



IMPROVING CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING AND 21ST CENTURY SKILLS WITH COIL

Authors

Ngoc D. Nguyen *

Vilma B. Liwan **

Thao T. P. Mai ***

Affiliations

* Posts and Telecommunication Institute of Technology, Vietnam - PhD student, Northumbria University

** TEFL Teacher, the Philippines

*** University of Economics, the University of Danang, Vietnam - PhD student, Deakin University

BACKGROUND

Technology is being widely used nowadays to develop and enhance the cultural and communication skills which are needed for successful and efficient daily interactions of this century (Schenker, 2013). Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) or Virtual Exchange (VE) is an educational approach using online technology to facilitate students' intercultural competence (Guth & Rubin, 2015). Skype in the classroom, for example, is an online community platform used by teachers to connect and collaborate with other teachers and let their students learn from other students in different geographic locations without leaving their classrooms. Along the learning process of the cultural exchange, student participants were given opportunities to also hone their 21st century skills through their participation in a 10 week COIL/VE project.

METHODOLOGY

A mixed-method approach was employed using quantitative data from the 5-point Likert scale questionnaire originally formulated by Hixson et al. (2012) to measure the development of 21st century skills among the research participants based on students' self-evaluation. SPSS quantitatively analysed the data obtained from the surveys of 36 students whose complete data were available. Qualitative data were also employed in the form of semi-structured interviews with 12 students randomly invited. The participants were asked questions related to their perspectives on the benefits of the COIL via Skype (intercultural understanding and 21st century skills), challenges facing them during the exchange, and their recommendations for better Skype sessions.

LIMITATIONS

The lack of a control group was a major limitation in this study. In addition, pre- and post-tests should be considered to help verify any improvements in intercultural understanding and development of 21st century skills after the whole experience. Future research needs to take into account the assessment of these skills rather than only using students' self-reporting. Furthermore, a larger sample of students at obviously different levels of language competency would help give a better answer to the research questions.

CONTACT INFO



n.d.nguyen@northumbria.ac.uk

AIMS

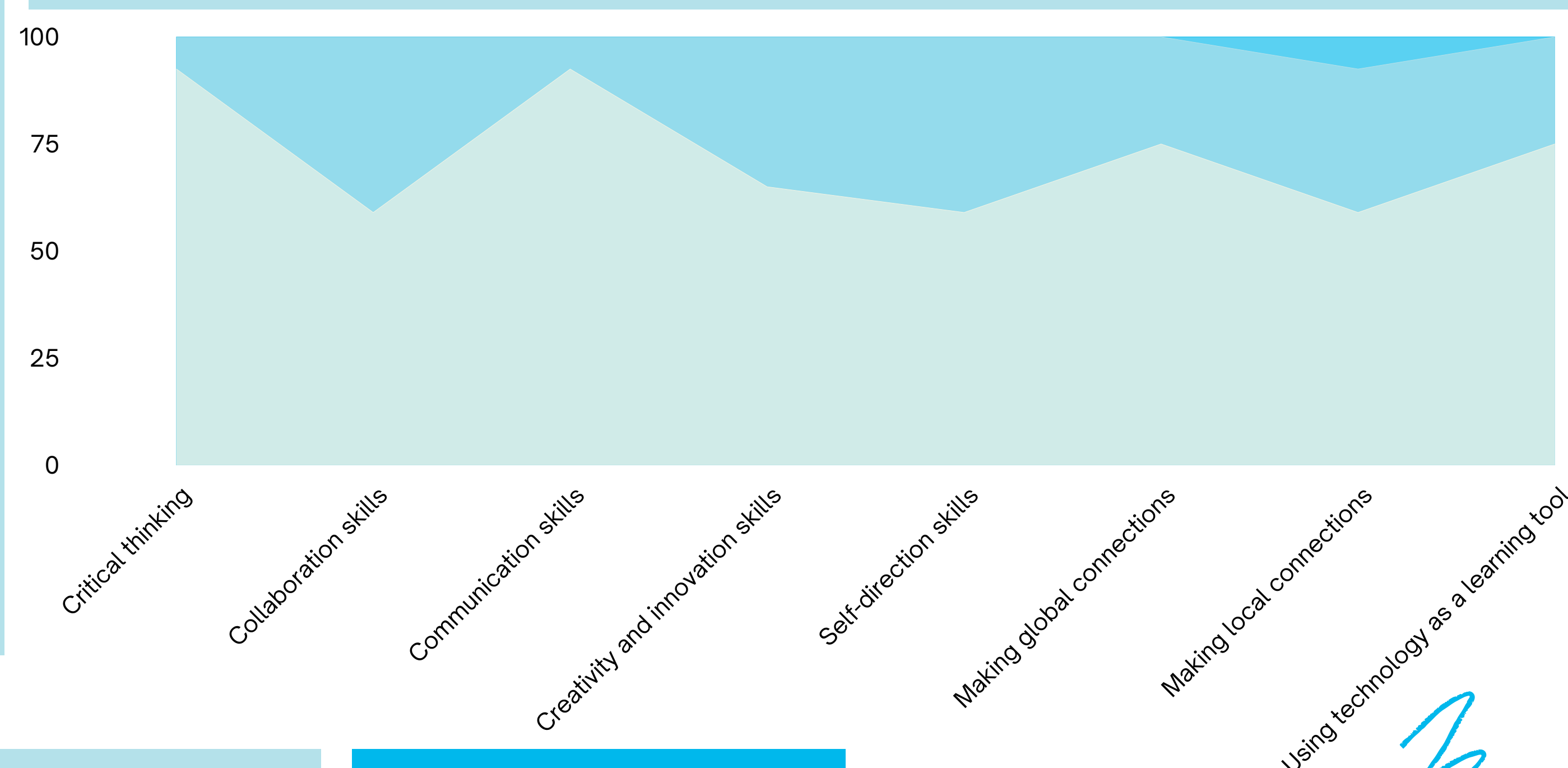
The study was conducted to evaluate the impacts of COIL/VE on the development of cultural understanding and 21st-century skills among Vietnamese university students.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Do students perceive that COIL helps improve their intercultural understanding?
2. Do students perceive that COIL helps improve their 21st-century skills?
3. What can be done to improve future COIL projects using Skype in the classroom?

RESULTS

Results suggest that COIL using Skype in the classroom can also maximize the possibility of participating in authentic communication and improving intercultural understanding. Interestingly, all the interviewed students emphasized the importance of understanding their own culture and people before learning about other cultures and making global connections. The findings also show that the COIL project had positive effects on the development of 21st century skills with 91.7 percent of students perceiving themselves fostering their critical thinking and communication skills. There was still room for improvement in other studied skills, especially in the skills of collaboration, self-direction, making local connections, and self-monitoring. Feedback from participants suggests COIL with Skype could be improved by using educational technology tools such as Microsoft Teams or Edmodo to keep track of the students' group work and also by providing students with the topic prior to upcoming sessions so they can prepare and get the most out of the COIL.



The perceived development of 21st century skills among students after participating in COIL project

CONCLUSION

The project enabled students to enhance their understanding of their own culture and their counterparts' culture.

Students noticed a significant improvement in the studied 21st century skills although the degree of development was different among the skills. There was no statistically significant difference in the perceived development of self-direction skills between the groups of students with lower English proficiency and those with high English proficiency.

More attention needs to be given to task designing, student training on sub-skills, appropriate scaffolding and monitoring processes.

COIL PROJECT

42 first year non-English majors participated in the 10 week COIL project. They were divided into groups of 5-6 preparing for a presentation on a particular cultural aspect of Vietnam. They were then virtually connected with a class or a teacher from another country to introduce Vietnamese culture and learn about their counterpart's culture. Each 30 minute Skype session started with Mystery Skype, followed by a student-led presentation and ended with a quiz or Q&A section.



OPEN ACCESS

The full-text article is freely available either on the CALL - EJ (a Q1 journal) website or ResearchGate.



R⁶

