It is about learning from helping our community. We can learn and drill the knowledge by helping solve some problems in our surroundings." - Central Mexico student

"more vocabulary" - Central Mexico student

"just a little but I want to know much more" - Central Mexico student

9) What outcomes do you expect to find from virtually connecting with your international students in an educational setting?

"I hope to find out the differences between what we are taught and how we are taught those things." - Midwestern U.S. student

"To get a glimpse of what life is like in another country." - Midwestern U.S. student

"I expect to learn new things from another culture as well as know new people. I may get a new vision for my career." - Central Mexico student

"I expect to have fun, learn the culture of other countries and to get ideas of community based learning projects." - Central Mexico student

"I think that the most important is know the way they think and notice that although we have different culture we have many things in common, and why not meet new friends." - Central Mexico student

Virtually Connecting Peers and Intercultural Competency

"I expect to be able to become more open minded and see the world through my international peers eyes as well as my own and vice versa for them. Then we could come to understand the world around us and how it works in other countries." -
Midwestern U.S. student

"Knowing the problem that need to be solved in another country and how they manage it. That can really help because we will have many ideas of what to do if we face the same situation someday. Besides this, I would be able to become intercultural :)" - Central Mexico student

"know about them more and be spcial with them" - Central Mexico student

"An interchange of thinking and knowledge to increase my culture." - Central Mexico student

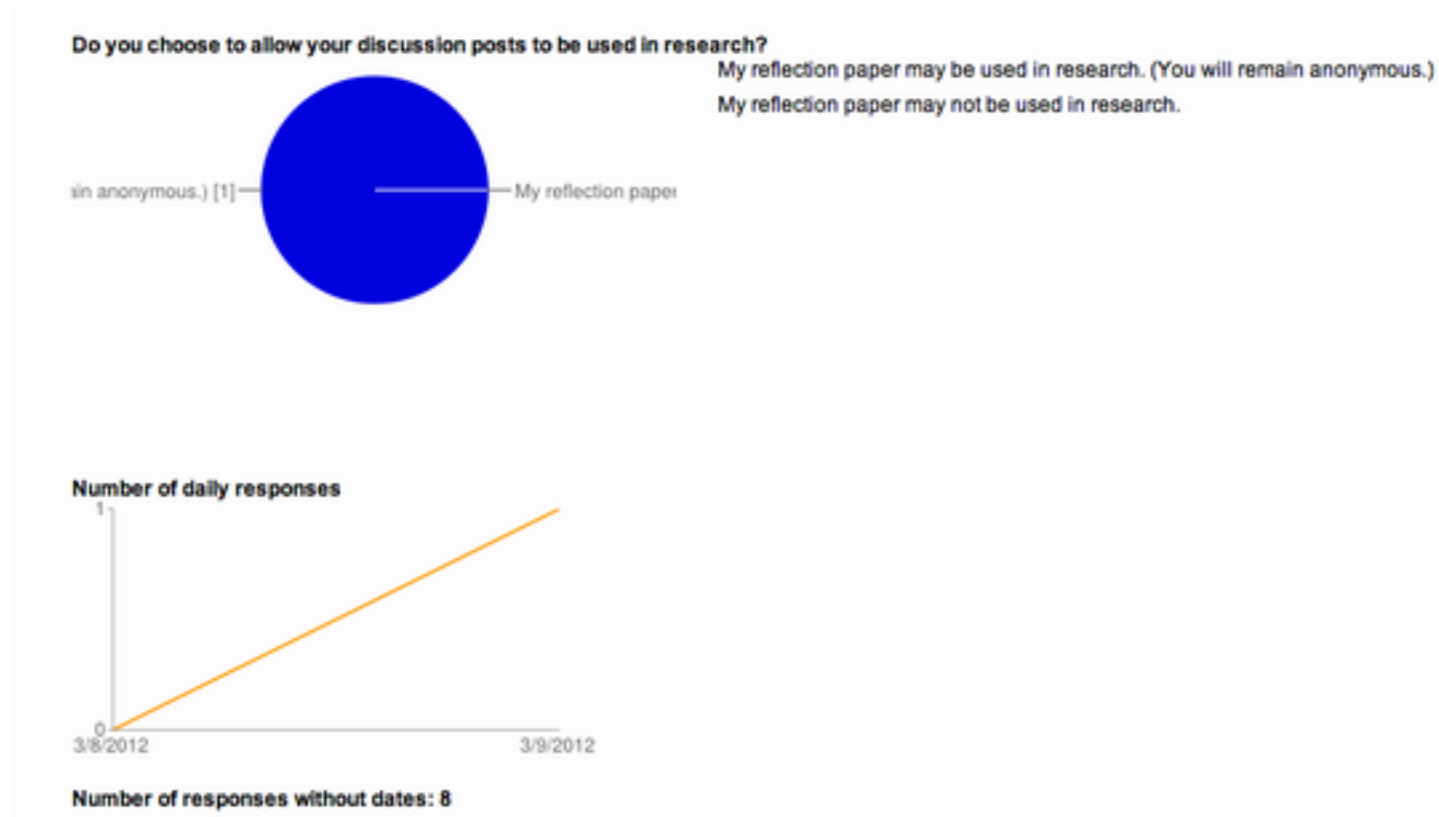


Appendix I - Results of Consent Forms

Discussion Consent Form

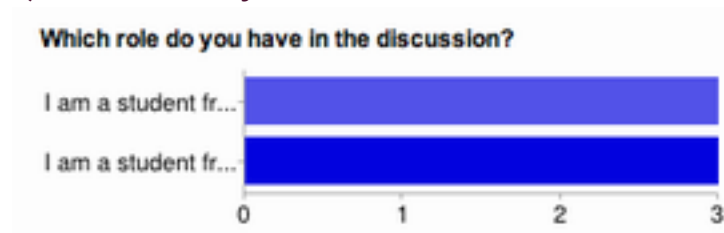


Reflection Consent Form



Appendix J - Results of Post-discussion survey

1) Which Role do you have in the discussion?



2) What do you think of diversity?



3) How do you feel towards diversity after virtually working with your international peers?

"I feel excited 'cause I'm knowing interesting people from different places and it is quite good for increase my knowledge about you. Now, I know more about certain cultures and languages." - Central Mexico student

"The question above is difficult to answer. I am thankful for the opportunity to do these discussions. It has reminded me of the value of my fellow human being." - Midwestern U.S. student

"I feel great its a great experience that we should learn from, i believe everyone should get to know people from different cultures and really should get the time to know each other and learn from each other." - Midwestern US. student

"Actually, I did not change very much my idea about diversity, I know that every person is different and that we have different ideas and opinions according to our own context, according to what we are, however I notice that all the students have more or less the same ideas about diversity that we are more aware about the differences among people and that we all have similar goals in life, so I feel happy to be in college and to have the opportunity to share my ideas and experiences with people from other countries." - Central Mexico student

"I realize that there are not many differences, among (Central Mexico) and (Midwestern U.S.) Students, probably because the countries are not really far. However it is very interesting knowing new people though our thoughts are similar, we have different ways to express them." - Central Mexico student

"I have always known about diversity and never liked it, after working with international peers I still feel the same." - Midwestern U.S. student

4) Did you find lots of differences between you and the students from the other university?



5) What differences did you find between you and your international peers?

Virtually Connecting Peers and Intercultural Competency

"Our thoughts, of course. But must they express in a quite long way." - Central Mexico student

"They learn more than just their national language. Second, third even fourth and fifth languages are more important than we realize here in the US." - Midwestern U.S. student

"I found no difference they spoke English and were well informed of what they were talking about." - Midwestern U.S. student

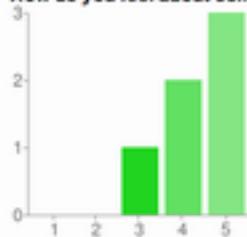
"Basically that we are studying different majors but about our ideas I guess that we have similar opinions." - Central Mexico student

"I think we have different ways to show our ideas and feelings, I think that Denver students are more expressive than Mexicans, at least that's my point of view." - Central Mexico student

"The difference I found between my international peers and I is it much easier here to get into school and have or find help." - Midwestern U.S. student

6) How do you feel about community based learning?

How do you feel about community based learning?



1 -I dislike community based learning. Everyone should work alone. 2 -Most school work and projects should incorporate more opportunities to work with others.

1 -I dislike community based learning. Everyone should work alone.	0	0%
2	0	0%
3	1	17%
4	2	33%
5 -Most school work and projects should incorporate more opportunities to work with others.	3	50%

7) What similarities did you find between you and your international peers?

"some similarities are, that all of us are studying, making friends, knowing each other. Share our working at school. Discussing about our projects." - Central Mexico student

"I found pretty much everything to be similar." - Midwestern U.S. student

Virtually Connecting Peers and Intercultural Competency

"We both thought the same way, and felt the same way about diversity. We had the same thoughts and feeling." - Midwestern U.S. student

"We are in college because we have goals, because we want to be better people, we want to help our communities and also because we want to evolve as people we want to have a better society and a better world if it is possible." - Central Mexico student

"we have same thoughts, perspectives, and interests about helping the community." - Central Mexico student

"The similarities I found between myself and my peers are that we want to do something with our lives and want to help people and make a difference." - Midwestern U.S. student

8) After interacting with your international peers, what did you discover about community based learning?

"It is a great strategy because it works to join students and make them apply their abilities." - Central Mexico student

"There are ways for people physically living in separate countries to actually study together." - Midwestern U.S. student

"That it gets you involved and interested with others and to hear the other peers opinion. It helps you be more active and social." - Midwestern U.S. student

"It implies a lot of hard work but at the same time it gives us a lot of satisfaction a feeling of proud, we realize that we can do something in order to change the life of some people and although we are still very young we can do big things." - Central Mexico student

"It is much more interesting than the traditional classes, it makes you a living part of the project instead of just getting theory" - Central Mexico student

"What I discovered is community based learning helps you currently and in your future, I think it helps you how to deal with people of different personalities, and how to read people." - Midwestern U.S. student

9) What outcomes did you find from virtually connecting with your international students in an educational setting?

"What outcomes did you find from virtually connecting with your international students in an educational setting?" - Central Mexico student

Virtually Connecting Peers and Intercultural Competency

"I think, it's absolutely useful for each student because it helps us to develop certain skills. Apart from discover another cultures." - Midwestern U.S. student

"I fear the cultural differences less, and I am less concerned about communication barriers. I have less fear of the unknown you might say." - Midwestern U.S. student

"It made me comfortable to ask questions and made me more social in school too by talking to more people." - Central Mexico student

"I noticed that we are very polite and respectful with each other, also that we are more aware about the problems of our society and that we are very focus in what we want to do in life." - Central Mexico student

"I learnt that it is very simple to get in touch with different people if we have same objectives, no matters distance" - Central Mexico student

"What I found in a educational setting connecting with interntional students is to make the best of what I got and with what I have and to take advantage of the help I am getting to get my education." - Midwestern U.S. student



Appendix K - Discussion Posts

Test Discussion pre introductions discussion

Undisclosed student comment

Midwest U.S. Instructor - Welcome (undisclosed name)! Please repost this under the main discussion. The students in (Midwest U.S.) are not in this Test Discussion for (Central Mexico). We look forward to having in the main discussion. Thanks! - Feb 24, 2012

Diversity Discussion

Central Mexico Instructor to Diversity Discussion Spring 12

Dear (Midwest U.S.) and (Central Mexico) Students, It's been a pleasure reading your posts and contributions in this forum. Thank you all for participating in this experience. Please feel

Virtually Connecting Peers and Intercultural Competency

free to keep the conversation with your peers. I'm sure there's more to learn about them.
Thanks,

(Central Mexico Instructor) Mar 16, 2012

Midwest U.S. Instructor - It has been wonderful to see all the posts from both student groups (Central Mexico) and (Midwest U.S.). Thank you all for your participation so far!

-Mar 16, 2012

Undisclosed student comment

Undisclosed student comment

Midwest U.S. Instructor - Welcome (undisclosed name)! We're glad you can join us! -

Mar 16, 2012

Undisclosed student comment

Undisclosed student comment

Midwest U.S. student Y to Diversity Discussion Spring 12

Life is not black and white, and thereby really can not be summed up in the few short sentences we have each contributed. Likely we could carry this discussion for the span of our lifetimes, and we should. I watch those around me everyday struggle to survive. We struggle to keep a roof over our heads, food in our bellies and clothes on our backs. These people are my family, my friends, my companions, and even myself. From the heart of the cities to the barely beaten paths we struggle. There isn't always enough to go round. But we are all human and we all have to eat, right? I don't care who you are, we still have to have basic human rights. Here in the US it has been far too easy to blame another for the reasons we are "kept down". I believe we individually should take time to self-reflect. I believe we, in the US anyway, need to stop feeling so entitled, and start becoming more personally responsible. What's the worst that could happen?

Take care everyone. Hope you and yours are all well.

(undisclosed name) - Mar 10, 2012

Undisclosed student comment

Midwest U.S. Instructor to Diversity Discussion Spring 12

(Optional) Survey for closing thoughts

Turned in (3) DUE: Mar 18, 2012

We are conducting an action research project on virtually connecting peers and intercultural competency and on community based learning. This research is also meeting the requirements for one of the graduate courses in which instructor (Midwest U.S.) is enrolled. This course and research will help (Midwest U.S. instructor) to refine her practice while helping the students to connect with their international peers to ideally increase intercultural competency and to explore the opinions of community based learning.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete an online survey that will take around 15 minutes. There are no right or wrong answers. Your individual answers to the questions will not be identified or published. You may discontinue your participation in this study at any time without penalty. Your response will remain anonymous. Your opinions will aid research about community based learning and virtually connecting peers to create intercultural competency.

Virtually Connecting Peers and Intercultural Competency

Answering and completing these online questionnaires indicate your willingness to participate in this study. By clicking the link to the survey, you are agreeing that you have read and understood the description of the study and you agree to participate.

Thank you for your time.

Please complete the following survey: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/viewform?...>

Post Discussion - Virtually Connecting Peers & Intercultural Competency Survey
docs.google.com - Mar 9, 2012

Midwest U.S. Student Z to Diversity Discussion Spring 12

Hi everyone, I'm (undisclosed name) I just want to introduce myself! I am studying to be a nurse because I want to help people, I like to help people especially if it helps to benefit themselves. - Mar 7, 2012

Midwest U.S. Instructor - Thanks for joining (undisclosed name)! We're glad to see that you were able to get into Edmodo. If you would like, feel free to respond to the Diversity discussion below. - Mar 9, 2012

Undisclosed student comment

Central Mexico Student to Diversity Discussion Spring 12

hi everyone, I hadn't presented myself officially- so i'll do it now:) my name is (undisclosed name) and I am from (Central Mexico). I'm studying Modern Languages, about to finish- I hope! I'm 24 years old and I know I'm supposed to give a real nice explanation of why i decided to study this major and say my future plans just as everyone does, but, I don't really have those answers:) Although, i guess I'll probabaly be a teacher in a near future and i am excited about it!, i hope to be a good teacher and I'll really try my best for that to happen! - Mar 5, 2012

Midwest U.S. Instructor - We're glad to have you (undisclosed name)! If you would like, feel free to respond to the Diversity discussion below. - Mar 9, 2012

Undisclosed student comment

Undisclosed student comment

Midwest U.S. instructor - Welcome (undisclosed name)! - Mar 4, 2012

Midwest U.S. Instructor to Diversity Discussion Spring 12

Optional Consent Form for discussion forum

Turned in (3) DUE: Mar 7, 2012

We are conducting an action research project on virtually connecting peers and intercultural competency and on community based learning. This research is also meeting the requirements for one of the graduate courses in which instructor (Midwest U.S. Instructor) is enrolled. This course and research will help (Midwest U.S. Instructor) to refine her practice while helping the students to connect with their international peers to ideally increase intercultural competency and to explore the opinions of community based learning. Data from discussions will be analyzed. Student participation in the discussion in Edmodo will remain anonymous. Please respond in this survey to show if you would allow the data from the discussion to be used in research while also protecting your privacy.

Thank you for your time.

(Optional) Consent form to use data from discussions and ensure student privacy
docs.google.com - Mar 1, 2012

Virtually Connecting Peers and Intercultural Competency

Undisclosed student comment

Midwest U.S. Instructor to Diversity Discussion Spring 12

Complete Diversity Discussion

Turned in (8) DUE: Mar 4, 2012

Read the diversity chapter by Amy Baldwin. As you read think about the need for a second language within a college community and what diversity looks like in your own college community.

Read the article: Article 1: All human beings are free and equal in dignity and rights by BBC World Service. As you read the article think how might students learn in a community based learning environment/what are concerns about community learning environments.

Post your reactions to one of the readings above (100-200 words) by February 29th.

Reading 1:

1. Describe the different types of people and their roles on campus. List the benefits of cultivating relationship in college.
2. Explain the importance of appreciating diversity.
3. How do you understand the process of resolving conflict in college relationships?

Reading 2:

RIGHT 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood".

1. What are some examples that are true for this Human Right in your college experience or community? For example, all students from BUAP have the right to use STU (cheap transportation). Children have the right for education, etc.
2. What are some examples that are not true for this Human Right in your community?
3. How can we help our community to be aware of cultural diversity to lessen stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination?

Read your classmates posts. Make sure you answer at least two posts from your classmates by March 4th. You're welcome to make more than two posts and keep up with the discussion.

Article 1: All human beings are free and equal in dignity and rights | BBC World Service
bbc.co.uk

Appreciating Diversity and Cultivating Relationships by Amy Baldwin docs.google.com - Mar 1, 2012

Central Mexico student - hi, im kind of late, i thought the assignment's due date was today. sorry

well, regarding the first reading, there are a lot of types of people on campus. students, teachers, and a lot of people working in the school office. their role os basically obvious, although in the real world they all may play more than one role. in possitivve expereinces teachers and students(or peers) may end up being more than just that, they can be friends and advisors and a real support through college years. a real life exampe of why cultivating relationships is beneficial. even if not everyone can be a friend ,we at least must respect diversity. you can learn alot from this type of coexistence, specially how to solve problems. talking things out instead of just being mad is the best option! - Mar 4, 2012

Central Mexico student - hi again!

RIGHT 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood". -- now that's pretty awesome! i wish that would be put into action! the last part, "and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood", that's my favorite part and the part i think is least done. i think that sometimes, and of course not everybody, in this eagerness for accomplishing our goals, we stop acting towards others in a spirit of brotherhood. becoming somewhat selfish and sometimes we forget that we are not the only ones in the world. there are thousand and thousands of people who also have desires of self-improvement, and we all should have the opportunity to at least try. yet still, there are many problems that hinder Human Rights to be enjoyed by everyone, there's poverty, stereotyping, prejudice, ignorance and discrimination. campaigns against these things are great! but it would really need to be perseverant! we also have to set the example! :) - Mar 4, 2012

Central Mexico student F- That is true we should see each other as brothers but I am not very sure about when that it could happen we are humans and part of our nature is competition we are always try to win and we do not care about others we just care about us and about our happiness I hope one day we could change and we will be able to respect and tolerate each other.- Mar 9, 2012

Undisclosed student comment

Undisclosed student comment

Undisclosed student comment

Undisclosed student comment

Central Mexico student - Nice to meet you (undisclosed name)! - Mar 4, 2012

Midwest U.S. Student to Diversity Discussion Spring 12

Diversity Discussion

Turned in (4) DUE: Feb 29, 2012

Read the diversity chapter by Amy Baldwin: https://docs.google.com/open?id=0B_tzQvTRTg9B...

As you read think about the need for a second language within a college community and what diversity looks like in your own college community.

Read the article: Article 1: All human beings are free and equal in dignity and rights located at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/people/feat...> by BBC World Service. As you read the article think how might students learn in a community based learning environment/what are concerns about community learning environments.

Post your reactions to one of the readings above (100-200 words) by February 29th.

Reading 1:

1. Describe the different types of people and their roles on campus. List the benefits of cultivating relationship in college.
2. Explain the importance of appreciating diversity.
3. How do you understand the process of resolving conflict in college relationships?

Reading 2:

RIGHT 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood".

Virtually Connecting Peers and Intercultural Competency

1. What are some examples that are true for this Human Right in your college experience or community? For example, all students from BUAP have the right to use STU (cheap transportation). Children have the right for education, etc.
2. What are some examples that are not true for this Human Right in your community?
3. How can we help our community to be aware of cultural diversity to lessen stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination?

Read your classmates posts. Make sure you answer at least two posts from your classmates by March 4th. You're welcome to make more than two posts and keep up with the discussion.

Article 1: All human beings are free and equal in dignity and rights | BBC World Service
bbc.co.uk

Diversity Chapter by Amy Baldwin docs.google.com - Feb 26, 2012

Undisclosed student comment

Undisclosed student comment

Central Mexico Student - I think that discrimination is one of the worst things in the world because I strongly believe that everybody is equal I believe that there is only one race: the human race so, there is not reason to make differences among people, unfortunately we cannot change the world so, what we can do is be open and accept the opinion of others in order to make a little change, anyway I am positive and I hope that someday we could treat each other in an equal way. - Feb 29, 2012

Central Mexico Student - About College experience I believe that making relationships and connections with other people and classmates while we are studying is very important in order to enjoy the experience of being in College, we have to learn to deal with different people because if we are not open to other ideas we will suffer a lot in life and we will lose a lot of opportunities. - Feb 29, 2012

Central Mexico student E - I think that discrimination is a big problem around the world although society has changed in many aspects we have not learnt to respect each other and notice that everybody is equal, it doesn't matter our race because we have one thing in common that we live in this world and everybody has the same rights, we have to understand that doesn't exist difference and we have the purpose in life, but unfortunately many people don't understand and so difficult that they change the way they think. - Feb 29, 2012

Central Mexico student E - I think that when you are in the school you have to try to meet different kinds of people because many times we close our world and we can see beyond that we think, many times we judge people without talking first with them and when we meet them we change what we think about him or her. Know to respect and understand that everybody is different can help us have a better relationship with other people. - Feb 29, 2012

Undisclosed student comment

Midwest U.S. Student - (undisclosed name): I agree that meeting and interacting with different people can help us build better relationships. Respect is something that everybody should have as a priority when interacting with other people because we are all not the same. There are different people who do things differently than we might but it's not for us to judge them or discriminate. It's for us to learn from them and them to learn from us to make a strong relationship. - Mar 1, 2012

Undisclosed student comment

Central Mexico student D- definitely the respect between people from anywhere is the base of peace as a very important person in my country one day said. "Respect for the rights of others is peace" (Benito Juárez) We, as the new generation of college students, have to put emphasis in the equality because it represents our values as Students.

Undisclosed student comment

Undisclosed student comment

Midwest U.S. student - (Undisclosed name) you are correct. It is sadly a very common Social problem. There is a large gap in America between the well-to-do and the not so well-to-do. The not so well-to-do are often treated as second rate humans simply because we do not have the access to the same resources and the wealthy in this country - Mar 5, 2012

Midwest U.S. Student - and (undisclosed name) I agree with you about respect. Basic human rights/dignities start with a respect for myself and continue with a respect for ALL those around me. - Mar 5, 2012

Central Mexico student C - it doesn't matter who really you are I think every one has the same rights to be wherever you want ! :D - Mar 5, 2012

Undisclosed student comment

Central Mexico student D - I am white and I have many friends that are blacks and many others that are "morenos" and I am very proud about it because for me, the color of your skin only gives you personality. - Mar 6, 2012

Central Mexico student D - Not only with people that have different color skin. The sexual preferences are a big problem specially in Mexico because the "Machismo" is still there. Even us when we use words to insult someone making reference that he or she do not act like the society demands indicate that we are being sexist. - Mar 6, 2012

Undisclosed student comment

Midwest U.S. student - sexual discrimination is far too common in the United States. Often gays and lesbians themselves are guilty of discriminating against people that are straight in America. It just does not seem to matter anymore. It's like if one person is different from another in any way there is discrimination. I thought the United States was supposed to celebrate our differences, it's unfortunate how society dictates what makes a person "right". Color of our skin, gender, sexual orientation, age, ethnicity etc, is often what makes us acceptable or not acceptable instead of the quality of our character and ethics. - Mar 6, 2012

Undisclosed student comment

Central Mexico student - that is true I do not know why some people in US tend to discriminate immigrant people, US is a diverse and modern country I think that is why people from many parts of the world are there, however in recent years it seems that American people have changed their minds and they feel threatened by immigrants. it is very sad - Mar 9, 2012

Midwest U.S. Instructor to Diversity Discussion Spring 12

Optional Survey

Turned in (3) DUE: Feb 29, 2012

Virtually Connecting Peers and Intercultural Competency

We are conducting an action research project on virtually connecting peers and intercultural competency and on community based learning. This research is also meeting the requirements for one of the graduate courses in which instructor (Midwest U.S. Instructor) is enrolled. This course and research will help (Midwest U.S. Instructor) to refine her practice while helping the students to connect with their international peers to ideally increase intercultural competency and to explore the opinions of community based learning. If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete an online survey that will take around 15 minutes. There are no right or wrong answers. Your individual answers to the questions will not be identified or published. You may discontinue your participation in this study at any time without penalty. Your response will remain anonymous. Your opinions will aid research about community based learning and virtually connecting peers to create intercultural competency.

Answering and completing these online questionnaires indicate your willingness to participate in this study. By clicking the link to the survey, you are agreeing that you have read and understood the description of the study and you agree to participate.

Thank you for your time.

Please complete the following survey: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/viewform?...>

Virtually Connecting Peers & Intercultural Competency Survey docs.google.com - Feb 26, 2012

Central Mexico Instructor - Hi guys, This is an optional task, but I encourage to do it :) plus you will get extra credit by answering it. - Feb 26, 2012

Central Mexico student B to Diversity Discussion Spring 12

I'm (undisclosed name), I am glad to be here to share experiences. Currently, I am majoring in languages and doing my best in a child's project which is completely amazing! - Feb 26, 2012

Undisclosed student comment

Central Mexico Student B - !!!! XD - Feb 27, 2012

Undisclosed student comment

Midwest U.S. student Y - I find it very interesting that you want to teach English to children. Do the children in your country often learn English as a second language? Is it required? - Feb 26, 2012

Undisclosed student comment

Undisclosed student comment

Undisclosed student comment

Undisclosed student comment

Undisclosed student comment

Undisclosed student comment

Central Mexico Student E - to Diversity Discussion Spring 12

Hi my name is (undisclosed name), it is a pleasure to be here and learn new things! - Feb 23, 2012

Central Mexico Student G - to Diversity Discussion Spring 12

Hi! my name is (undisclosed name), it is a pleasure to be part of this community because I'm having many good experiences and also I'm enjoying it so much. - Feb 23, 2012

Undisclosed student comment

Central Mexico Student H to Diversity Discussion Spring 12

Virtually Connecting Peers and Intercultural Competency

Hello there!! I'm (undisclosed name) and I'm one of the mexican students..I'm working on my project with children and it's just great! I'm learning a lot from it and I'm enjoying it as well.. :) - Feb 23, 2012

Midwest U.S. Student Y - What is your project with the children about? - Feb 26, 2012

Undisclosed student comment - Feb 26, 2012

Central Mexico student H - It is about helping homeless children, we visit them and spend time with them every week, we usually do some activities or we just have a long chat...it's amazing! they're lovely and they enjoy the company just as we do. We're learning a lot from them! :) - Mar 1, 2012

Central Mexico student H- Hello (undisclosed name)!!! xD nice to meet you too ;) - Mar 1, 2012

Undisclosed student comment

Undisclosed student comment

Undisclosed student comment

Undisclosed student comment

Undisclosed student comment

Undisclosed student comment

Central Mexico Student H- Hi (Undisclosed student)...I'm just curious, what are you studying? you sound very excited about it..that's great! We all need to love what we do or will do for living. - Mar 1, 2012

Central Mexico Student F to Diversity Discussion Spring 12

hi this is me ha, ha - Feb 23, 2012

Undisclosed student comment

Central Mexico Student to Diversity Discussion Spring 12

hi i am (undisclosed name) i am studying to be an English Language teacher i would like to know your college experience and also i would to share my college experiences - Feb 23, 2012

Midwest U.S. Instructor- Hi (undisclosed name),

How long have you been a student at (Central Mexico city)? What do you like best about studying? - Feb 24, 2012

Central Mexico student F - For almost four years and the thing that I like the most about studying is to help people I think that when we have the opportunity to study especially here in Mexico that is a poor country we should use our knowledge to help others and I think that my major is very important in society because teachers can help and share experiences wiht many people. - Mar 9, 2012

Midwest U.S. Instructor - Hi (undisclosed student),

Sorry for my delay in responding! I just noted your response. You have excellent reasons to study! I hope you do well in your program. Are you close to graduating? - March 19, 2012

Undisclosed student comment - Feb 21, 2012

Undisclosed student comment

Undisclosed student comment-Feb 23, 2012

Midwest U.S. Student - I do not know what I want to study either. Do you find people accept this or that they do not accept it? - Feb 26, 2012

Virtually Connecting Peers and Intercultural Competency

Central Mexico student H- Hi (undisclosed student)! I'm glad you really appreciate the opportunity of studying and becoming a better person. I know it can be difficult to choose what you want for your career but just try to find and do what you love! and if you make a mistake, don't worry we all make them, just learn from it and start once again... ;) - Mar 1, 2012

Undisclosed student comment- Feb 20, 2012

Undisclosed student comment- Feb 23, 2012

Undisclosed student comment-Feb 25, 2012

Undisclosed student comment-Feb 20, 2012

Undisclosed student comment- Feb 20, 2012

Undisclosed student comment- Mar 2, 2012

U.S. Instructor to Diversity Discussion Spring 12

Welcome!

(Midwest U.S.) students, please use the discussion called "Test Discussion for (Midwest U.S.)". This week you will be testing out this discussion tool so that you feel more comfortable when we start the discussion with the (Central Mexico) students.

~(U.S. Instructor) -Feb 5, 2012

Midwest U.S. Instructor to Diversity Discussion Spring 12

Welcome!

(Central Mexico) students, please use the discussion called "Test Discussion for (Central Mexico)". This week you will be testing out this discussion tool so that you feel more comfortable when we start the discussion with the (Midwest U.S.) students.

~(U.S. instructor) - Feb 5, 2012

Central Mexico Instructor - Hello dear (Midwest U.S. Instructor), I'm just testing, I'll have my students to join soon :) - Feb 9, 2012

Midwest U.S. Instructor - Sound great (Central Mexico Instructor)! Mine are just starting to join this week as well. - Feb 10, 2012

Central Mexico Instructor - HI MY NAME IS (undisclosed name), UM I'M NOT SURE I'M SUPPOSED TO BE WRITING HERE, I DIDN'T FIND ANY THREAD THAT SAYS "TEST DISCUSSION FOR (Central Mexico)" I'M ONE OF (Midwest U.S. Instructor's) STUDENTS. - Feb 20, 2012

Central Mexico student - HI!! everybody, my name is (undisclosed student), well I'm just trying if I'm in. - Feb 20, 2012

Central Mexico Instructor - welcome girls :) - Feb 20, 2012

Midwest U.S. Instructor - Thanks for joining! - Feb 22, 2012

Central Mexico Student D- Hi (Cenral Mexico) Teacher!! I am (undisclosed name) and this is only to let you know that i am in !!! I will see you next weekend to do the online project and thanks to send me the password. Later!!! - March 1, 2012

Readability level of main discussion:

<i>Indication of the number of years of formal education that a person requires</i>	
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<i>in order to easily understand the text on the first reading</i>	
Gunning Fog index :	10.45

<i>Approximate representation of the U.S. grade level needed to comprehend the text :</i>		
Coleman Liau index :	9.96	
Flesch Kincaid Grade level :	8.32	
ARI (Automated Readability Index) :	7.32	
SMOG :	10.59	

Flesch Reading Ease :	57.61
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Diversity Assignments Discussion

Undisclosed student comment

Central Mexico Student A to Diversity Assignments (Diversity Discussion Spring 12)

hello!

I can say that a very interesting example of inequality in my community is about the indigenous people who live in the (Central Mexico city). Most of the times they are discriminated because they do not speak Spanish, by their indigenous accent , by the way that they dress and even though when they go to a certain place like to hospital, they do not receive the same attention than others. Well, I think that to raise awareness that we all have the same rights as it is established in the first article of the constitution, it is necessary that since family the parents inculcate the value of respect towards others and also the society can create campaigns against discrimination and try to diffuse the indigenous culture. - Feb 29, 2012

Undisclosed student comment

Central Mexico Student B to Diversity Assignments (Diversity Discussion Spring 12)

I'm (Central Mexico Student B) from (undisclosed Central Mexico city), and certainly I have had plenty of good experiences at my Faculty but the ones I appreciate the most are those bad ones due to the learning they provide.

In my career there is also a bunch of cultural diversity and I like that, I strongly believe that I chose this career because of the interaction among people. - Feb 26, 2012

Virtually Connecting Peers and Intercultural Competency

Central Mexico Student A- Yes, you are right (Central Mexico Student B)

because I also learn more about bad experiences than good ones. - Feb 26, 2012

Central Mexico Student A to Diversity Assignments (Diversity Discussion Spring 12)

Hello, I am (Central Mexico Student A), I think this would be a great experience to be in touch and work with this community. My college experience has influenced me on to be a better person each day, both personally and academically because with every experience that I got I can learn much of people and situations so all these made me that I reflect about my right and wrong decisions. My career is about teaching English, thus in a year and a half I will become an English Teacher and it will imply for me that I will help other people to learn a second language which means a little bit difficult for some and it does not for others. I am in college because I want to have the opportunity to get a better job and probably travel. And what motivates me to be in this community is that I can share ideas with other people and at the same time I can learn more about how to work in team work and online which for me it is sometimes a little bit difficult. - Feb 25, 2012

Undisclosed student comment

Undisclosed student comment

Central Mexico Student A- I agree with you about that we as future teacher will have great responsibilities.... - Feb 24, 2012

Undisclosed student comment

Undisclosed student comment

U.S. Instructor to Diversity Assignments (Diversity Discussion Spring 12)

Complete Introductions Discussion

Turned in (5) DUE: Feb 26, 2012

Explore the website and post a brief introduction about yourself in the main discussion.

1) Talk about your college experience so far.

2) Describe your career.

3) Mention why you are in college. What motivates you to be in this community? Post your thoughts here in EDMODO(100-200 words) by February 22nd. If you haven't participated yet, please do so.

Then, read your classmates posts. Make sure you answer at least two posts from your classmates by February 26th. You're welcome to make more than two posts in order to meet your classmates. - Feb 24, 2012

Undisclosed student comment

U.S. Instructor - Hi (undisclosed name),

You are all set. My apologies for not responding sooner.

~(U.S. Instructor) - Mar 5, 2012

U.S. Instructor to Diversity Assignments (Diversity Discussion Spring 12)

Post to Introductions Discussion

Turned in (8) DUE: Feb 22, 2012

Virtually Connecting Peers and Intercultural Competency

Explore the Edmodo website and post a brief introduction about yourself in the discussion Introductions:

- 1) Talk about your college experience so far.
- 2) Describe your career.
- 3) Mention why you are in college. What motivates you to be in this community?

Post your thoughts here in EDMODO (100-200 words) by February 22nd. - Feb 20, 2012

Undisclosed student comment

U.S. Instructor - Please go ahead and respond in the main discussion. We'd love to hear from you! - Feb 24, 2012

Undisclosed student comment

Appendix L - Reflection Paper

Authored by U.S. student X

Many times we assume and judge by the way people act or simply of what they wear. Diversity is very common throughout the world, and can be discriminated by many. In Edmodo I have been talking to some students that have their own opinions about diversity. Many say that they have been threw it themselves.

In Edmodo I have learned many new things from the students in (Central Mexico), and from my own peers in my community. Many of them have the same feeling as I do in Diversity, we believe that it happens to everyone no matter what race they are and sadly people allow that to happen. I also agreed with them when they said that we should all be equally treated and judged, how we should all be treated with respect. My peers surprised me with how well they responded and came along in one word with Diversity; we all had Different opinion but came as one in the end. What I liked about the experience was how we got to share our feelings and thoughts with people in different places, and no matter how far they were it seemed that Diversity is misunderstood like in every other place. What I wished was different in this experience is, to get and know a little bit more about some other people that just gave a little bit of information about themselves.

Diversity is all around us, whether you go to the park or to the store to buy groceries. We should see everyone as one, and no matter if they are a little different to not underestimate them. We should not see someone different by the way they talk or do things, but we should allow them and accept them how they are. In the end our world is better when we are all united.

Bibliography: Community College Experience by Amy Baldwin

Readability Level:

<i>Indication of the number of years of</i>	
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<i>formal education that a person requires in order to easily understand the text on the first reading</i>	
Gunning Fog index :	12.19

<i>Approximate representation of the U.S. grade level needed to comprehend the text :</i>		
Coleman Liau index :	8.09	
Flesch Kincaid Grade level :	10.12	
ARI (Automated Readability Index) :	9.29	
SMOG :	11.49	

Flesch Reading Ease :	59.77
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Appendix K - Final Project Proposal for LLC 5150 Summer 2010

Noemi Wahls
Final Project

Connecting Peers Virtually

The project is connecting student peers virtually across borders. While it sounds like a massive work load, it holds so many benefits for students on both sides that the work load becomes irrelevant. Initially I was somewhat discouraged by the lack of progress in the project. Recently I've discovered that feeling of discouragement was really due to my way of organizing time and projects. With such a large project, small movements are huge steps forward and should be much appreciated. Even last week I was down that I didn't seem to have any actual projects setup yet. Now I realize that I have the commitments of several instructors who are willing to participate and although all the details are not set yet, the project is definitely moving forward and in such a project, small steps forward are really huge advances.

There are several portions of this project underway. One focus is on graduate students, another on TESOL students, and another on students in middle school. The main

reason for the variety of student ages is due to the interest of teachers willing to participate as well as the need to see how student peers can interact in various ways and assignments.

The status of the joint assignment between students of the age of 10 at Liz' school in Central Mexico and Heather McLean's group in the Midwestern U.S. have the commitment of both instructors and we are in the stages of looking at various options. Heather is interested in having them do a blog or wiki and just yesterday informed me that her school is going to be using edublogging. There are several edublogging companies, so I've contacted her for clarification on which one they will be using. She will be teaching social studies to her group of 10 year olds. My immediate concern is how outside users can access the same edublogging site and participate together without enrollments or accounts. I'm verifying with her if her school purchased anything to see if Liz group can interact with them. Heather expects to be ready to launch in October, but has not determined how long she would like her students to continue the blog.

At this point, I'm going to suggest something brief for both sides to ensure that the students participate and to be able to evaluate whether or not the students should continue the project. To enable both sides time to read and respond, I think it would be best for them to read the same passage, allowing the student's in Mexico double the reading time, allow for 1 week's time for the student's to draft the first blog, then a week for the students to read, discuss the first blog with their instructors, and then add comments to other students' blogs. After the first two weeks, both instructors can evaluate whether or not they would like to do another week of blogs, a new topic for another two weeks, or hold and evaluate as to whether or not changes need to be made in the assignment before repeating.

Another connection that will be setup this fall is with Matthew Cecil who will be teaching a TESOL methods course this fall in Colorado with a methods course in Central Mexico. The course that will be connected to Matt's course is still to be determined as the courses and instructors have not all been determined yet for the fall in Central Mexico. For his course, we will be looking at setting up a reading and a discussion and possibly more depending upon the initial discussion. As his course will be a hybrid, both online and on campus, we will be looking at all the available online tools that his university offers his students in addition to Google Wave. I am waiting to hear back from him as to what his university uses, but will plan for Google Wave assuming that we will not be able to utilize the tools offered by his university.

In this case, we are looking to start the project sometime after the first month of classes and may possibly do more than one discussion. The initial discussion assignment would be one week for the initial post and response and a second week for follow-up thoughts and/or additional responses. The students in Mexico will be provided with the discussion question a week before the initial post is due so that they can focus on their first response in the first week. I am also suggesting a two week discussion instead of a one week discussion to enable all participates time to read, evaluate, and respond. Based on the success of the first discussion, we will be evaluating whether or not to do an additional discussion during the semester.

Initially Google Wave was searchable by Google, allowing anyone to look at the waves. During the beta version, it was determined that wouldn't be ideal. Now, there is a way to make a wave public, but otherwise, it remains private. That fix should calm privacy issues for

universities. Apart from that original concern, universities were concerned with supporting Google Wave and it possibly needing server space. During a wave discussing concerns for using Google Wave by Stuart Ridout, it was brought up that university IT departments would like to make it easier on their department rather than the students. The argument for using server space isn't needed at this time since we'll be using Google Wave as is on their server. I'm not sure there would ever really be a need to make server space even for larger universities, but I do understand the concern for server space.

In that same wave, Ridout lists many options for utilizing Google Wave in the classroom, the last being for discussions. There is a "translation bot" which enables users to translate what they post, but the instructor and the rest in the group invited to the wave would see their original post in addition to the translation. Ridout mentions that Google Wave would be great for "Real-time international exchange" because of the use of the translation bot. However, I feel that Google Wave would also be great for international exchanges at any time without the use of the translation bot. I would like to point out that most students are not likely to even know there is a translation bot available, let alone how to download it, apply it to Google Wave, and use it. As I mentioned though, all of those invited to the Wave would see whenever the student used the translation bot. As with all translation programs, the translations produced are not as accurate as if the student actually wrote without using a translation program.

In addition to the above two connections, I will be connecting a Methods course in Central Mexico with Dr. Von Canon's Methodology for Teaching Foreign Languages. They will be reading the same article and then discussion it. I am waiting to confirm the use of Google Buzz for the discussion. Before the assignment begins in her course, I will stop by and show the class how to use the tool and how to participate in the assignment.

For this course, there will only be one discussion about one article. The discussion will need to be only one week long as Dr. Von Canon would like to ensure that the activity is not too time consuming. I will be giving the students in Mexico an additional week to do the reading and to prepare for the discussion by providing the discussion question to them a week prior to the actual posting. By doing this, the students will have extra time to prepare for their initial post and focus more on their replies to other students.

One major plus for Google Buzz is that it enables private posts and allows for grouping. These two attributes are not always found in free online tools and help to preserve the student's privacy in the course. The grouping enables the student to post to the group easily. The reason why I'm choosing Google Buzz for Dr. Von Canon's group is that she wants it to be very simple and many students have Google email accounts and would be familiar with Google already. Vahid Masrour states that Buzz is good for "impromptu interchanges", and I feel that with the simplicity of Google would be a great option for her and her students.

In all the cases above, I will be creating "how-to" videos for the students on how to use the tools and participate in their assignments. I will be working with the instructors individually to ensure that they are confident in the tool. I have offered to visit Matt's course as well if needed.

My discussion time frame suggestions are based on experience working with CU Online as here in my position; I have found the normal discussion time frame to be 1 week. I am extending that time in some cases to enable second language users the additional time to

feel most prepared for their first decision across the border virtually. This extra time is not actually needed, but I feel it provides the students an additional comfort level. This semester I will be evaluating as to whether or not the extra time frame is necessary. At this point, I feel that it is, but most likely not again if these same students are to do further connections virtually.

This August or September, I will be meeting with my advisor to discuss my Thesis proposal. After speaking with another professor about setting up anonymous peer group evaluations, I feel confident that my advisor will approve the project. There is a lot of work to be done yet, but there are open doors. My goal is to be ready to create virtual student peer groups of five by Fall 2011 when new students enter into the program in Puebla. For that to happen, I must first be able to evaluate how much time it takes for students groups to interact virtually crossing borders as well as what programs to use for anonymous peer reviews. This semester I'm focusing on timing for small projects and do not feel that any of these programs that I've suggested thus far would provide an adequate anonymous peer review system. Next semester, I would like to focus on tools for anonymous peer reviews.

This August I will be attending COLTT, Colorado Learning and Teaching with Technology, Conference. By attending that conference, I hope to learn new possible ways to connect students and hope to be able to evaluate possible tools for anonymous peer reviews. Additionally, I will be attending the sessions on the tools that I will be looking to use this semester. There is a session called "Enhancing Class Discussions with FREE Web Tools" and I hope to learn a lot from that session for this coming semester. I was looking at using Ning before as suggested by a coworker, but this conference has a sessions that caused me to think otherwise: "The Death of Ning: Coping with the Cloud and Third-party Services in Higher Education". Since Ning was similar to Facebook, I'm wondering if simply using a Facebook group or page with possible other tools might work for the anonymous peer review groups. I will be attending "Social Networking; 'Prove it to me!'" to get some more insight on that. Another helpful session might be: "Collaboration, Interaction, and Social Presence in Higher Education".

References:

- Roudit, Stuart. *Uses of Google Wave in the classroom*. Google Wave. June 28, 2010. Web. 14 July, 2010.
- Masrour, Vahid. *Google Buzz for education*. Classroom 2.0. February 24, 2010. Web. 14 July 14, 2010.
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Appendix L - Blog Summary on Google Wave Discussion from 2010

<http://naomiwahls.weebly.com/retired-technology-tools.html>



Retired

Retired Technology Tools / Las herramientas de tecnología jubilada

Google Wave

What was Google Wave?
It was a discussion or conversation tool used in many settings, including work and school. It allowed users to share video, website, and other items while also commenting on them. Links and other Google gadgets could be added to create a more robust conversation.

When
I utilized this tool in the fall semester of 2010 to facilitate an online discussion between multiple courses at 21 different universities, including one in Mexico. Google terminated support for Google Wave during that fall semester and officially fully retired this tool in 2011.

Pros
Google Wave worked amazing. It is the first tool that showed a little bit of fun discussion, making it appear more like an actual conversation, similar to the iPhone text messages. It was very open ended with the number of gadgets that could be used. It also allowed you to copy the same people into a new conversation quite easily. Conversations could be filed away, just like emails. Conversation histories could be rolled back, even if content was deleted.

Cons
Sometimes worked in small settings, and as discussion or conversations were hard in large groups unless everyone saw each other name is listed. Managing who's involved in the conversation could be frustrating because of the name issues as well. It has been discontinued.

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Appendix M - Results from Google Wave Discussion from 2010

Response Summary

Total Started Survey: 6

Total Completed Survey: 6 (100%)

PAGE: GOOGLE WAVE DISCUSSION SURVEY

1. Please rate the following aspects of the discussions.

Create Chart

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	Excellent	Good	Adequate	Poor	Unacceptable	N/A	Rating Average	Response Count
Understanding the discussion requirements	33.3% (2)	16.7% (1)	33.3% (2)	16.7% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.33	6
Meeting time restraints	16.7% (1)	83.3% (5)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.83	6
Responding promptly to problems	33.3% (2)	33.3% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	33.3% (2)	1.50	6
Meeting overall discussion objectives	16.7% (1)	50.0% (3)	33.3% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.17	6
Content of the articles	16.7% (1)	66.7% (4)	16.7% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.00	6
Content of the cases	16.7% (1)	66.7% (4)	16.7% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.00	6
Responses from your peers	16.7% (1)	16.7% (1)	66.7% (4)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.50	6
Understanding how to login to Google Wave	50.0% (3)	50.0% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.50	6
Understanding how to post in a discussion	33.3% (2)	66.7% (4)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.67	6
Understanding which discussion to respond to	33.3% (2)	16.7% (1)	33.3% (2)	16.7% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.33	6
answered question								6
skipped question								0



4. Based on your experience, would you opt in to interact more internationally in future classes? [Create Chart](#) [Download](#)

	Response Percent	Response Count
Certain	50.0%	3
Very likely	0.0%	0
Somewhat likely	33.3%	2
Unlikely	16.7%	1
Very unlikely	0.0%	0
answered question		6
skipped question		0

5. If you have any suggestions regarding how we could improve the the technical side of the discussion, please enter them in the box below. [Download](#)

	Response Count
Hide Responses	2
Responses (2) Text Analysis My Categories (0)	

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×

Showing 2 text responses

No responses selected

I think this type of thing is a great idea. I think more emphasis should be put into expectations and facilitator questioning (related to expectations/objectives).

1/19/2011 8:58 AM [View Responses](#)

I would like to be able to identify the person who wrote the comment.

1/11/2011 6:29 PM [View Responses](#)

Virtually Connecting Peers and Intercultural Competency

Responses (3)

Text Analysis

My Categories (0)

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×

Showing 3 text responses

No responses selected

The topic of this discussion was good...especially for an ice-breaker. I'd like to see this type of relationship/discussion cover other topics like language acquisition, bringing culture into the classroom in a way that facilitates 2nd language acquisition while potentially supporting 1st language development. This is where many of us are at in our practice I think.
1/19/2011 8:58 AM [View Responses](#)

The discussions were pretty chaotic. I think there were too many people involved in each one. Smaller groups would help immensely.
1/11/2011 9:45 PM [View Responses](#)

Immigration policies in both countries, heritage from Latin American countries, immersion programs available.
1/11/2011 6:29 PM [View Responses](#)