

Chinese as Foreign Language Learner's Intercultural Communicative Competence Development through a U.S. - China Collaborative Online International Learning Project

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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted global trends towards greater intercultural engagement among students, staff, and faculty in higher education. Whereas study abroad programs, scholar exchanges, and other forms of international exchange were once on an explosive trajectory of growth, travel restrictions and geopolitical tensions will likely curtail many of these activities over the few years. Each of these challenges require higher education institutions to conceptualize and develop innovative programs to replace the ones which have been lost. Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) has been increasingly recognized as a meaningful mode of second and foreign language learning and teaching, which allows learners to engage in complex online dialogues for intended learning outcomes. This study describes the instructional design and outcomes of a six-week U.S-Chinese COIL project, which is implemented in an intermediate-level Business Chinese course in the Fall 2020. The project includes 7 college-level American CFL learners who study in a virtual environment with 10 Chinese partners in Beijing, China. This practical study centers on how the COIL model increases intercultural learning, promotes learners' motivations to travel and study in other countries, and develops cultural sensitivity around the raised awareness of different cultural norms. Practical recommendations are offered regarding the considerations that may come into play when designing and implementing a successful COIL project in other contexts. Additionally, pedagogical suggestions are offered to enhance the synchronous and asynchronous elements of techno-collaborative projects like COIL.