

2020 Annotated Bibliography on Virtual Exchange Research

The Stevens Initiative
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The Stevens Initiative's 2020 Annotated Bibliography on Virtual Exchange Research identifies and summarizes existing academic literature and research in the field of virtual exchange. This document includes 26 annotated publications that are contextualized for potential application, education level and audience, and geographic focus with key words used for easy searchability. In addition to the annotations, this publication includes a description of the methodology used to develop this project and lists multiple implications for future research in the virtual exchange field. This annotated bibliography serves as a resource for scholars, practitioners, and educators who have an interest in virtual exchange and who will contribute to research in this field in the future.



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Introductions

Stevens Initiative Introduction

Virtual exchange uses technology to connect young people around the world to learn and work together, developing the skills they need to participate in the 21st century workforce and to take an active role in their community and society. Virtual exchange as a pedagogical practice is not as recent a development as many assume. Educators and others have sought to use information technology to link young people in classrooms around the world since at least the late 1980s. Accompanying these classroom efforts were research projects, often designed and implemented by the educator implementing the exchange. The body of research focused on virtual exchange will only continue to grow as adoption and use of this practice becomes more widespread. Few resources describe this research landscape holistically, so practitioners and scholars can be isolated from other research and findings. Virtual exchange has the potential to become a part of all educational institutions, but understanding what is known and what questions still need to be answered about this practice is an important step toward wider adoption. Through this annotated bibliography, the Stevens Initiative seeks to establish a base of knowledge about research related to virtual exchange. We are excited to share this resource with the field as a way to start the discussion and elevate findings that can inform our work.

Acknowledgements

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Author's Introduction

The Stevens Initiative developed this annotated bibliography in an effort to aggregate as thoroughly as possible the existing research within the field of virtual exchange. This document is intended to provide a reference for scholars, practitioners, and educators interested in contributing to future research and practice within virtual exchange programming. In addition, this document will inform a research agenda for future Stevens Initiative projects.

The project is comprised of two sections, including a memo and a series of annotations. The memo describes the search process used to locate articles and synthesizes the current state of literature. Following the current state of the literature, a series of future research area recommendations are suggested. Lastly, a series of annotations are provided. The annotations are alphabetized and include the bibliographic information for the source, a short summary of the article, keywords, the geographic focus of the article, the intended audience, and the potential application implications for the article.

Annotated Bibliography Memo

Search Methodology

Articles for this annotated bibliography were initially located through searches of the education databases EBSCOHOST and ERIC. Within these databases, the keywords “virtual exchange,” “international educational exchange,” and “education” were used to identify relevant peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, conference proceedings, magazine articles, and reports. Given the use of multiple terms to describe these virtual activities, each of the above keywords was utilized to capture a more comprehensive body of work. The results were then narrowed by selecting articles published after 2005 to establish a recent research context. Additionally, a majority of non-peer-reviewed articles (e.g., magazines, conference proceedings, etc.) were removed; however, some practitioner-based resources were included since the field’s body of scholarship is still emerging. Articles were then selected for review based on their thematic relevance to the broad topic of virtual exchange programming. Articles’ bibliographies, a review of International Virtual Education Conference (IVEC) proceedings, and a list of previously collected annotations provided by Stevens Initiative staff were reviewed to determine additional resources. A draft of this document was provided to participants at the 2019 IVEC to receive further feedback and to identify additional sources for review. The Stevens Initiative also sought to make clarifying edits while seeking to maintain the author’s analysis. All articles were available in English, but the search was not limited to resources solely from the United States. Many of the reviewed authors represent perspectives outside the U.S. educational environment.

Current Literature Landscape

Virtual exchange is viewed as an innovative and new pedagogical technique that is being implemented across a variety of academic fields. As an emerging field of study, much of the existing literature addresses the concept of “international virtual exchange” rather broadly as the focus of research. As implied above in the search methodology, there are no standard terms in use in the field that describe the virtual environment of international exchange or the variety of activities it encompasses. In the research, multiple terms are used to refer to the field at large, including “international virtual exchange” and “online intercultural exchange.” In addition, a specific model of virtual exchange is often used to refer broadly to the field at large. For instance, Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) is increasingly considered a specific model of virtual exchange but is sometimes used synonymously with the term “international virtual exchange.” This illuminates the need for standardized terminology in

order for scholars, practitioners, and educators to more precisely understand the nuances of the field of international virtual exchange.

While the literature in this field is still emerging, a number of scholars, organizations, and practitioners are developing a body of research to inform our understanding of the international virtual exchange landscape. Many of the existing works are case studies, which provide descriptive accounts of implementing and leading a specific virtual exchange but are not meant to be generalized. Nevertheless, common findings about international virtual exchange have surfaced. Research has revealed that international virtual exchange has most commonly been used in service of language learning, peace building, and developing international cultural competencies. The majority of exchanges utilize a 1:1 relationship between two institutions instead of leveraging a network of partners. Many of the exchanges that have been studied have taken place between the U.S. and European partners; however, research points to the growing number of geographic regions engaging in this practice. English is the most common medium for facilitating international virtual exchanges when language learning is not the sole purpose for the exchange.

Much of this research has been completed by scholars who utilize and research virtual exchange as a new pedagogical technique. Thus, the existing scholarly studies have given little attention to the practical components of designing and implementing virtual exchange programming. On the other hand, the existing practitioner-based resources share tips and insight (e.g., timelines, technological testing techniques) for designing these exchanges but do not provide empirical evidence to support program design decisions. Many studies note certain elements of international virtual exchange that the researchers believe lead to a deeper impact; however, these are rarely the components being studied within the research design. Future research should focus on specific elements (expanded below) within the virtual exchange to determine what could lead to greater student learning outcomes.

Implications for Future Study

Potential areas for future study based on the existing research, listed alphabetically, include:

- **Academic Level:** While many of the studies within this annotated bibliography examine the academic environment and experiences for undergraduate university students, future research should explore the experiences of graduate students and students at the primary and secondary level. Additional studies could also focus on the collaboration between students at the same academic level and those collaborating with peers in differing levels of education (e.g., undergraduate students collaborating with graduate students).
- **Accessibility:** Further examination of the accessibility and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance of virtual exchanges for students with disabilities is warranted to ensure equitable access to international virtual exchange opportunities.
- **Alumni Programming:** As with the previous two suggestions, little is known about alumni of virtual exchange programs and how these experiences influence their future selves. Longitudinal

studies or studies focusing on past participants of virtual exchanges could illuminate the long-term impacts of these exchanges.

- **Diversity and Inclusion:** There is a dearth of research on international virtual exchanges involving underrepresented students. Research should focus on the experiences of underrepresented students both in the context of their interaction with students in their home communities and with their international counterparts.
- **Duration:** A number of studies noted duration in two distinct ways: length of the virtual exchange program and the number of hours spent engaging in virtual activities within the program, something the Stevens Initiative refers to as “dosage.” While many of these studies noted duration, they did not specifically research the topic. Future research should explore both of these aspects to determine the impact of the program and activity length on student learning.
- **English as Lingua Franca:** Additional research is needed on the impact of English as the default language of instruction and interaction for participant groups who speak other languages.
- **Implications of Asynchronous versus Synchronous Interactions:** Time zone differences, technological infrastructure differences, and academic calendar misalignment are factors influencing the selection of asynchronous or synchronous interactions. Further research could focus on the different outcomes of these two interactions and best practices for each.
- **Instructor/Facilitator Development:** Little research is focused on the impact of faculty training on the effectiveness of international virtual exchange programs. Future studies could examine a variety of educational interventions meant to advance faculty learning and enhance implementation of these exchanges. Additionally, researchers could examine faculty members’ previous international or virtual education exposure and its potential impact on student learning.
- **Orientation Programming:** Studies have revealed the need for orientation programming that addresses cultural, communication, and academic differences between international participants and implementing partners before virtual exchange activities. Future studies could examine the impact of supplemental pre-programming on deepening participant learning outcomes.
- **Previous Exposure:** As more students are exposed to international virtual exchanges or similar virtual activities, studies should take into consideration the impact of students’ multiple exposures on learning outcomes in subsequent program participation.
- **Program Evaluation and Assessment:** The appropriate role of research and effective program evaluation methods are still emerging within the field. Studies could focus on a variety of different measures (e.g., academic performance, economic outcomes) to determine indicators of virtual exchange success for a variety of stakeholders.
- **Scaling of Programming:** Many studies examine single exchange programs and do not focus on the growth of programs or institutional programming. Additional attention to challenges and opportunities in expanding these exchanges as well as ensuring sustainability within these partnerships is needed.
- **Technological Inputs:** A variety of platforms and communication applications exist to support virtual exchanges, but the efficacy and appropriate usage of these technological tools warrants

further study to determine the most impactful implementation of technology on student learning.

Additionally, cross-program and cross-institution research should be prioritized to determine generalizability or transferability of these curricular interventions. As mentioned before, another hindrance to this emerging field of research is the lack of standardized terminology. For instance, in the European context, virtual exchanges are sometimes called Online Intercultural Exchanges (OIE). In different academic fields, virtual exchanges are commonly referred to by names that correspond with different virtual exchange models (e.g., business–virtual teams; foreign language–telecollaboration/e-tandem). Separate annotated bibliographies or research projects could examine best practices of the various models of virtual exchange. Lastly, there is a dearth of research on exchanges with institutions specifically in sub-Saharan Africa. Additional resources to create virtual exchanges or examine the existing examples of virtual exchanges in the region should be prioritized.

Incentives for university faculty to develop innovative pedagogical practice and to produce publications has led to a high concentration of articles focusing on the implementation of these exchanges at the university level. However, the virtual exchange community includes many K-12 virtual exchange projects, and additional research or assistance should examine the successes and challenges of these virtual exchange projects as well. Furthermore, published articles often lack the input or voice of educational administrators. Future research initiatives could support the development of practitioners in entering the scholarly arena.

Key Voices in the Current Literature

Of note are four scholars who are producing a considerable amount of material on the topic of virtual exchange; some of their work is included in this annotated bibliography. O'Dowd is prolific with over 40 articles on the topic. Helm, Guth, and Rubin are also frequent contributors to scholarly and practitioner resources. Additionally, Byram's (1997) definition of intercultural competence is commonly used to define intercultural activities, and Allport's Intergroup Contact Theory is commonly understood as a rationale for the development of virtual exchanges. These scholars are frequently cited in the study abroad (physical mobility) scholarly context, which highlights synergies in international education scholarship and practice. While many theoretical frameworks can be used to study virtual exchange, it would be useful to consider prominent scholars within the student learning, development, and international education fields. Some of these scholars include Mezirow's (1978) Transformative Learning Theory, Yosso's (2005) Cultural Wealth Model, Barber's (2012) Theory of Integrative Learning, Tinto (1975) or Braxton's (2000) research on student retention, and Bennett's (1986) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. Research regarding virtual exchange is emerging as the practice grows in popularity. The annotations below, including these key voices and other scholars, review a sample of the research examining this emerging field and aim to assist virtual exchange practitioners and scholars in the formation and implementation of virtual exchange programming.

Annotated Bibliography

Abrahamse, A., Johnson, M., Levinson, N., Medsker, L., Pearce, J. M., Quiroga, C., & Scipione, R. (2014). A virtual educational exchange: A north-south virtually shared class on sustainable development. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 19(2), 140-159. doi: 10.1177/1028315314540474

Summary: In this article, the authors detail insights gained from a first-year virtual exchange program offered between a U.S. institution and a Bolivian partner university. The course was developed to facilitate an international education opportunity for STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) students, as these students were underrepresented in international student mobility efforts. Furthermore, the course aimed to provide a relevant example of sustainable development and enhance an existing service-learning partnership. Key findings from the case study indicate ongoing challenges for partnership building with differences in technological infrastructures, as well as the need for early intervention in facilitating bonding between students. Two important takeaways from this article are the necessity of providing students with clear instructions and orientations on differing academic cultures to facilitate better student-to-student interactions. Secondly, guest lectures should be used intentionally to deepen student learning and avoid confusion on the scope of the course content.

Usage/Application: Program Design; Navigating Technology Issues; Enhancing Partnerships

Educational Level/Audience: Higher Education/Virtual Exchange Instructors

Geographic Focus: U.S.; Latin America

Keywords: STEM; Program Design

Akbaba, Y., & Başkan, F. (2017). How to merge courses via Skype? Lessons from an International Blended Learning Project. *Research in Learning Technology*, 25. <https://doi.org/10.25304/rlt.v25.1915>

Summary: The authors of this study designed and co-taught a course between colleges in the U.S. and Turkey on contemporary Turkish politics. Course development took place over 15 months and offered the instructors a collaborative space to discuss differing pedagogical approaches, which led to innovations and improvement to their instruction that impacted this course and future courses. The course combined face-to-face instruction with whole-class Skype sessions and 1:1 student virtual project teams. The virtual exchange environment was viewed by the instructors and students as a complement to the course delivery. Students in both country contexts agreed that the virtual environment was a value-add, but there were notable differences between the Turkish and American students' views on learning from one another. American students indicated more positive learning advancements on understanding the Turkish political system than their international peers indicated on understanding the American system. Common challenges around time differences and logistics emerged but were reframed as opportunities to better understand the geography and traditions of the other country. Authors also noted that the continual enhancement of technology offers a new and easier facilitated environment for engagement in virtual learning that can cause both excitement and fatigue.

Usage/Application: Teaching & Learning; Course Redesign

Educational Level/Audience: Higher Education/Virtual Exchange Instructors

Geographic Focus: U.S.; Europe

Keywords: Political Science; Institutional Cooperation

Barbier, R., & Benjamin, E. (2019). From 'CoCo' to 'FloCoCo': The evolving role of virtual exchange (practice report). In A. Turula, M. Kurek, & T. Lewis (Eds.), *Telecollaboration and virtual exchange across disciplines: In service of social inclusion and global citizenship* (pp. 23-29). Research-publishing.net. <https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2019.35.936>

Summary: The focus of this research centers on the emerging need for virtual exchanges in the face of socio-political uncertainties. In particular, the authors noted a need to respond to the realities of Brexit and future developments that will impede physical mobility. Additionally, the article discussed the complexities of using English as a lingua franca and the need to use culturally appropriate texts and materials given the international and multicultural nature of the participants in the virtual exchange. The authors studied an expanding virtual exchange, supported by Erasmus+ funding, focused on enhancing cultural competency and language learning. The studied virtual exchange environment was facilitated by creating spaces to build relationships, leveraging those relationships to build competence, and then engaging with those international peers across devices and applications. The authors pointed to an increasingly knowledgeable group of students when it comes to navigating multiple devices but a negative relationship to completing extended tasks. Main takeaways included the need to create small, manageable tasks that break down a larger project as a means to facilitate project completion and varied interactions between international peers.

Usage/Application: Foreign Language Classrooms; Program Design

Educational Level/Audience: Higher Education; Virtual Exchange Instructors; Policymakers

Geographic Focus: Europe

Keywords: Cultural Competence; Socio-Political Issues; Brexit

Bassani, P., & Buchem, I. (2019). Virtual exchanges in higher education: Developing intercultural skills of students across borders through online collaboration. *RIITE. Revista Interuniversitaria de Investigación en Tecnología Educativa*, 6, 22-36. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6018/riite.377771>

Summary: The authors examined a virtual exchange between students in Brazil, France, and Germany intended to increase students' intercultural competence. The case study examined the planning phase, virtual exchange activity, and evaluation phase of the experience. The authors noted that all three faculty participated in asynchronous and synchronous meetings to develop the program a month prior to course launch. The short window to course launch likely impacted the ability of faculty to test the technological platform they were using, which later presented as an issue. Students navigated this issue by utilizing other applications to communicate. During the second phase of the study, two key findings emerged. The first was that low confidence in English language skills negatively impacted student engagement. The second finding was that students engaged primarily during predetermined class times and rarely engaged outside of these times. In the third evaluation phase, two surveys were conducted. Overall, little insight was gained because the response rate between the first and second surveys was vastly different. However, the first survey provided insight into students' low confidence in navigating differing cultural work environments. The article is available in English and Spanish.

Usage/Application: Course Design; Enhancing Intercultural Competence
Educational Level/Audience: Higher Education/Virtual Exchange Instructors
Geographic Focus: Europe; Latin America
Keywords: Intercultural Competence; Student Engagement

Caluianu, D. (2019). When more is less: Unexpected challenges and benefits of telecollaboration. In A. Turula, M. Kurek, & T. Lewis (Eds.), *Telecollaboration and virtual exchange across disciplines: In service of social inclusion and global citizenship* (pp. 7-13). Research-publishing.net.
<https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2019.35.934>

Summary: The author discusses a multi-year virtual exchange partnership between institutions in Japan and Romania. There were varying levels of buy-in and support between the institutions, which negatively impacted the ability of instructors to balance their course workload and created communication challenges between the partners. These challenges led to a continual reduction in activities and offerings of the virtual exchange each year. The reduction of activities highlighted a need for the partnering institutions to discuss the sustainability and longevity of the partnership and the unequal nature of institutional support at their respective universities at the onset of program development. However, the author noted that a reduction of activities, due to a lack of institutional commitment on the Romanian side, led to a redevelopment of the course. The course moved from a highly structured and planned model of delivery to a more flexible model that offered students the space to digest the course content and critically reflect on course activities. Students were ultimately able to articulate a deeper sense of self-awareness, understand differences in communication styles, and advocate for programmatic changes (e.g., course pacing and cultural training) within the course.

Usage/Application: Partnership Development; Initial Program Design; Incorporating Reflection
Educational Level/Audience: Higher Education/Program Designers; Donors
Geographic Focus: Asia; Europe
Keywords: Institutional Support; Program Design; Partnerships; Reflective Practice

Custer, L., & Tuominen, A. (2016). Bringing “internationalization at home” opportunities to community colleges: Design and assessment of an online exchange activity between U.S. and Japanese students. *Teaching Sociology*, 45(4), 347-357. doi: 10.1177/0092055x16679488

Summary: In this research, virtual exchange programming was examined as an applicable way to support the internationalization goals of a community college. Authors stressed the importance of including community colleges in the field of virtual exchange and considering virtual exchange as a form of global engagement in spaces where access to mobility efforts are limited. Authors highlighted data from the course design and delivery phases that showcased the differences in retention in carrying out these exchanges, as Japanese students expressed great interest, but very few participated. On the other hand, fewer U.S. students expressed interest, but the majority of the cohort participated, which provides interesting insights into cultural dimensions of recruitment. Within the course context, the authors found it is important to utilize professional contacts within campus networks in order to incorporate additional expertise within the course design and lectures. Authors stressed the importance

of a common language, similar levels of understanding concerning discipline-specific knowledge and grading cross-institutional assignments to hold students accountable for the effective development of virtual exchanges. Additionally, the authors found that their assessment tools indicated differing levels of advancement in a student's intercultural development. When designing and conducting surveys, practitioners should consider the cultural dimensions and interpretations of their international counterparts. Authors in this study indicated particular cultural differences in modesty, which led to the underrepresentation of self-reported cultural gains by the Japanese students. Even with these assessment challenges, the authors noted that both groups of students appreciated the opportunity to engage in a virtual exchange and were surprised by being able to establish common ground with international peers.

Usage/Application: Course Design; Assessment Practices; Recruitment

Educational Level/Audience: Higher Education; Community College; Virtual Exchange
Instructors

Geographic Focus: U.S.; Asia

Keywords: Assessment; Cultural-Competency; Community College; Recruitment

De Wit, H. (2016). Internationalisation and the role of online intercultural exchange. In R. O'Dowd & T. Lewis (Eds.), *Online intercultural exchange: Policy, pedagogy, practice* (pp 69-82). New York: Routledge.

Summary: In this chapter, De Wit, a prolific scholar of international education, discusses the history of the internationalization of higher education, eventually linking with online intercultural exchange (OIE). From the modern historical account, he moves to the current rationale for internationalization and advocates for updated definitions for internationalization within the curriculum, on the home campus, and in how it is applied comprehensively. Within these updated definitions, he connects the practice of internationalization with OIE through academic and economic motivations and the need to develop students' and staff's intercultural competencies. Additionally, he discusses the arguments in support of OIE, which include access to global education, interest generation in study abroad, exposure to new cultural and pedagogical practices, strengthening of collaboration between partners, and the cost-effective nature of these exchanges. He goes on to highlight European initiatives to provide a strategic framework for OIE implementation, grant support, and research generation. He concludes with a call to action to expand internationalization framing beyond physical mobility to incorporate OIE and to scale virtual exchange initiatives.

Usage/Application: Policymaking; Rationale Building; Linking to Internationalization Practice

Educational Level/Audience: All; Higher Education/Policymakers; Senior Internationalization Officers; University Senior Administration

Geographic Focus: Global; Europe

Keywords: Internationalization; Global Citizenship; Access; Advocacy

Easteal, P., & Westmarland, N. (2010). The virtual sabbatical: A pioneering case study. *Innovative Higher Education*, 35(5), 297-311. doi: 10.1007/s10755-010-9153-9

Summary: In this article, the authors advance a new notion of virtual engagement that encourages faculty to utilize virtual technology to embed themselves in another university campus environment during a sabbatical. This particular method provides insight into new avenues for engaging faculty in virtual exchange programming, as well as strengthening partnerships. The article provides a clear process for identifying a partnership and utilizing appropriate technologies and identifies activities that can be carried out from a virtual environment that overlaps with traditional forms of sabbatical engagement. A timeline that details the search for partnerships and the logistical and administrative framework for developing this sabbatical experience was shared along with a list of goals that guided the virtual sabbatical experience. In summary, the article provides insight into future faculty-based programming and digital partnerships.

Usage/Application: Faculty Engagement; Enhanced Research Partnerships

Educational Level/Audience: Higher Education/Faculty

Geographic Focus: Australia; Europe; Global

Keywords: Faculty; Research & Scholarship

Elliott-Gower, S., & Hill, K.W. (2015). The Soliya Connect Program: Two Institutions' Experience with Virtual Intercultural Communication. Digital Commons @ Kennesaw State University.

Summary: This article opens with an overview of the Soliya model of virtual exchange, which focuses on connecting small groups of students from Western countries with those in Muslim-majority countries, fostering meaningful contact and dialogue to increase compassion among students. Soliya strives to create access for a diverse array of students to engage in global education since physical mobility (study abroad) opportunities are still limited for many. The article offers a case study by two faculty leading a Soliya-facilitated course at two Georgia universities. The Soliya experience facilitated an exchange that allowed students to empathize with each other and enhanced the academic content by connecting students with international peers. Both institutions supported the Soliya dialogue experience with course readings about Islam and Muslim communities to deepen the students' experience as they engaged with international peers. These readings, combined with dialogues with international peers, increased U.S. students' self-awareness about culture and their own cultural tendencies; increased understanding of the culture and history of communities with significant Muslim populations; and created a space for constructive dialogue that did not previously exist. Shared lessons learned stressed the importance of intentional course planning, utilizing learning contracts to hold students accountable, and preparing and setting expectations for technological issues.

Usage/Application: Course Redesign; Facilitating Intergroup Dialogue

Educational Level/Audience: Higher Education/Faculty

Geographic Focus: All

Keywords: Student Learning; Soliya; Intercultural Competence; Assessment

Guadamillas Gómez, M. V. (2017). Building global graduates and developing transnational professional skills through a telecollaboration project in foreign language education. In C. Álvarez-Mayo, A. Gallagher-Brett, & F. Michel (Eds.), *Innovative language teaching and learning at university: Enhancing employability* (pp. 49-58).

Summary: This chapter evaluates a case study of a virtual exchange program between institutions in the United Kingdom and in Spain that was created to advance students' language skills in an effort to boost employability. Course activities were developed in three phases with the goal of developing e-literacies and e-skills that enhance a student's ability to communicate in a foreign language. In the first phase, two weeks of preparation and discussion between the two institutions led to the creation of exchange activities and a system of support to monitor the effectiveness of the exchange. In phase two, students engaged on a weekly basis for 30 minutes a week. The students completed practical, adaptable, and meaningful tasks shown to enhance intercultural competence development. A series of prompts were also provided to aid the students in creating a relationship with their virtual peers. Instructional support staff monitored the student engagement and provided oral and written interventions in non-virtual course learning spaces. In the third and final phase, an evaluation system was deployed at the pre-, mid-, and post-virtual exchange phases. The evaluation highlighted how previous exposure to virtual exchange programming led to differing levels of student engagement with the course activities. Additionally, course activities with relevance and applicability to the "real world" deepened the students' intercultural learning gains.

Usage/Application: Foreign Language Classrooms; Employability; Program Design

Educational Level/Audience: Higher Education; Language Educators

Geographic Focus: Europe

Keywords: Foreign Language Learning; Professional Skills; Case Study

Guth, S., & Helm, F. (2012). Developing multiliteracies in ELT through telecollaboration. *ELT Journal*, 66(1), 42-51.

Summary: Guth and Helm argue for the need to move beyond traditional notions of literacy to a multiliterate framework, one that includes the development of a student's understanding of a diverse range of languages and cultures in society. Their article examines the development of multiliteracies through task design within a telecollaboration model. Their case is a virtual exchange between an Italian and a German institution that uses English as a lingua franca. Task cycles were created with pre-task activities, task completion activities via Skype sessions, and post-task activities. These tasks focused on core elements of tasks typical of telecollaboration; information exchange, comparison, and analysis; and collaboration and product creation (O'Dowd & Ware, 2009). These task elements were examined across three dimensions of online literacies: skills (operational), knowledge (cultural), and awareness (critical). The authors acknowledge that the study of task development is emerging in the virtual exchange scholarship. However, their hope is that this study starts that conversation, as their students indicated positive gains in online literacy and English language skills through their structured interventions in task design. Additionally, the article shares specific examples of scaffolding activities that utilize technology, build contextual knowledge surrounding the task, and introduce self-reflection for developing critical meaning of the task. The authors state that potential future areas of research should examine student and teacher roles in task activities, the best tools for meeting task objectives, and the collaboration that needs to take place between instructors in co-developing the course.

Usage/Application: Task Creation; Program Development; Assessment
Educational Level/Audience: Higher Education; All/Virtual Exchange Instructors
Geographic Focus: Europe
Keywords: Telecollaboration; Foreign Language Learning; Program Design; Tasks

Guth, S., & Rubin, J. (2015). How to get started with COIL. In A. Moore & S. Simon (Eds.), *Globally networked teaching in the humanities: Theories and practices*. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Summary: This chapter serves as an introduction to the COIL model and is written for virtual exchange beginners. The COIL model emphasizes a collaborative approach that creates shared investment in course design and implementation, which differs from a cooperative approach emphasizing individuals working separately on a shared project. Additionally, all COIL projects are designed to enhance learning and cultural awareness through interactions with international student counterparts. The authors note that while COIL focuses on the course development process, partners need to work together to create sustainability beyond one-off course exchanges. To increase the sustainability of these exchanges, they discuss the need to garner institutional support that situates COIL programming within the curriculum. A discussion of various roles that campus administrators and instructional staff play is provided in detail. Partnering techniques are also described, with a focus on discovering existing university partnerships, acknowledging geographical differences, and finding a discipline-specific partner over a perceived course match. Once a match is found, logistical planning (e.g., time zones, academic schedules, key contacts) is needed to better understand the feasibility of the partnership. Since COIL courses are co-designed, instructors' meetings to discuss pedagogy, course objectives, content, course tasks, and technology conversations are critical to their success. Instructors are also advised to think differently about the delivery of these courses, as readings may need to be reduced to allow time for collaborations, or collaboration may need to be scaffolded to build rapport between students. In summary, this article provides a guide to starting your own COIL course and is an essential read for anyone considering this model.

Usage/Application: Cultural Learning; Program Development; Partnering
Educational Level/Audience: Higher Education; Virtual Exchange Instructors; Virtual Exchange Administrators
Geographic Focus: All
Keywords: COIL; Starting a Virtual Exchange; Program Design

Hagley, E. (2016). Making virtual exchange/telecollaboration mainstream – Large scale exchanges. In S. Jager, M. Kurek, & B. O'Rourke (Eds.), *New directions in telecollaborative research and practice: Selected papers from the second conference on telecollaboration in higher education* (pp. 225-230). Research-publishing.net. <https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2016.telecollab2016.511>

Summary: This paper advances the use of virtual exchange in language classrooms. The authors note that the English as a Second Language classrooms are typically culturally homogenous, which increase the need for intercultural connections and collaborations. Authors also note that this student

population's mobility is typically limited; thus, utilizing virtual exchange programming can assist with cultural exposure and reduce access concerns. Lessons learned from this study highlight the need to organize groups of similar academic levels to create deeper engagement with international peers and to tackle more complex tasks. Instructors also play an important role in monitoring the virtual exchange environment and providing additional interventions.

Usage/Application: Language Learning; Intercultural Competence Development

Educational Level/Audience: Higher Education; Language Centers; Language Instructions

Geographic Focus: Asia

Keywords: Language Learning; Intercultural Competence; Instruction; Access

Helm, F., & Guth, S. (2012). Open intercultural dialogue: Educator perspectives. *Journal of E-Learning and Knowledge Society*, 8(3). <https://doi.org/10.20368/1971-8829/648>

Summary: Helm and Guth begin this article by discussing the various ways individuals could connect across difference utilizing technology. However, they note that research shows many people are mostly engaging online with others with similar viewpoints. Using this to frame their study, they seek to understand instructors' attitudes toward introducing sensitive topics in their virtual exchanges and examine instructors' feelings in regard to disagreements and conflicts. They characterize disagreements as differences in opinion and conflict as confrontation that occurs when discussing sensitive topics. To study this, they surveyed over 200 European instructors with and without virtual exchange experience before following up with semi-structured interviews and focus groups with a much smaller subset of the survey respondents. The follow-up subset only included instructors with virtual exchange experience. They found that conflict avoidance is an issue within instruction, as less than half (44 percent) of respondents said they intentionally encourage discussion of sensitive topics. Instructors noted certain sensitive areas like political topics (e.g., September 11th) and national/cultural issues (e.g., independence movements) that they purposefully avoid to reduce conflict. The finding was similar between educators with virtual exchange experience and those without. For many of the instructors, there is a fear of losing control of their class if these topics are discussed. Authors suggest the need to study the effectiveness of trainings on facilitating dialogue around sensitive topics to create meaningful intercultural exchange. Another area that the authors suggest for additional research studies is the correlation between students' language skills and their ability to engage in discussions on sensitive topics.

Usage/Application: Intercultural Competence; Program Design; Teaching & Learning; Instructor Training

Educational Level/Audience: Higher Education; All/Virtual Exchange Instructors; Researchers

Geographic Focus: Europe; All

Keywords: Conflict Avoidance; Sensitive Topics; Intercultural Communication; Program Design

Helm, F. (2017). Critical approaches to online intercultural language education. In S. Thorne & S. May (Eds.), *Language, education and technology. Encyclopedia of language and education*. (3rd ed.). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-02237-6_18

Summary: In this chapter, Helm reviews the development of virtual exchanges in foreign language learning through a critical lens. She debunks four commonly held assumptions about language learning in virtual exchange programming and practice. The first assumption she addresses is intercultural contact leads to deeper understanding and fosters equity. Using additional studies, she notes aspects of failed communication and privileged Western-centric viewpoints exist in participation and silence. The second assumption debunked is the notion of the native speaker as the ideal interlocutor in the telecollaboration. Developing the agency of the non-native speaker can move from a deficit-based approach to one that values the non-native speaker. Additionally, this assumption ascribes a single native language to a nation, which can lead to an oversimplification of language and culture in a community. The third assumption is the need to foster communicative and sociocultural competence, which overemphasizes conflict avoidance. Instead, Helm advocates for students sharing their viewpoints and instructors helping students navigate conflict and tensions in these exchanges. Lastly, she debunks the assumption that technology is inherently a neutral medium. Instead, she acknowledges technology does not eliminate unequal power dynamics or inequalities that exist in the “real” world. Helm suggests some alternatives such as using English as a lingua franca, which addresses deficiencies in some assumptions but also has its own pitfalls as it can reduce plurilingualism. She also suggests that additional studies should be carried out to better understand how students and teachers navigate the virtual exchange environment. In summary, Helm offers a variety of empirical sources to advocate for using a critical lens to examine virtual exchange practice.

Usage/Application: Teaching & Learning; Foreign Language Learning; Critical Approach; Curriculum Design

Educational Level/Audience: All/Researchers; Virtual Exchange Administrators; Virtual Exchange Instructors; Policymakers

Geographic Focus: Global

Keywords: Telecollaboration; Intercultural Communication; Critical Pedagogy

Helm, F. (2018). The long and winding road...In C. Fuchs, C. Kennedy, & M. Satar (Eds.), *Journal of Virtual Exchange 2018* (pp. 41-63). <https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2018.jve.3>

Summary: Helm’s article provides a comprehensive history of the field and is useful for any practitioner hoping to gain additional insight into the development and advances made in virtual exchange programming. Her primary audience is the community of virtual exchange practitioners and policymakers, many of whom she names in the article (i.e., Soliya, iEARN, Stevens Initiative, etc.). While she brings a European perspective, Helm’s article engages with the global history and practice of the field. She argues that geographical distance and security costs are potential leading rationales for advancing virtual exchange within the U.S. Helm also articulates policy action needed for the future. She shares examples of successful previous policy advocacy initiatives that produced large-scale data on virtual exchanges and created platforms (UNICollaboration and the *Journal of Virtual Exchange*) that connected educators and decreased fragmentation of virtual exchange resources. Highlights of her vision focus on engaging across organizations through a coherent policy strategy, cultivating new regional stakeholders through grants, critically examining the virtual exchange practice through research projects, and advocating for increased support from policymakers and within educational curriculums.

Usage/Application: Policy Formation; Historical Perspective; Advocacy
Educational Level/Audience: All/Virtual Exchange Administrators; Policymakers
Geographic Focus: Europe; Global
Keywords: Education Policy; Leadership & Governance

Li, Y. (2012). Cultivating student global competence: A pilot experimental study. *Decision Sciences Journal of Innovative Education*, 11(1), 125–143. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-4609.2012.00371.x

Summary: This article covers creating and assessing a virtual exchange intervention within the business school curriculum at institutions in the U.S. and China. The author pursues two key propositions. The first articulates the belief that global competence is teachable, and the second articulates the need for students to have meaningful hands-on contact with international peers to advance global competence. To test these propositions, the author discusses an international virtual exchange intervention that allowed students to explore the internet, consumer spending, real estate, hiring, and product development habits in the U.S. and China. There were three opportunities to check in with students to hold them accountable. Additionally, a 17-point assessment was created following a review of global competence literature. The main findings of the article show the prevalence of Chinese students wanting to engage with their U.S. counterparts even though the Chinese students already have a strong understanding of U.S. culture. U.S. students, on the other hand, grew in their intercultural competence with exposure to their Chinese peers. Pre-tests indicated that American students lack global knowledge, skills, and attitudes, which should also cause the higher education community to take action. Lastly, the assessment results indicate that global competence is teachable with appropriate learning opportunities.

Usage/Application: Project-Based Learning; Course Redesign
Educational Level/Audience: Higher Education; Virtual Exchange Instructors
Geographic Focus: U.S.; Asia
Keywords: Business; Assessment; Intercultural Competence

O'Dowd, R. (2018). From telecollaboration to virtual exchanges: State-of-the-art and the role of UNICollaboration in moving forward. *Journal of Virtual Exchange*, (1). 1-23. doi: <https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2018.jve.1>

Summary: The author uses his extensive knowledge of the field to provide a literature review of virtual exchange, establishing a common history of the field and illuminating the challenges within it. The main challenge noted is the lack of consensus on terminology. O'Dowd offers a typology to organize the various approaches to virtual exchange. The first approach, subject-specific, is divided into two categories. The first category examines virtual exchange for language learning that has a long history and robust body of scholarship on the topic. The second category within this approach focuses on business studies initiatives, which provides common practices that simulate the work environment. Both of these categories of subject-specific approaches rely heavily on a bottom-up method that emphasizes the instructor as the leader of the exchange. The second approach examines the shared syllabus model, which includes the commonly known Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) model. In this

approach, courses are co-designed and taught by two or more international partners. This model involves instructors and administrators, which allows for increased institutional support and the ability to scale these exchanges quickly. The final approach is the service-provider. In this model, the school outsources the virtual exchange to an outside organization that facilitates the virtual exchange. iEarn, Soliya, and Sharing Perspectives are profiled as various facilitator-led approaches that utilize these providers' platforms. These organizations have formed the Virtual Exchange Coalition that advocates for virtual exchange funding and awareness within the U.S. policy environment. The author ends the article by discussing the need for virtual exchange to increase tolerance given the current global political environment. He promotes the need to advance scholarship about the field and offers the *Journal of Virtual Exchange* as one potential avenue for publication.

Usage/Application: Historical Account; Developing Program Typology; Creating Glossary; Understanding Program Models; Research

Educational Level/Audience: All/Program Developers; Virtual Exchange Instructors; Researchers

Geographic Focus: Global

Keywords: Typology; Internationalization; COIL; Soliya; Foreign Language

O'Dowd, R. (2019). A transnational model of virtual exchange for global citizenship education. *Language Teaching*, 1-14. doi:10.1017/S0261444819000077

Summary: In this article, the author provides an overview of differing models for virtual exchange. These models include Xculture (also called virtual teams), which is a business-focused model that exposes students to competences in the workplace; e-tandem, a language learning model that requires students to take charge of their learning; telecollaboration, a language learning model that requires classroom integration; Soliya, a mentor-led, cross-cultural exchange between the West and the Muslim and Arab world; and Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), a more general model that transverses academic fields. Following the overview of these models, the author provides case studies specifically for e-tandem and telecollaboration. These emphasized models are used to showcase their strengths and weaknesses in aiding foreign language and intercultural learning. Additionally, the author describes intercultural competence and global citizenship frameworks and provides models for understanding these concepts. The author argues that the field needs to move from a reflective ("pre-political") state to an action-oriented ("political") state in which participants take interculturally informed action within virtual exchange programming to address pressing global issues.

Usage/Application: Foreign Language Classrooms; Development of Learning Outcomes; Understanding Key Concepts and Terms in Virtual Exchange

Educational Level/Audience: Higher Education/Language Educators

Geographic Focus: Europe; Global

Keywords: Foreign Language Learning; Higher Education; Intercultural Competence; Global Citizenship

Patterson, L.M., Carrillo, P.B., & Salinas, R.S. (2012). Lessons from a global learning virtual classroom. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 16(2), 182-197. doi:10.1177/1028315311398665

Summary: In many ways this article is a cautionary tale as it showcases a number of issues that can emerge in the process of designing and implementing a virtual exchange. Kennesaw State University and an educational institutional partnership in Colombia agreed to facilitate a form of mobility since physical mobility options were not available due to university risk management policies. The course goals were to advance students' global competency while also exposing students to issues of social development and immigration. Even with planning meetings between partners, key issues emerged around all aspects of course implementation, from technological issues to course content to communication challenges. Technological difficulties resulted from underdeveloped technological infrastructure within Colombia. Faculty addressed this problem by moving many of the lectures to asynchronous meetings with students uploading reflections and engaging in web-mediated discussion sessions. Logistical and communication challenges emerged around language barriers, academic schedule differences, and a time change midway through the course. Faculty addressed these concerns in future courses by embedding an online translation software, changing introductory activities, and changing course activity timelines. Lastly, content challenges emerged, as immigration looks vastly different in Atlanta and Bogotá. Immigrants in the Atlanta region came from a variety of backgrounds (i.e., ethnicity, poverty level, gender, etc.), while those in Bogotá were rather homogenous, making it difficult to draw comparisons. Future course offerings will redesign the comparative activity to contextualize immigration in both locations and discuss applications of theory to each situation. Even with these challenges, the faculty noted that they and their students enjoyed this type of classroom environment and wish to pursue virtual exchange opportunities in the future.

Usage/Application: Partnerships; Intercultural Development; Foreign Language

Educational Level/Audience: Higher Education; Virtual Exchange Administrators; Virtual Exchange Instructors

Geographic Focus: Latin America; U.S.

Keywords: Initiating Partnerships; Intercultural Competence

Rubin, J. (2016). The Collaborative Online International Learning Network. In R. O'Dowd & T. Lewis (Eds.), *Online intercultural exchange: Policy, pedagogy, practice* (pp. 236-272). New York: Routledge.

Summary: In this chapter, Jon Rubin, the author and director of the Center for Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) at the State University of New York (SUNY), provides a comprehensive history of the COIL model of virtual exchange and the approach the staff at COIL take to support these exchanges. COIL formally started in 2006 after years of faculty creating their own international linkages through virtual exchange. In 2010, COIL became a part of the SUNY system-wide administrative structure. It should be noted that it is not affiliated with one particular university within the system. The Center for COIL takes a consultative and supportive approach to facilitating online learning through conducting institutional profiling, developing orientation courses, and identifying sustainable partners. The Center for COIL offers a variety of formats for developing a COIL course. These formats range from short-term one- to three-week engagements to full semester-length engagements, with the majority of the courses opting for a format in-between. COIL operates on a membership basis where SUNY schools pay fees to use the resources of the Center for COIL and attend the COIL conference. These SUNY member institutions join a network called the Nodal Network. International institutions also utilize the

center but join the Global Partner Network. In both networks, institutions must secure commitments from leadership and have committed faculty and/or support staff. Even with a dedicated center, challenges still arose from institutional commitment, university system size, and the decentralized nature of the system, as well as resistance to the new modality of teaching and the ability to fully integrate these courses into the curriculum and department teaching practices. However, SUNY and the Center for COIL continue to advocate for these exchanges to support access to global education, as only 4 percent of their student body has the opportunity to study abroad.

Usage/Application: Organization & Administration; Advocacy; Implementing COIL Course

Educational Level/Audience: Higher Education; Senior Internationalization Officers;
Organization Leadership

Geographic Focus: Global

Keywords: COIL; Access; Program Support

Rubin, J. (2016). Nautical musings on local and global innovation and change: The disruptive pedagogy of COIL. In E. Jones et al. (Eds.), *Global and local internationalization*. Sense Publishers, 75-79.
doi:10.1007/978-94-6300-301-8_11

Summary: In this chapter, Rubin, former director of SUNY's Center for Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), reflects on the disruptive nature of virtual exchanges within the university setting using a metaphor from his background as a media artist. His metaphor is meant to provide an example of how virtual exchanges challenge educators to think about exchanges in a new light within a new context. He continues by offering a critique of current practice and pushes the reader to "stretch" their current understandings of international exchange. Additionally, the article offers insights into the COIL model and discusses the key aspects (e.g., team taught, shared coursework, emphasis on experiential education) of this model.

Usage/Application: Faculty Recruitment & Training

Educational Level/Audience: All; Higher Education/Virtual Exchange Instructors

Geographic Focus: Global

Keywords: COIL; Faculty; Disruptive Pedagogy

Ruiz-Corbella, M. (2014). Virtual mobility as an inclusion strategy in higher education: Research on distance education master degrees in Europe, Latin America and Asia. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 9(2), 165-180. doi:10.2304/rcie.2014.9.2.165

Summary: This article is the culmination of a six-year research project looking at the feasibility of implementing virtual exchanges in graduate degree programs across three regions. Authors noted the need to advance global competences within their student bodies as a primary factory for advancing virtual exchanges. Additionally, the authors discussed the increased usage of virtual technologies across universities (MOOCs, distance education, etc.) and the prevalence of handheld devices (cellphones, tablets, etc.) that the majority of students use on a daily basis as additional rationale for developing virtual exchange programming. Lastly, authors discussed access for students with differing ability statuses, financial means, and other life commitments as needing alternative options for mobility.

Within the study, the authors examined everything from the availability of web-based information regarding institutional offerings to academic calendars to institutional commitment through strategy articulation and dedicated infrastructural resources for virtual exchange. This article is a precursor to the ERASMUS+ virtual exchange program and offers insights into advocating for virtual exchanges and assessing the feasibility of partnerships.

Usage/Application: Policy Formation; Partnerships

Educational Level/Audience: Higher Education; Graduate Education; All Levels; Policymakers; Decision Makers

Geographic Focus: Europe; Latin America; Asia

Keywords: Global Competency; Advocacy; Feasibility

The Collaboratory. (2019). *Virtual Exchange Toolkit*. Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Department of State.

Summary: This is a beginning-level guide that details how to set up a virtual exchange. Key definitions and case studies (e.g., Virtual Book Clubs, Virtual Sister Cities) are shared to provide a basic understanding of virtual exchange programming. Additional tools, including detailed timelines, support for troubleshooting common issues, and a handout to map a virtual exchange, are shared to assist practitioners in establishing a virtual exchange.

Usage/Application: Program Development; Resource for New Faculty & Administrators

Educational Level/Audience: All Levels/New Practitioners

Geographic Focus: Global

Keywords: Assessment; Case Studies; Diplomacy

The EVALUATE Group. (2019). *Executive summary – The key findings from the EVALUATE European policy experiment project on the impact of virtual exchange on initial teacher education*. Research-publishing.net. <https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2019.30.9782490057344>

Summary: In this report, key findings are shared from the Evaluating and Upscaling Telecollaborative Teacher Education (EVALUATE) European policy experimentation, which aimed to evaluate the impact of the telecollaborative model of virtual exchange in enhancing the competencies student teachers need to engage in a digital and cosmopolitan world. The experimental program ran from 2017-2018 with 34 different institutions across 16 countries that organized over 25 virtual exchanges involving over 1,000 students. The report shows growth in intercultural, linguistic, and digital-pedagogical competencies among these individuals. Student teachers highlighted how the program enhanced their ability to engage with peers from other cultures, advanced their ability to use technology in the classroom, and increased their confidence and problem-solving skills within their work. These positive attributes led teachers to recommend that others utilize virtual exchange and encourage students to explore physical travel to other countries in the future. This policy experiment also illuminated challenges centered on the need for support with course development, planning and integrating these activities into organizational structures, and establishing measures to combat resistance and provide institutional recognition by decision makers. Additionally, within the classroom context, the findings point to the

need for regular engagement among international peers in the pursuit of completing tasks and the appropriate use of technologies (e.g., videoconferencing for language learning or messenger apps to effectively collaborate and communicate). Activities that allowed peers to introduce themselves and share information about themselves were shown to build rapport for collaborative projects implemented later in the exchange. The report provides a list of recommendations for stakeholders at higher education institutions and in policy-making roles that advocate for additional funding and support for these programs.

Usage/Application: Inform Policy; Enhance Curriculum; Teacher Training

Educational Level/Audience: All; Higher Education; Policymakers; University Leadership

Geographic Focus: Europe; All

Keywords: Teacher Education; Telecollaboration; Policymaking

Zheng, D., Schmidt, M., Hu, Y., Liu, M., & Hsu, J. (2017). Eco-dialogical learning and translanguaging in open-ended 3D virtual learning environments: Where place, time, and objects matter. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 33(5). doi:10.14742/ajet.2909

Summary: In this article, the authors examine a virtual exchange between four high school students in the U.S. and China. The study examines sense-making and language use as students navigate a gaming space that creates a virtual living room that students must decorate. The article examines language learning and the emergence of translanguaging, a term that refers to learners using two or more languages to navigate a task together. While the main focus of the study is not the virtual environment, it does analyze how students in the virtual context are bound by their socio-cultural understandings of an object or a place. Additionally, it provides insight into how students use language in a virtual environment. Lastly, the article provides potential coding mechanisms for others to consider in future studies examining how students navigate and communicate in the virtual environment.

Usage/Application: Language learning/Research; Teaching

Educational Level/Audience: High School/Virtual Exchange Instructors; Researchers; Language Instructors

Geographic Focus: U.S.; Asia

Keywords: Foreign Language; Gaming; Research



The Stevens Initiative is an international effort to build global competence and career readiness skills for young people in the United States and the Middle East and North Africa by growing and enhancing the field of virtual exchange. It is a lasting tribute to Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens, a public servant who dedicated himself to building understanding between people from different countries. The Stevens Initiative is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, with funding provided by the U.S. Government, and is administered by the Aspen Institute. It is also supported by the Bezos Family Foundation and the governments of Morocco and the United Arab Emirates.

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Stevens Initiative



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