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US and Mexico Online Interaction in Higher Education



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Problem Statement

- Undergraduate & graduate students in U.S. and Mexico lack intercultural competence (Bank, 2001; Byram 1997).
 - Knowledge and Skills
 - Despite the growing interest in higher education to creating global citizen, there is a lack of literature related to the influences of cross-cultural interaction on the participants' cultural awareness.
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Research Purpose

- This study examined the cross-cultural online interaction experiences between the U.S. and Mexican students.



Research Questions

- 1. What learners think about cross-cultural online interaction?
 - 2. What were the self-reported changes in regards to cultural awareness that occurred during cross-cultural online interaction?
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Theoretical Framework

- social constructivism
 - collaborative learning
 - technology
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Participants

- 6 U.S. and 3 Mexican participants took a one month summer online course on Multicultural Perspectives on Technology.
 - U.S graduate students were from Southern public university.
 - Mexican undergraduate students were southeastern university.
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Context

- Blackboard (LMS)
 - Wimba (Synchronous)
 - Discussion board (Asynchronous)
 - Videoconference (Interpreter: Mexican instructor)
 - Reading assignment -> online discussion
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Class assignment

- Photo stories
 - 1) short narrated self-introduction
 - 2) introduction about their own culture
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rC5pdAEcvLg>
 - Collaborative project
 - create a product like a lesson plan that promoted cultural awareness in the field of your choosing.
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Research Method

- Survey (1)
 - Semi-structured online interviews (1-2)
 - Online observation (11)
 - Documents (2 x photo stories, collaborative project, reflection paper)
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Data Analysis

- An inductive analysis approach to identify meaningful themes and patterns from the data collected.
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Results

- Lack of cross-cultural interaction
 - Only 3 out of 9 clearly stated their circle of friends were diverse.
 - Change in perspectives
 - 4 participants has changed their perspectives in relation to either US or Mexican culture.
 - Other participants had prior experiences with roommates, friends or co-workers either from Mexico or the United States and thought that the class reinforced their perspectives about these cultures.
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Results continue

- Increase their cultural awareness (photo stories and class discussions)
 - more than half of the participants thought that the course and the interaction with people from another culture have increased their cultural awareness.
 - The participants enjoyed creating and viewing other classmates' photo stories which provided them with a better understanding of their classmates and culture.
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Results continue

- Identifying similar and difference between culture.
 - family, nationalism, food, religion and music (photo stories)
 - US and Mexican realized that they had more alike than different because they valued the same things.
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- Every student expressed positive response to the cross-cultural online interaction and the overall online course.
 - Cultural understanding
 - Communication and cooperation skills (they would be able to work with people from other culture)
 - Potential tools the students can use in their class and/or for collaboration.
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Challenges

- Language Barrier
 - Google Translator
- Time Zone



Conclusion

- All students valued the experience of interacting with students from another country and enjoyed the online course very much.
 - The online tools such as Wimba and photo stories used in this course were successful in promoting cross-cultural interaction.
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Future Study & Recommendation

- Incorporate another country into the study (Mexico, Brazil, US)
 - Focus more on the local aspect of the culture
 - Education
 - Context
 - Lifestyle
 - Society
 - Another suggested tool for communication: Babelwithme
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