2 How to Get Started with COIL

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INTRODUCTION

COIL is inherently different from online distance learning in that it calls for co-teaching and brings together two or more groups of students in geographically distant locations to collaborate on activities. Perhaps the most significant differentiating factor is the first word in the COIL acronym: collaborative. Collaboration can be defined, interpreted, and implemented in any number of ways, and it is important that we discuss and define why it is so central to the topic at hand.

Collaboration refers to two or more people working together to achieve a shared goal; each person contributes his or her knowledge and expertise while leaving space for these inputs to be reframed or edited by those with whom they are collaborating. In other words, a fundamental characteristic of collaboration is the willingness to modify one's own contribution in order to better achieve a shared goal—along with the possibility of modifying the contributions of others for the same purpose. This interpenetration of ideas and actions is the crucible in which collaborative participants gain insights about one another's views of the world and how they jointly reflect on the subject at hand. As a point of comparison, cooperation refers to two or more people working individually to complete their part of a shared goal; each person contributes knowledge and expertise to a specific aspect of the final product, without any synthesis or recombination.

One goal that all COIL courses[1] share, regardless of their specific subject matter, is to enhance students' learning and cultural awareness. Learning and cultural awareness come through an increased engagement not only with the experience of other students located in a geographically different location but also by students recognizing how their own context shapes their beliefs and ideas. Through the process of planning and designing a COIL course together—a process that involves teachers[2] examining each of their respective courses, teaching styles, institutional cultures, thus experiencing first hand the process of collaboration. This then models collaboration for the students participating in their COIL course.

The primary aim of this chapter is to guide teachers interested in setting up COIL courses through a series of steps that help provide the necessary structure and flexibility for their success. Until recently, we would have begun a chapter such as this with a discussion of what individual teachers should take into consideration before embarking on a COIL project. Once one teacher has decided to proceed, we would next have focused on finding the right teaching partner because an effective, sustainable partnership is the foundation for a successful COIL project. However, as the COIL format was developed over the past decade, we have found that in order to avoid the one-off nature of so many COIL courses, the partnership needing development should not be merely the relationship between two or more teachers but must be based on a much broader network of understanding between their institutions, their staff, and their academic leaders. This realization means that although most of what follows focuses on the course development process between partnered teachers, for the effort to yield a sustainable and extensible initiative, other institutional participants must be included.

First of all, the senior administrator ultimately responsible for curriculum at each institution should be introduced to the budding partnership and should be encouraged to sign on as an active and engaged supporter. Ideally, this individual would soon become a COIL champion on campus and would help spread the model to other programs, departments, and schools in his or her domain. Almost as important, particularly at institutions with an active international programs office, is the direct involvement of the senior international officer (or equivalent). Even though COIL is primarily a curricular initiative, it shares much of its rationale with international programs, and the international institutional partnerships already established for student exchange, faculty research, and study abroad can provide a foundation for future COIL partnerships. Furthermore, developing hybrid programs that link COIL courses to short-term study-abroad trips can be a wonderful way of internationalizing the curriculum and expanding student mobility—for both partnering institutions.

Developing mutually compatible technical support, as well as gaining the direct involvement of instructional designers when they are on staff, is also key to the sustainable development of COIL. Although a few teachers are comfortable managing the technology used by students in their classes, a COIL initiative will not be successful without staff assigned to work with those teachers who either do not have the needed technical skills or who simply do not have the time to manage the technical complexities of a COIL course by themselves. This is also an area where institutional cultures must be examined because it is unlikely that the partnering institutions view technical support or course design in the same way. Even within the U.S., the presence of an instructional designer—that is, a professional trained in both technology and pedagogy—is not always the norm.

Thus when we speak of partnering, we refer to the entire process from finding to sustaining a good partnership on all levels, even though it is ultimately

the partnered teachers who in most cases will determine the collaborative heart of each shared course. These teaching partners must then plan the course based on an examination of some shared outcomes, tasks they have developed together, and tools that work for both partner groups. The rest of this chapter will focus on the steps individual teachers need to take to set up a COIL course.

WHY COIL?

Planning and implementing a COIL course requires a significant time commitment on the part of the teacher and the people at their institution who will support them. Thus, the first consideration is why you want to do a COIL course. If you are going to make the effort to invest time and energy into doing a collaborative online international course, it should add something significant to course content, learning outcomes, and the overall educational experience for both you and your students. Therefore, the first step is to consider how your existing or potentially new course could be enhanced by interaction with international peers. If you are solely interested in knowledge and information about another culture, perhaps adding resources such as guest lectures from international colleagues or online videos from other cultures about your course content will suffice. If, on the other hand, you are interested in engaging the perspectives of international students who may view the course content from a very different vantage point, a COIL course might be the right solution. Without discarding the benefits of the former approaches, the rest of this chapter will focus on the latter: internationalizing your course through COIL.

Finding a Partner

Locating the right partner to co-teach with is the second step, once you've decided you want to implement a COIL component in your course. For some teachers meeting and talking with a colleague at a conference can be the very stimulus for deciding to work collaboratively on developing a COIL course, but for many others, finding a partner can be the first significant barrier. Regardless of which category you fall into, we find that the following two exercises are useful for any teacher interested in engaging in COIL.

- *Geography:* Is there a particular geographic global perspective(s) that would best suit your course content? If there is, note how you see student contributions from that particular location adding to your students' learning. However, also choose two other geographical locations, such as ones that you may be interested in or where you might have colleagues, and try to imagine how student contributions from those parts of the world might enhance your course in different ways. As will become clear throughout this chapter, flexibility is key to making COIL courses successful. Therefore, if, for example, you have a reliable colleague who is not located in your first choice for geographical location, consider the benefits of working with that person's students. The same holds true for discipline.
- *Discipline:* Newcomers to COIL often assume, understandably, that they need to look for a partner who teaches a course similar to theirs or one that is based in the same discipline. A common example would be a foreign language class where the teacher looks for a partner in the country where the language they are teaching is the native or predominant language, such as a French teacher in the U.S. and an English teacher in France. Although there are obvious advantages to this model, other options are just as viable. Rather than search for an English teacher in France, the French teacher in the U.S. may look for learners of French as a foreign language in other countries. This puts the two groups on more equal linguistic footing and allows them to communicate solely in the target language (in this case French). Another option is to find a class from a completely different discipline in a country where the target language is a native language. In our example, this could be a sociology course in France where partner groups discuss family and society or a civil engineering course in French-speaking Cameroon where students discuss buildings, bridges, permitting rules and local bureaucracy, and the like in the respective countries. As these examples indicate, each option offers different benefits, and although the original course objectives may be quite different, for the purposes of the COIL component (usually running from 4 to 12 weeks), partners can find other shared objectives that focus on cultural learning, digital communication, and other learning outcomes. It may be a useful exercise to imagine three scenarios, each with a partner in a different discipline, to consider how the COIL component would change depending on the setting. It is also important to note that often when teachers think they have found a similar course or even 'the same' course in a foreign institution, rarely do the syllabi truly overlap. In all cases, partners will have to be flexible about adapting their existing syllabi to accommodate the shared syllabi of the COIL component.

Once you have started thinking about these questions, you then have to go about finding potential partners. You can find partners in many ways. A 2011 survey of European practitioners engaging in COIL-type activities (Guth, Helm, and O'Dowd 2012) found that two-thirds of respondents found their partners through their own network of colleagues and collaborators and that the remaining third worked through colleagues they had met at professional conferences, through their institution's network of partner institutions, and/or through partner-finding websites and/or social

networks. If you have yet to find a partner, the following are some initial questions that might help guide you in your search.

- Does your institution have existing partners for study-abroad programs, exchange programs, collaborative research, and the like that you might be able to tap into for potential COIL partners?
- Are there academic communities or disciplinary associations that could help you connect with a colleague? Do they have listservs or other portals through which members can communicate directly with one another?
- Do you have colleagues in foreign institutions that you or your colleagues have worked with in the past on research or other types of exchange and collaboration?
- Do you have colleagues who have already implemented COIL either at your institution or elsewhere?

Establishing a Partnership

Once you have identified a potential partner, you should discuss some criteria during the initial contact phase such as level of commitment, willingness to collaboratively work on COIL development, understanding of respective institutional cultures (whose differences are often not obvious at first), and keeping an open mind. Both you and your partner need to be equally engaged, committed, and responsive to negotiating the course content and teaching load that you will be sharing. Without equal input, the course can become unbalanced and will then reflect only one cultural perspective. This can undermine the most valuable aspect of the course, inasmuch as you and your partner should ideally be modeling productive cross-border collaboration to your students. The partner who initiates the collaboration may take a leadership role, but he or she needs to be careful not to dictate all of the details during course development. This restraint can be challenging because most initial partnered relationships, especially across international borders, are never completely equitable, but equity should be a goal and should be regularly discussed between collaborating teachers.

The starting point for course development is often a comparison of both partners' existing course syllabi, but it can be useful to step back and discuss each teacher's goals for their course and for the cross-cultural exchange. This shared developmental process can open a course or courses up to deeper revisions, rather than simply revising one teacher's syllabus to fit the other. Put otherwise, it may be appropriate to start with one teacher from the collaborative team as the lead, but the benefits, both for the teachers and students, will be most fully realized to the extent that the conceptualization, development, and implementation are truly shared.

The degree of freedom teachers have to make changes to their syllabi varies significantly across cultures, nations, and institutions. In some universities

modifying a course syllabus may require authorization from a supervisor, and proposing to work in partnership with a colleague in another country often requires the direct involvement of a senior administrator. In other institutions, teachers may have total freedom to change content from year to year without having to communicate the changes to their supervisors or students. Therefore, in the early stages of planning, it is important to discuss openly the institutional cultures and hierarchies that may need to be navigated if there is to be a successful outcome of the collaboration because extra time may be required to receive approval for the COIL component.

Finally, the aim of a COIL project is necessarily not to find an exact copy of your existing course in another cultural context but rather to look for ways that another teacher's material and approach might enrich your existing course. The more open-minded and flexible both partners are, the better the end product is likely to be.

Contacts

Simple as it may sound, sharing contact information right from the start is very important. It is likely that email will serve as a main source for communication, but teachers should consider a series of factors. For example, if you have more than one email address, which one do you check more often and which one would you prefer to use to communicate with your partner teacher? Or what expectations do you have about how much time should pass from when you send an email to when you expect to receive a reply, and whether text messaging is a useful and speedier alternate pathway? These questions should be negotiated from the start. It is important to remember that, in many contexts, access to the Internet carries a fee, is limited to certain times of the day (because of access to electricity), and/or is available only in specific locations such as a university computer lab. Experience has shown that partner teachers may feel offended if and when they do not receive a reply from their partner within the time frame they expect. Similarly, students will need to negotiate their communication expectations in order to build successful collaborations. It is also desirable to discuss how partners should handle problematic or even emergency situations because significant interruptions in communication are often misunderstood and can lead to false attributions and accusations. With a notification plan in place even if work needs to be suspended, the situation can be treated as a challenge, not as a devastating void.

In addition to email, teachers may choose to communicate using any number of other tools. It is useful to find some way to communicate synchronously, but using the telephone may be too expensive. Numerous free tools are available, such as instant messaging (Google chat and WhatsApp) and audio/video chat (Skype) that do, however, require an Internet connection. Expectations in synchronous communication can be even greater because each person is making an effort to be available not only via a certain

tool but at a specific time. Audio/video communication, particularly when teachers have never met in person, can truly help develop a stronger relationship and is almost a necessary component during course development. Often, at the beginning of the planning process, teachers agree on a day and time each week when they will commit to some form of synchronous communication. If this agreement is recorded in a shared online course development document such as a Google document or wiki page, then the teachers have more responsibility for respecting the agreed-upon times or letting their partners know in advance if they cannot be available.

Institutional Contexts and Cultures

Not only do COIL projects bring together teachers and students from different national, regional, linguistic, and/or ethnic cultures, but since COIL is an institutionalized form of exchange, we also have to consider institutional cultures. This means that it is important to consider factors regarding everything from factual information such as semester length to larger issues of pedagogy and assessment.

Factual Information

When two teachers have agreed to collaborate, they have most likely briefly considered issues such as semester[3] timing and time zones. Nonetheless, adding this information to a shared document allows both partners to have immediate access to these dates, especially during the planning stages. Important factual information that should be shared may include:

- Time zone in relation to GMT
- Daylight savings time, if it is used
- Semester start and end dates of the course you would like to use for the project
- Scheduled holidays when students (and teachers) are not available
- Other scheduled times when students may not be available for collaborative activities, such as during exam sessions, the last week of a semester, and so on
- Typical fixed times of day and days of the week for your course
- Duration of a typical class period (and number of face-to-face meetings per week if the course is not online)

This type of information is particularly important when COIL projects engage students in synchronous communication, but the same holds true for partner teachers. During the development stage, partner teachers may find that their academic calendars do not overlap; that is, while one may be teaching and not have very much time to dedicate to planning, the other may be on break and be more available. To avoid misunderstandings, partner

teachers must be clear about when they are or are not available for collaborative course development.

Pedagogy

What we might consider to be normal teaching practice in our specific context can often appear quite foreign or even strange to our partners from institutions in different nations and cultures. The spread of online and distance learning has indeed opened up opportunities to less served populations around the globe to get a higher degree, but at the same time this trend has been led primarily by anglophone institutions and cultures. As Helm, Guth, and Farrah report:

> There is a growing recognition that technology and online learning are not culturally neutral (Hewling, 2005; Reeder, Macfadyen, Roche & Chase, 2004) and that educational hegemonies need to be addressed. Ess (2009) argues that failing to do so "is simply naive and inevitably fatal to efforts to exploit ICTs [information and communication technologies] for effective cross-cultural communication."
>
> (2012, 27)

It is therefore very important that partner teachers share what is the norm at their respective institutions and through negotiation arrive at pedagogical practices that are acceptable in both institutional contexts. Here are some questions that might help guide this discussion.

- How many hours per week are students expected to be in the classroom/ to dedicate to study and work outside the classroom?
- How much of a student's grade is typically determined by the final exam? Is it possible to give more credit to other exercises during the semester?
- Is regular class attendance and participation important when determining a student's grade? If so, how will online participation in this collaboration be evaluated?
- Is there a mandatory grade distribution?
- How much are students expected to contribute their thoughts in class? Do student-initiated discussions add valuable content, or are they seen more as distracting from predetermined content?
- How much in-class (if your class meets face to face) or out-of-class group work do your students typically do with fellow students? Are they comfortable being graded for such group work?

The degree of academic freedom is, again, relevant here. Although a teacher might be inclined to adapt a partner's pedagogical approach, they both must be clear about their ability and comfort level with implementing

and supporting this approach. Similarly, if the approach is different from what students might normally expect in the classroom, teachers need to allow extra time for familiarizing students with the new approach and need to be prepared to scaffold students should there be discomfort with the approach. Venturing into unexplored pedagogical territory is also a reason why supporting a COIL course can be illuminating to instructional designers because they likely have limited experience in designing interculturally.

Course Objectives

'Shared' is one of the key words of any COIL project, and this is particularly important when we consider the objectives and content of any specific project. In many institutional contexts, course objectives and content are determined not by teachers but by departments, boards, or committees. However, to be successful, the teachers planning a COIL course must find a way to reconcile locally limiting standards to arrive at solutions that work for both groups.

To be as equitable as possible, a good starting point is for both partners to write down three or more objectives they have for their specific course. It is important that this be done individually and then shared because teachers need to express their own needs without being influenced by those of their partner. If both partners lay out their objectives during the initial planning stages, they can then negotiate how to accommodate both sets of objectives and develop course activities and tasks that help both groups achieve those objectives.

Content

> Cut down the readings.
> It was hectic . . . too many assignments not enough time to rest in between.
> More time for collaborative work.
> More oral [synchronous audio/video] sessions.

These are just four recommendations from students who were part of a project that piloted 24 COIL courses in the academic year 2010–2013 through the COIL Institute for Globally Networked Learning in the Humanities (see Chapter 1). As stated previously, theoretically the one shared objective of any COIL project is the development of students' intercultural awareness. The preceding four comments speak to this outcome. Whether or the main course content objectives on either side are shared, students appear to understand that they are being asked to collaborate online to learn about one another and themselves and would like more time to do just this. This leads to two questions that partners need to consider:

- How will you and your partner decide what content to use, and who will be responsible for reviewing, editing, and posting this content online?

- Will student-generated content, such as from a discussion forum or video project, be a significant resource for your course? How will these contributions be made?

With regard to the first question, it is important to understand how much "content" you will actually provide for students. For example, are you going to ask them to read articles and/or watch videos that are normally part of your course, or are you willing to negotiate new materials with your partner? You also need to consider how much time you expect students to engage with content as opposed to how much time you would like or expect them to engage with one another. If you have institutional expectations about how much content must be covered, is there any way you can move content to before or after the COIL exchange in order to allow students to dedicate 100% of their energy to the project while it is taking place? This is particularly important when a COIL course is brief—say, four or five weeks. If, for example, students have such a limited time period, most of the content should be their own production rather than numerous readings. In the end, the only advice that can be given regarding content is to be conscious of not overloading students and allowing them the time and space to engage in online intercultural exchange.

Tasks and Technology

In 2009, O'Dowd and Ware, two early adopter researchers and teachers of online intercultural exchange, published a paper in which they did a survey of COIL courses in the field of language learning and categorized the types of tasks used. Their findings confirmed much of what had been established as effective pedagogy in the field of distance learning (see Salmon 2000, 2002): learners must be familiar with one another and with the technology before they begin any sort of collaboration or knowledge construction, and it is the role of the teacher to support a progression from a more superficial getting-to-know-you stage to a more in-depth learning experience. They identified three macro categories that they defined as information exchange, comparison and analysis, and collaboration and production. These categories were also seen to be sequential inasmuch as they start students with more superficial tasks and activities that gradually allow them to build up trust so that they may eventually be able to effectively collaborate.

Based on this research and our own experience, the SUNY COIL Center has adapted this categorization to provide a basic outline of the types of activities that should be in any COIL course (see Figure 2.1).

Before jumping into content and complex discussions, students need to first break the ice—that is, the uncomfortable space between them. These types of activities are typical of both face-to-face classes and online classes, though they should be adapted for the COIL context. Icebreakers are a great way of establishing social presence—for both students and you as the professor. Conrad and Donaldson, in *Engaging the Online Learner* (2004), suggested that online icebreakers should be fun, creative, expressive, and

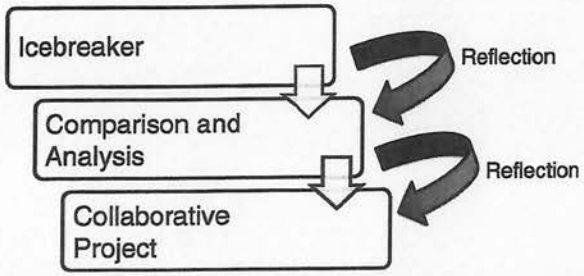

Figure 2.1 Task sequence for COIL courses.

focused more on personal life than on academic life. Given the ease with which multimedia content can be shared today online, especially where students have smart phones that allow them to take pictures, record audio, and make videos, icebreakers offer an excellent opportunity for students to share their worlds visually and aurally rather than merely through written introductions. However, these types of activities should be accompanied by clear instructions that allow students time to post whatever content they are sharing, to discuss it locally through guided discussion, and to share their ideas online with their international peers. As can be seen in the figure, each task should be followed by a reflection exercise integrated into the sequence. This can take place in the form of individual learner diaries that students keep or through guided classroom discussion.

Once students begin to communicate with one another in a nonthreatening activity, they should be ready to move on to more in-depth comparison and analysis. There are two fundamental considerations to make when developing comparison and analysis tasks.

- The partner teachers need to communicate effectively in order to identify an object or topic of comparison that will lead students to identify both similarities and differences among the cultures that are represented. There is a fine line to walk between a task that leads students to assume that 'we're all the same' or to feel defensive about differences. The partner teachers need to be comfortable with the topic chosen.
- The partner teachers will play a fundamental role in helping students interpret and understand not only the origins of their peers' responses to a given task but the cultural assumptions behind their own responses.

It is important to note that the point of comparison, often referred to as a 'text,' can vary greatly depending on course objectives (those of one or both partners). Some commonly used tasks are comparing how a global news issue is presented in newspapers in the respective countries, comparing an adaptation of a film from one culture to another, or comparing advertising campaigns of global products in both countries.

In the model we propose, collaboration is the keystone for developing intercultural competence but can only be proposed as an activity once students have developed a sense of trust and understanding. Collaboration requires interdependence; that is, students cannot complete the activity without communicating with their peers to access the experience and knowledge that only they have. In other words, collaborative activities must be designed in order to engage students in communication that will allow them to understand things they cannot simply discover by accessing a website or reading a book. Similarly, these tasks must be designed so that students depend on one another to complete the task. For example, rather than having students write a collaborative essay in which each individual writes his or her own part and adds it to the whole, students could be asked to carry out interviews locally, which are then shared with their peers and interpreted through online discussion and edited jointly.

Finally, first-time COIL teachers make two common mistakes when developing their pilot course:

- Thinking about the tools before thinking about the tasks
- Thinking too big

Readers might be surprised to find that tools and technology have yet to be discussed in this chapter. Tools and pedagogy can certainly inform one another, for example, a tool that allows students to engage in asynchronous video discussion, such as VoiceThread, might lead teachers to imagine how this could enhance learning in a course. However, it is important that the course objectives and outcomes, as well as general ideas about content and tasks, be in place before thinking about technology so that the pedagogy is the guiding factor. In addition to considering which tool might be the most appropriate for a given objective and task, you should consider other issues as well:

- *Student familiarity with the tools:* What's the learning curve if the tools are new to students on one side (e.g., you are using one institution's LMS) or both sides (e.g., you are using a neutral tool such as a blog)? You will need to allow time to train students.
- *Social media:* If you use tools students are familiar with, such as Facebook, you may require less time for training but will have to make sure that students understand a tool they generally use for social purposes will now be used for academic purposes.
- *Balance:* If one group is native speakers of English and the other is not and if the language of the COIL module is English, you can help counterbalance the linguistic advantage of the native speaker group by using the LMS of the non-native speaker group with the interface in the other language.
- Firewalls, privacy, institutional/state constraints on Internet use

Not only should partner teachers consider these issues, but once they have made technological choices, they should try out the tasks themselves. Although there may always be last-minute barriers to technology use, such as Internet outages (hence the need to always have a plan B!), some barriers may be constant, such as students not having access to certain social media tools. Teachers will undoubtedly have to be flexible in real time, but if they have tried out the tasks and tools beforehand, they will be able to avoid predictable problems and have more energy to deal with the unpredictable ones. Finally, it goes without saying that the more technical support teachers on both sides have, the more likely it is that the collaboration will go smoothly.

Assessment

Assessment of student learning is an extremely sensitive area because it can determine a student's academic success or failure. In general, it is usually better to keep assessment entirely local; that is, each teacher evaluates and assigns marks to his or her own cohort of students, and local assessment may in fact be legally required. This does not mean, however, that partner teachers cannot agree on a shared rubric for assessment for the COIL project. A shared rubric is the result of shared outcomes, which should be the basis of any COIL exchange. Nonetheless, the grades/marks that are assigned for achieving a particular outcome vary greatly from institution to institution, culture to culture, country to country, and this diversity itself is worthy of discussion. For example, while a high mark might be the norm in institution A, in institution B it may very well be the exception; discussion about the reasons behind these differences can lead to interesting intercultural discovery and increased awareness.

Associated with student learning is an overall assessment of the COIL course that may (or may not) determine whether it will be offered again. Different institutions use different formats of course assessments. In some cases these are anonymous and based on student feedback, whereas in other cases they are based on students' results on standardized tests. In either case, the key is that student learning is being assessed on what the objectives of the course are. Therefore, it is fundamental that partner teachers agree on the objectives/outcomes of the COIL project or agree to have differing objectives where that is justified. A case in point is when a COIL course is taught in English and only one cohort has improvement of their English language skills as a desired learning outcome.

Nonetheless, objectives that teachers will most likely have in common will be those regarding increased intercultural awareness, intercultural communicative competence, and the like. The assessment of intercultural competence (IC) is highly debated. The first attempts to define and assess IC started in the realm of business. As business was becoming more globalized,

companies and managers began to realize the need for their employees to be competent across cultures. One of the most widely used and well- known models is Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory (1983). Hofstede worked for IBM Europe and, over the second half of the last century, carried out research to identify systematic differences in national cultures. In addition to the challenges of adapting a model created for commerce to education, Hofstede's model has been criticized because it works on the assumption that national cultures can be defined. Moving beyond the concept of national culture, during the last two decades of the last century, Bennett (1993) developed a framework that describes the different ways individuals react to cultural differences. The framework, called the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), is divided into six stages of increasingly complex understanding of culture, resulting in increasing sensitivity to and understanding of difference. Hammer (2012) then developed the widely used Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), based on the DMIS, in order to generate a profile of an individual's or group's predominant stage of development. Not only is it a fee-based tool, but the IDI was not developed to specifically assess online intercultural encounters. Similarly in Europe, Byram (1997) developed a model for teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence (ICC) based on face-to-face cultural encounters, not online communication. Indeed, one of the challenges facing COIL innovators is the limited research on assessing intercultural development in COIL.

It is one thing to assess students' knowledge of a culture or ability to interpret a document from a different culture but quite another to assess changes in perspectives and attitudes. As Dervin (2010) points out, "openness to others, critical self-awareness and self analysis are basic values in education, yet there is no way we can prove or test (or trust) if somebody genuinely believes in them" (163). Yet often it is the transformation in attitudes and perspectives that teachers aim to achieve through COIL courses. Even when teachers depend on self-assessment through portfolios, essays, and questionnaires, it is difficult to objectively assess change or development. Consequently, the solution that many practitioners have chosen has been to develop their own tools with their specific course or program objectives in mind.

A comparison of the tools developed by two established COIL-type programs provides a good example of how tools are designed with specific outcomes in mind. Both programs use pre- and post-exchange surveys with closed questions using a Likert scale and additional open questions on the post survey. The first is the Global Understanding Program at East Carolina University (Chia, Poe, and Wuensch 2009). The course is aimed at exposing first-year students to varying cultural perspectives by engaging students in synchronous exchanges with students from three different cultures over the course of a semester. The second is the Soliya Connect Program

(www.soliya.net/?q=what_we_do_connect_program), which was originally designed for students in conflict resolution and media studies. The program brings together four students from the 'West' and four from the predominantly Muslim world for weekly topic-based discussions over an eight-week period. Figure 2.2 presents an extract of four questions from the pre- and post-surveys used by each program.

ECU Global Understanding	Soliya Connect Program
Generally, I am comfortable interacting with a group of people from different cultures.	Please rate your ability to express your ideas in a way that people from different backgrounds can understand.
I am tense and nervous while interacting with people from different cultures.	Please rate your ability to critically analyze global issues.
I have no fear of speaking up in a conversation with a person from a different culture.	Please rate your knowledge of the relationship between the Arab/Muslim World and the West.
I am calm and relaxed with interacting with a group of people from different cultures.	I have challenged media misrepresentation about the relationship between Western and predominantly Muslim societies.

Figure 2.2 Comparison of assessment rubrics.

A brief comparison demonstrates the different target groups and course objectives. While the Global Understanding Program investigates more emotional reactions (comfortable, tense, nervous, fear, calm, relaxed), the Soliya program, which targets higher-level students in specific disciplines, focuses on abilities and knowledge and makes specific reference to a Western–Muslim conflict. Whereas both programs are well aware of the subjectivity embedded within and the limitations of such surveys, they also know that it is important to provide the best possible assessment available for the benefit of both students and stakeholders. Two lessons that can be learned from these two tools and others, nonetheless, are the importance of administering pre- and post-assessment and administering them to all of the students involved in a project. This means that partner teachers (and preferably their institutions) agree on the use of a tool beforehand and that both are willing to administer it to their group of students. Too often research into COIL projects has been based on feedback from only one group of students, limiting the validity of such results.

Keys to Success

COIL is an innovative approach to internationalization. As with any innovation, there will be struggles and challenges along the way. Given the nascent nature of the field, there can be no guaranteed steps to success that have

proven to be true over decades. Nonetheless, this chapter has been informed by the experience of motivated teachers across the globe who have implemented COIL and shared their experiences through academic publishing and/or work with the SUNY COIL Center. This wealth of knowledge has allowed us to identify three factors that appear to be fundamental not only for the success of a COIL course but also for the sustainability of COIL initiatives across institutions:

- Committed institutional and teacher-to-teacher partnerships
- Learning first—joint course development that moves from objectives to activities to tools
- Flexibility with structure

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, partnering and partnerships refer not only to the two or more teachers offering a COIL course but to the teams within each institution and across institutions that will support COIL implementation. It is important to create close partnerships between teachers and university staff who support and administer technology and international education on campus. Once this has been accomplished, it is then important to build strong working relationships with teams locally and abroad.

Learning first refers to the concepts brought up in the last sections of this chapter: a focus on objectives and outcomes, then on content and tasks, and only then on technology.

Finally, *flexibility* should be the key word defining a COIL project from partnering to course implementation. Course development within a single culture or locus is complex enough, so if we add another culture and technology-mediated communication into this mix, there must be open communication and compromise—as well as, in the end, trust—to be successful. But this flexibility must be based on a course structure that is clear and transparent to all involved. Then, should there be technical difficulties or should a task require additional time to fully achieve proposed outcomes, most participants will understand the need to be flexible and to modify the structure to these needs.

The information provided in this chapter holds much of what you need to embark on a journey of global teaching. Be aware that the recommendations provided are meant only as guidelines for you, your partner, and your respective institutional teams because each COIL course is unique and requires unique consideration. Additional support can be found in the COIL Center's Faculty Guide to COIL Course Development (www.suny.coil.edu), which contains a list of resources, and by reading the experiences of the 24 COIL courses carried out as part of the COIL Institute for Globally Networked Learning (http://coil.suny.edu/case-studies). Armed with these tools and institutional support, in addition to flexibility, patience, and open communication, you should be well on your way to developing a successful and hopefully sustainable COIL course.

NOTES

1. In this chapter, we use the words 'course,' 'project,' and 'module' indiscriminately to refer to any portion of established institutional learning units that have been modified to include a component of collaborative study and work with one or more international groups of students.
2. In this chapter, we use the term 'teacher' to refer to any person who teaches a group of students in a higher education institutional context. Given the fact that numerous words to describe this role exist internationally (e.g., 'professor,' 'teacher,' 'lecturer,' 'educator,' etc.) and that each such word might carry with it certain political and professional connotations, we have chosen what we believe will be received as the most neutral term.
3. Although we use the term 'semester,' we are aware that other words, such as 'term,' 'trimester,' etc. are used. We are simply referring to a scheduled period of study with a beginning and an end in a specific institutional context.

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