First steps toward implementing critical virtual exchange

As we broaden and deepen our collaborations with our partners in the Global South, we strive to create, sustain, and embed in our curricula virtual exchanges that bring our students closer together, if not physically, then through increased awareness, growing empathy, and mutual respect for each other's skills, knowledge and experiences. At the same time, however, there is a growing awareness that we in higher education need to address issues of coloniality (Bacino 2024), as well as challenges related to the digital divide and access to equitable use of technology (Weaver, et. al 2024). These issues have influenced the ongoing international virtual exchange between pre-service language teachers from the Universidade Federal de Santa Caterina, Brazil, and pre-service English language teachers from the Pädagogische Hochschule Weingarten, Germany. The lecturers became aware of the need to address, if not directly, then at least indirectly, the real differences that exist between our students and their educational and personal contexts through the choice of tasks and group projects. One consequence of this reflection was the decision to include the lesson plans for the educational projects that the Brazilian students were working on for their coursework. These projects were embedded in outreach programmes and community organisations in their region, and this decision was intended to shift the lead from the outset to these students and their contexts. As lecturers, we wanted to address aspects of critical virtual exchange in this way and 'ensure (a) more equitable and inclusive student exchange experience' (Hauck 2023). This 'forced' realignment of roles led in part to insecurities and irritations on the part of the German students which could then be discussed in class, thus raising students' awareness of these issues and inequalities. The German students highlighted in their learning journals the care and respect they tried to show in offering feedback on the lesson plans from this uncertain position.

The groups worked closely together during the six-week exchange, sharing stories of indigenous communities, immigrant backgrounds, regional traditions, and different educational backgrounds; they found commonalities but also learned to appreciate their differences in views and experiences. The exchange continued despite the faculty and student strike taking place at the same time at the university in Brazil. Many students expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to participate in the VE and their wish to repeat such an exchange in their future classrooms. The decision to include a presentation by an eTwinning Ambassador seemed to have been successful in providing the German students with a real platform and means to implement such an exchange in the future.

Padlet of Group 5

Laura Topcu-Müller • 4 • 14d

Communication
We choose to communicate via what's app. We created a group already :)

Weekly time to meet
Wednesday
→ 11 am Brazilian time
→ 4 pm German time

Rules
Virtual Exchange Program Rules
1. Respectful Communication
2. Punctuality
3. Active Participation
4. Cultural Sensitivity
5. Technical Etiquette
6. Feedback and Improvement
7. Problem Resolution
8. Program Commitment

Leaders
- Meeting 1 > Christina
- Meeting 2 > Ann-Cathrine
- Meeting 3 > Ricardo
- Meeting 4 > Laura
- Meeting 5 + 6 > Ekaterina

AI's image of a Brazilian and German Exchange

Pinhão

Pinhão

Culture Box
TRILINGUALISM IS MY...
Padlet - laura topcu-müller
Culture box

Communalities and differences in our culture box discussion/ presenation
DOCX
Communalities and differences in the culture box discussion

Ekaterina Pochueva
1. Ran a marathon and came in last;
2. Own four dogs, a cat, a turtle, and a fish;
3. Lived in New York for a couple of years.

2 truths, one lie
1. I love swimming and participated in competitions when I was young.
2. I have a horse and two dogs.
3. I have lived in Vancouver and Toronto before.

1. I bred poodles for 2 years.
2. I kidnapped my neighbor's rabbit when I was 5 years old.
3. I named one of my cats "Small cat".

1) I'm from a village with less than 500 inhabitants.
2) I have never drunk coffee.
3) I have lived in three different countries.

Ricardo Piccolo Abel
1) I live in an island;
2) I have a gnome tattoo on my leg;
3) I know how to read tarot cards.

May celebrations - Brazil & Germany
DOCX
May celebrations

Formalities - Lesson Plan
google docs
Lesson Plan - Healthy Food
- should deal with more than one skill (reading, writing, listening, speaking) and with a communicative or critical focus.
- include the following three components:
  • The targeted student group: age, language level, school context - This is already given to your Team by the UFSC students' teaching contexts
  • The targeted learning objectives (relate to the CEFR or other reference documents (e.g., in Brazil, BNCC))
  • instructions for the task, assessment criteria, and tips for implementation

Lesson Plan Sketch
google docs
Lesson Plan - Virtual Exchange (UFSC + PHW).docx

PowerPoint Presentation
LESSON PLAN – VIRTUAL EXCHANGE
PPTX
Lesson plan_final version_Virtual Exchange_Ricardo, Ekaterina, Laura, Anne-Cathrine, Christina (1)

Lesson Plan	Celebration in May	Culture box	Online rules	Weekly team leaders	Weekly time to meet

Bruna Tomé Borges

google docs
Lesson Plan - Bruna and Marlisa

Bruna Tomé Borges
Presentation
Team 4
canva.com
Lesson Plan VE
+ Add comment

Bruna Tomé Borges

Anonymous
I think it is Mother's Day, a holiday where mothers are acknowledged for their hard work throughout the entire year.
melissaribler1 - I think it is Mother's Day.
Freuden Strahl - I suggest Mother's day as well :)
Anonymous - I think its Mother's day :)
+ Add comment

Anonymous
I think it is International Tea Day, celebrated in May. This day acknowledges the cultural and economic significance of tea worldwide and aims to raise awareness about the history of tea, the conditions of tea workers, and sustainable production.
Bruna Tomé Borges - International Tea Day, celebrated on May 21st.
melissaribler1 - I would agree, that it is the International Tea Day.
+ Add comment

Anonymous

What is a Culture Box?
A culture box is a collection of random objects that define us or our social identities. Such identities might include race, religion, gender, ethnicity, social status, sexual orientation, family groups, or perhaps none of these. The goal of the culture box is a way to help others understand our life story and who we are today, and share with them hidden or invisible values. Culture box items don't have to be physical or material items such as photos or jewels. Instead, the items can be quotes, family stories, important narratives, jokes, experiences, favorite expressions or words, or anything else. (Abdesalam Soudi, PhD - Department of Linguistics, University of Pittsburgh)
+ Add comment

Culture Box Melissa
+ Add comment

Freuden Strahl
culture box Carolin
PDF
cultural box
+ Add comment

Anonymous
Culture box Kathrin

Bruna Tomé Borges
- Everyone must make sure their cameras and microphones are working before the meeting.
- Find a place that is quiet with a minimum chance of interruptions.
- Do not try to do another task while the meeting is on.
- If there are issues with the scheduled time, the team must be informed 24 hours ahead on WhatsApp group.
+ Add comment

Anonymous
Idea for the lesson plan
Tooth brushing and mouth hygiene
+ Add comment

Bruna Tomé Borges
Team leader #1: Bruna
+ Add comment
melissaribler1
Team leader #2: Melissa
+ Add comment
Freuden Strahl
Team leader#3: Carolin
+ Add comment
Anonymous
Team leader #4: Kathrin
+ Add comment
Anonymous
Team leader #5: Christina
+ Add comment

Bruna Tomé Borges
Thursday
10:30 - 12:00 (Brazil)
15:30 - 17:00 (Germany)
+ Add comment

Im Zuge der Ausweitung und Vertiefung unserer Zusammenarbeit mit Partnern im Globalen Süden bemühen wir uns um die Entwicklung, Aufrechterhaltung und Verankerung in unseren Curricula von virtuellen Austauschprogrammen, die unsere Studierenden einander näher bringen, wenn auch nicht physisch, so doch durch ein größeres Bewusstsein, wachsende Empathie und gegenseitigen Respekt für die Fähigkeiten, das Wissen und die Erfahrungen der anderen. Gleichzeitig wächst jedoch das Bewusstsein, dass wir uns in der Hochschulbildung mit Fragen der Kolonialität (Bacino 2024) sowie mit Herausforderungen im Zusammenhang mit der digitalen Kluft und dem Zugang zu einer gerechten Nutzung der Technologie auseinandersetzen müssen (Weaver, et. al 2024). Diese Themen haben den laufenden internationalen virtuellen Austausch zwischen angehenden Fremdsprachenlehrern der Universidade Federal de Santa Caterina, Brasilien, und angehenden Englischlehrern der Pädagogischen Hochschule Weingarten, Deutschland, beeinflusst. Die Dozenten wurden sich der Notwendigkeit bewusst, durch die Wahl der Aufgaben und Gruppenprojekte, wenn nicht direkt, so doch zumindest indirekt, auf die realen Unterschiede zwischen unseren Studierenden und ihren Bildungs- und Lebenskontexten einzugehen. Eine Folge dieser Überlegungen war die Entscheidung, die Unterrichtspläne für Bildungsprojekte, an denen die brasilianischen Studenten im Rahmen ihrer Kursarbeit arbeiteten, mit einzubeziehen. Diese Projekte waren in gemeinnützige Programme und Organisationen in ihrer Region eingebettet, und mit dieser Entscheidung sollte von Anfang an die Führungsrolle auf diese Studierenden und ihre Kontexte übertragen werden. Als Dozenten wollten wir auf diese Weise Aspekte des kritischen virtuellen Austauschs ansprechen und "eine gerechtere und integrativere Erfahrung des studentischen Austauschs gewährleisten" (Hauck 2023). Diese "erzwungene" Neuverteilung der Rollen führte zum Teil zu Unsicherheiten und Irritationen auf Seiten der deutschen Studierenden, die dann im Unterricht besprochen werden konnten und so das Bewusstsein der Studierenden für diese Themen und Ungleichheiten schärften. Die deutschen Studierenden betonten in ihren Lerntagebüchern die Sorgfalt und den Respekt, mit dem sie versuchten, aus dieser unsicheren Position heraus Rückmeldungen zum Projekten zu geben.

Die Gruppen arbeiteten während des sechswöchigen Austauschs eng zusammen und tauschten Geschichten über indigene Gemeinschaften, Migrationshintergründe, regionale Traditionen und unterschiedliche Bildungshintergründe aus; sie fanden Gemeinsamkeiten, lernten aber auch, ihre unterschiedlichen Ansichten und Erfahrungen zu schätzen. Der Austausch wurde fortgesetzt, obwohl an der brasilianischen Universität zur gleichen Zeit ein Streik der Lehrkräfte und Studenten stattfand. Viele Studierende bedankten sich für die Möglichkeit, an der VE teilzunehmen, und äußerten den Wunsch, einen solchen Austausch in ihren künftigen Klassen zu wiederholen. Die Entscheidung, eine Präsentation eines eTwinning-Botschafters einzubeziehen, schien erfolgreich gewesen zu sein, da sie den deutschen Studierenden eine echte Plattform und Mittel für die Durchführung eines solchen Austauschs in der Zukunft bot.

Bacino B. (2024). Identify, Interrogate and Interrupt – how to begin addressing the issue of Coloniality in Virtual Exchange. *UNICollaboration Blog*. 2024; https://www.unicollaboration.org/index.php/2024/05/21/identify-interrogate-and-interrupt-how-to-begin-addressing-the-issue-of-coloniality-in-virtual-exchange/

Hauck, M. (2023). From Virtual Exchange to Critical Virtual Exchange and Critical Internationalization at Home. *The Global Impact Exchange*, 2023(Spring) pp. 9–12. https://www.diversityabroad.org/common/Uploaded%20...

Weaver GC, McDonald PL, Louie GS & Woodman TC. (2024). Future Potentials for International Virtual Exchange in Higher Education Post COVID-19: A Scoping Review. *Education Sciences*. 2024; 14(3):232. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14030232