



Cameras on, minds on: Reshaping beliefs about English learning through the COIL approach

Luis Felipe Hoyos

Yoselin Pardo Piñeres

Universidad Icesi

Master's program in Teaching English as a Foreign Language

Tim Marr, PhD

Cali, Colombia

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Luis Felipe Hoyos

Yoselin Pardo Piñeres

Professor Tim Marr

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the extent to which the Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) approach influences eleventh-grade students' beliefs about the importance of learning English in an intercultural context. Despite the worldwide effort toward internationalization, students in public schools, particularly in under-resourced regions, often lack access to intercultural learning experiences. This study involved 24 students from a public school in Cali, Colombia. Through an action research design, the students' perceptions were analyzed before, during, and after virtual intercultural exchanges with U.S. peers using questionnaires (pre and post implementation), reflective journals (at the end of each session), and focus group (pre-implementation). The findings show that the COIL experience helped students reconsider their views on English, increasing their intercultural awareness by reflecting on their own customs and others, their confidence in using the language, and their motivation to communicate beyond local settings. The results highlight COIL's benefits to develop intercultural awareness in terms of curiosity and exploration and promote global citizenship by opening the world door from their own surroundings, particularly in public schools where resources for international experiences are limited and such experiences are often diminished, emphasizing its value as a transformative tool in contemporary language learning.

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1. Introduction

In an increasingly interconnected world, English has emerged as a global lingua franca in which interculturality plays an important role when relationships are negotiated. Interactions are not limited to communicating ideas but meaning negotiations, cultures encounters and exchanges framed by vary backgrounds. However, in many Colombian classrooms, English is still primarily taught through isolated topics using grammar-focused methods, often diminishing the intercultural dimensions of communication and competences that, in fact, enable students to navigate successfully overcoming and repairing communication difficulties. As Carey (1989) acknowledges, ‘intercultural communication is not merely about transferring information between cultures, but about negotiating identities, meanings, and values in situated interactions’ (cited by Zhu Hua 2014, p. 13).

While English is taught as a subject and is usually framed in a grammar-focused approach, and it is often viewed by many students as a school subject rather than being perceived as a tool for global interaction, its true potential for global connection can sometimes be diminished. This limited view undermines the scope it offers to individuals seeking to engage in cross-cultural communication. However, these beliefs about English may be shaped by personal, social and educational experiences (Barcelos, 2011, 2014). So, when such beliefs are left unchallenged and traditional teaching models take place, they tend to persist and solidify, as a result, traditional approaches often fail to engage with students’ deeper perceptions or to provide meaningful intercultural experiences that could transform these beliefs.

Given this, exploring ways to challenge these beliefs becomes essential; students need room for authentic intercultural exchanges that help them to shift these perspectives. One promising approach for this authentic intercultural exchange is COIL. As Ozel (2011) states that

learners need to navigate in social and cultural environments and become communicators who are proficient not just in language but also in cultural understanding; intercultural exchanges may help shift these perspectives by providing meaningful connections beyond the traditional classroom setting. COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) is an approach that brings language, interculturality and collaboration together to learn and interact with cultures abroad allowing participants to exchange and connect with various cultures without moving from their school place. Rubin defines COIL as “a new teaching and learning paradigm that develops cross-cultural awareness across shared multicultural learning environments” (2017, p. 33). As such, COIL offers a valuable opportunity to transform students’ perceptions of English from an academic subject into a lived experience of intercultural communication, fostering not only language development, but also empathy, critical reflection, and global awareness.

Understanding the importance of cultural exploration in language learning can lead to more inclusive, globally relevant language curricula in Colombian EFL contexts, particularly in settings where physical mobility is inaccessible and educational resources are restricted. Students can engage in authentic intercultural communication without leaving their local environment, therefore COIL contributes to reducing educational inequalities and promoting intercultural awareness as a core component of language education, even though a minimum equipment is essential. This empowers learners to see themselves not just as language users, but as global citizens who can actively interpret and negotiate meaning across diverse cultural contexts.

This study aims to explore how a short-term COIL experience may reshape students' beliefs about English learning within an intercultural framework. Specifically, it examines how participation in a COIL exchange with U.S.-based students can influence learners' perspectives on English as a tool for connection, identity exploration, and intercultural understanding.

Through authentic asynchronous and synchronous exchanges, this research seeks to disclose the transformative potential of virtual intercultural encounters for EFL learners in diminished contexts.

Finally, this research seeks to contribute to broader discussions on the integration of intercultural approaches in English language education. By highlighting the impact of COIL in a socioeconomically marginalized context, it challenges dominant paradigms of language teaching and emphasizes the value of positioning students as active, reflective participants in global dialogue. In doing so, it calls for a reimagining of English education, not as an isolated academic subject, but as a window where critical intercultural engagement becomes central to learning.

2. Research question

To what extent can the implementation of the COIL approach in developing intercultural awareness reshape 11th-grade students' beliefs about the importance of learning English?

3. Objectives

3.1 General objective

To determine the extent to which the COIL approach influences 11th-grade students' beliefs about the importance of learning English in the context of intercultural exchange.

3.2 Specific objectives

- To assess the changes in students' beliefs about the importance of learning English before and after participating in the COIL approach.
- To analyze how intercultural exchange contributes to reshaping students' beliefs about learning English.
- To understand how students reframe the role of English in both their local context and globalized world as a result of the COIL experience.

4. Literature review

Fishman (1978) said “in a multilingual world, it is obviously more efficient and rational to be multilingual than not” (cited by de Mejía, 2004). English, as a global language, has become a gateway to new opportunities and a barrier for some, influencing people’s futures and reflecting unequal power structures in society. In our context, Colombian elite people can access English learning with meaningful experiences is an everyday situation since it entails acquisition in terms of privileges. In public schools in contexts like southeast Cali, Colombia, students do not have access to valuable resources such connection, technological devices since they have limited purchasing power. In addition, they are often introduced to English not as a neutral academic subject but as a gateway to imagined better opportunities and as a reflection of socio-economic disparities. So, even though learning English is clearly important, students often see it in a limited way, without connecting it to global cultures and social issues that come with using the language.

When these complexities are addressed through cultural exchanges by isolated activities, these efforts risk becoming superficial when they do not critically examine the underlying assumptions about language and culture. The COIL approach opens spaces for encounters in an intercultural framework and intends to challenge learners’ beliefs about language learning in real-time interactions within planned activities but involve spontaneous responses. The COIL approach aims to question learners and make them reflect on their own assumptions and personal values.

Many educational settings, especially public schools in Aguablanca-Cali, serve low-income students from different regions of Colombia and many of them have a limited vision of EFL learning. With this literature review, we aim to explore how COIL can transform traditional

ideas of language learning and reshape students' beliefs about it, considering the effect of intercultural exchanges and the ways in which students' perceptions of English can evolve.

4.1 Intercultural Awareness

We begin by examining the ideas proposed by Michael Byram, Bella Gribkova, and Hugh Starkey (2002) who have been widely recognized for their contributions on intercultural competence in language education. Their framework, which emphasizes integrating intercultural skills into language teaching, offers a critical basis for this research, particularly because it aligns with the study's focus on fostering intercultural awareness through the COIL approach. Byram et al. focus on the development of intercultural competence which is especially relevant for exploring how these principles can be applied in an EFL setting (essays, discussions, and real-world interactions provide insights into learners' intercultural sensitivity and adaptability). The authors suggest that, as teachers, we need to develop skills that enable us to encourage our students to think critically and reflect, rather than simply learn more about a specific culture. Our goal should be to foster greater openness and a reflective attitude toward new experiences. Their guide also offers practical strategies that can be adapted to the COIL-based activities, which supports deeper awareness through interaction with peers from different backgrounds.

Byram et al (2002) offer a strong theoretical foundation, defining the term intercultural awareness as follows:

knowledge, awareness and understanding of the relation (similarities and distinctive differences) between the 'world of origin' and the 'world of the target community' produce an intercultural awareness. It is, of course, important to note

that intercultural awareness includes an awareness of the regional and social diversity of both worlds. (p. 34)

Byram et al. highlight important elements such as curiosity, cultural knowledge, and critical reflection on cultural differences to question students' stereotypes and promote appreciation of the diversity. These relevant elements point to this study which looks for a COIL approach to do so. Furthermore, the authors prioritize the development of skills that over rote memorization lines up with the goals of these research objectives, which include fostering collaborative work, communication, and critical thinking, significant components for culturally and linguistically diverse contexts.

These practical strategies that Byram et al. outline are meaningful in the COIL activities in this study in several ways. First the approach is structured to develop intercultural competence and guide the activities designed to involve real-world interactions with students from different cultural contexts. Reflective practices such as journaling or group discussions elicit students from analyzing their experiences and developing empathy. Additionally, Byram et al.'s framework supports this study objectives of shifting students' beliefs by encouraging the development of attitudes of openness and curiosity during intercultural exchanges

The students involved in this study face complex social realities such as violence, displacement, and limited access to resources but in contrast they possess a rich cultural background and resilience. Therefore, these activities benefit them and invite them to explore their cultural identities while they interact, in that way they are deepening their understanding of cultural diversity. Additionally, Byram et al. provides limited detail on how teachers themselves can develop their own intercultural competence, a key aspect for effective teaching in a COIL setting. For this research context is a challenge, as teachers, play a crucial role in guiding

reflective practices and facilitating long-distance and cross-cultural interactions. Other limitations lie on the complexity of assessing intercultural competence since its subjectivity.

Regarding Baker (2011), he expands the idea of cultural awareness proposed by Byram et al. Baker explores the dynamics of intercultural communication and focuses on how diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds influences when English serves as a common language (*lingua franca*). He also recognizes basic, advanced and intercultural awareness and provides a way to assess students' progress in terms of intercultural understanding, which is essential for analyzing how students' beliefs about the importance of learning English may change over time.

This model of intercultural awareness is integrated into this study's methodology by designing COIL activities based on these three levels of intercultural awareness proposed by Baker (2011). At the initial stage, students are encouraged to engage in basic cultural awareness activities that encourage them to reflect on their own cultural backgrounds to establish differences with their international peers. In the following stages, students are encouraged to advanced cultural awareness tasks that require students to compare and analyze deeply, moving beyond stereotypes. Finally, at the intercultural awareness level, students are involved in real-time interactions and collaborative work to foster meaning negotiation and mediation to gain culture understanding.

Baker's framework is useful to identify how cultural awareness develops in stages, beginning with a basic recognition of cultural differences and moving into a more differentiated understanding of cultures. The Baker's model of awareness offers a stance of this study's exploration of how, students participate in COIL, move from simplistic views of culture toward a more sophisticated, interculturally competent mindset. It is important to mention that Baker's

article does not sufficiently focus on the role of technologies in education, such as those used in COIL settings, or the relevance of global issues to intercultural communication. These gaps suggest the need for more context-specific strategies that encompass the technological and global dimensions of intercultural learning, which the research aims to explore when incorporating the COIL approach.

Continuing with the foundations of the intercultural awareness concept in the literature review, Liddicoat and Scarino's (2013) work is highly relevant for this study since they explore how language education can be integrated with intercultural understanding, especially in the context of globalization and technological developments. Liddicoat and Scarino prioritize the importance of fostering intercultural capabilities in language teaching to promote deeper comprehension between cultures. They complement Byram's and Baker's studies on intercultural competence (see above) by stating that this involves at least the following aspects:

- accepting that one's practices are influenced by the cultures in which one participates and so are those of one's interlocutors;
- accepting that there is no one right way to do things;
- valuing one's own culture and other cultures;
- using language to explore culture;
- finding personal ways of engaging in intercultural interaction;
- using one's existing knowledge of cultures as a resource for learning about new cultures;
- finding a personal intercultural style and identity.

Intercultural competence means being aware that cultures are relative. That is, being aware that there is no one “normal” way of doing things, but that all behaviors are culturally variable. (Liddicoat and Scarino 2013, p.24)

Continuing with intercultural competence, Liddicoat and Scarino prioritize meaning making over isolated linguistic structures which is an interesting shift from traditional language teaching methods. These authors argue that it is vital for the learner the understanding of language and cultural contexts for an effective language education. According to Liddicoat and Scarino, for successful language learning it is necessary to actively engage with diverse meanings shaped by learners’ background and experiences instead of mastering a linguistic code which aligns to our research focus on how intercultural exchange through COIL reshape students’ beliefs about the importance of learning English. The authors propose a set of outlines to apply with the learners, that involve classroom interaction and assessment strategies and integrate technology to enhance intercultural learning and rethink educational practices. They also recommend an approach that transforms language teaching that acknowledges that language, culture and learning are intertwined.

Zhu Hua (2014) explores the relationship between language, culture and identity and displays a set of scholars’ classification of identity. Among others, Zhu cites Tracy (2002) and her two dimensions of identity: stable vs. situated and social vs. personal. In her work, Zhu defines cultural identity as ‘a collection of multiple identities, consisting of predominantly ethnic identities along with other intersecting identities’ (2014, p. 4), they consist of race, nationality, gender, class and religious affiliation. Even though race and ethnicity are not a definite mark of identity they do play an important part; the way we speak (audible), the way we look (visible) and how legible we are, tell others who we are (readable) (Zhu, 2014, p. 8).

The author also discloses the terms crossing and passing, that refer to borrowing from other languages and which is the way of being perceived as belonging to a different social group than one's actual identity. Moreover, she emphasizes how language acts as a tool to negotiate cultural identities and examine differences in communication practices in terms of conventional styles, politeness strategies and non-verbal signs. Using several case studies, she demonstrated how these types of practices influence the interpretation of messages in different settings. Zhu's contributions highlight that a person possesses multiple identities that can vary according to the context and these identities may affect interactions. In terms of interculturality, she states that it helps people to construct relationships balancing cultural heritage and local customs and understand how interactions can shape conversations. Hence, cultural identity influences how people engage with others in an intercultural exchange.

Chenlu Liu (2016) discloses how language, culture and intercultural awareness are related in EFL learning and teaching to improve learners' communication and cultural understanding. She presents the existent gap between learners' own culture and the expectations for effective communication in a globalized world. Liu's studies found that there is lack between EFL learners and essential cultural topics from English-speaking countries and this deficiency points to the need of filling these knowledge gaps to foster a more comprehensive understanding of different cultures. Liu's findings highlight the importance of integrating intercultural awareness into EFL education. The statistic that 'only 3.64% of the subjects think intercultural awareness is useless, 34.70% find it useful, and 76.45% consider it very useful' (2016, p.228) reflects a largely positive student attitude towards intercultural learning. Based on these statistics, we can conclude that students can benefit from a curriculum that incorporates intercultural elements with significant pedagogical strategies.

Liu stands for more creative and strategic teaching approaches that emphasize the importance of making the content more practical and relatable to students, enhancing engagement and learning outcomes. Despite Liu's study was based on test and questionnaires and those instruments do not capture students' intercultural experiences interpretation, it provides foundation for understanding the state of intercultural awareness in EFL settings and opens the possibility of integration in the curriculum.

Regarding traditional focus on reading, writing, listening, and speaking, Dilara Özel (2021) presents cultural awareness as the foundation of a real linguistic proficiency. She states that 'students' already existing perspectives affect the attitude toward the language' (2021, p. 109), then she adds that these perspectives can be influenced by educators and materials (2021). According to Özel, language learners need to develop pragmatic skills that enable them to respond appropriately to complex social and cultural situations, evolving from basic language users into culturally competent communicators. Additionally, she highlights that 'students need to understand this sociocultural context to communicate effectively as well that is not given in the course books' (2021, p. 109); therefore, teaching language cannot be fixed by a classroom setting and coursebooks with lack of intercultural elements that truly elicit students' analysis and comparisons.

In her work, she proposes the foundations of cultural awareness consisting of four key *codes* (2021, p.116); the first codes are lesson components that relate the relationship between educators in an EFL setting and activities based on intercultural awareness. She also emphasizes the importance of the role of the educator as an intercultural speaker model. The second code is named *interaction* which is the interaction that learners have with people from diverse backgrounds. This second code, interaction, enriches students' higher-order thinking skills and

cultural awareness which enhance their interaction and makes the relations more meaningful and effective.

The third code is named *dynamics*, and it discloses how language, communication and technology take place in the current globalized world. The fourth code is *personal connection*. It involves the relationship between culture and the language from a specific country to equip the learner with the particularities of that country in terms of values, traditions and beliefs.

Özel builds on her research a practical framework that encourages language educators to rethink EFL not just as an isolated set of skills, but as an opportunity for intercultural learning and active global participation. She emphasizes the importance of integrating these values into curriculum design, teacher training, and assessment tools. Her work allows a positive integration into our study since her foundations are such a guide to integrate meaningful interaction and personal engagement, she also highlights the importance of educators in the process of cultural awareness in the classroom and invites to restate the our model as teachers in the language classroom Her call for dynamic and interactive approaches to cultural awareness supports the exploration of innovative pedagogical methods like COIL and cultivating global citizens.

Moncada (2016) explores the “othering” and its impact on language learning, it focuses on how cultural biases and stereotypes limit students’ engagement with a new language. In exploring how intercultural awareness, understanding the “othering” students' beliefs about learning English can reshape through four pedagogical tools stated by Moncada: cultural products, critical incidents, role-playing, and collaborative projects. These tools are part of a framework that allows students to track their changes in terms of beliefs by encouraging reflection on cultural differences and similarities.

About digital collaboration, Moncada's pedagogical tools are suitable for COIL: allowing students from different cultural backgrounds to explore and reflect on each other's cultural symbols and media representations enable self-reflection and understanding of diverse perspectives. Real-life experiences help learners to analyze situations that involve cultural misunderstandings and to critically assess their own biases and assumptions. Moreover, role-playing and simulations, adapted to online environments, can encourage students to step into roles that challenge their cultural preconceptions, promoting empathy and critical thinking while collaborative projects, which are already central to COIL, can continue to support dialogue, teamwork, and mutual understanding.

However, the article also highlights some challenges; the first limitation is the resistance that can arise from educators and students when addressing sensitive cultural issues through these tools. The second limitation regards the COIL context since it involves low-income students from a public school in Colombia and a school in the U.S., the reactions towards discussing topics such as power dynamics and inequality may vary. This can state challenges in fostering open and productive intercultural dialogues.

Moncada's article raises several challenges however it adds valuable contributions, practical as theoretical and its interdisciplinary approach going from philosophy, sociology to postcolonial studies complements our study's purposes which are addressing intercultural dynamics in language learning. Moncada focuses on power relations and identity which is particularly pertinent to understanding how students in marginalized contexts perceive English, aligning with the socio-critical framework of this research. Moncada's tools are adaptable to the COIL setting, making this article a crucial resource for the design and implementation of intercultural activities in this study.

Saharani's (2023) study contributes to inquiry into how students from diverse backgrounds develop intercultural awareness through their interactions in a multicultural classroom. Saharani recognizes the identification of three progressive levels of awareness which are the basic cultural awareness, advanced cultural awareness, and intercultural awareness. Regarding the author, they give a structured framework to assess the effectiveness of COIL approaches in our study since it allows us to reflect on the potential growth in students' intercultural competence which is a key objective of the COIL methodology.

Navigating cultural norms and practices that differ significantly from their own are some of the challenges that the research highlights about students facing multicultural learning. The authors illustrate that students had to learn to respect cultural taboos and understand the nuances of communication styles like the importance of making appointments in western cultures which contrasts with the more informal approach in Indonesia. To overcome these preconceived notions, efforts and interactions to foster a more realistic understanding of their educational environment are required. These challenges are directly relevant to the research, which examines how the COIL approach can address similar issues in a diverse educational setting.

Using Saharani's findings in this study is useful since it guides us to apply these progressive levels of awareness as standards to evaluate the development of students' intercultural competence through COIL activities. Moreover, the challenges identified in the study informs the COIL modules design to ensure accessibility and effectiveness for students with varied language levels proficiency and cultural backgrounds. According to the study, language proficiency is established as a barrier to effective communication and intercultural learning. This limitation reinforces the importance of considering language support strategies to

ensure all the students, no matter their proficiency level, can benefit from the intercultural learning opportunities.

Saharani's contributions are relevant to this study for her focus on intercultural awareness in a multicultural EFL context, she explores in detail the exploration of how students develop and experience intercultural awareness and gives references for understanding the potential impact of COIL approach in the EFL classroom. Her study presents challenges that offer important considerations for the design and implementation of COIL activities, ensuring that they are culturally responsive and accessible to all students.

The examination of the COIL approach leads to natural progression from the exploration of intercultural awareness and serves as a practical mechanism to develop such awareness in educational settings. COIL approach implements these principles through structured online interactions between geographically and culturally diverse classrooms whereas intercultural competence prioritizes understanding and valuing diversity in cultural perspectives. COIL is a platform for students to apply and deepen their intercultural understanding since it facilitates synchronous communication and collaboration across boundaries. It also offers opportunities for discussions about culture but also enables real-world exchanges that challenge students to negotiate differences and reflect on their own cultural assumptions.

4.2 Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL)

The term "COIL" – which stands for Collaborative Online International Learning – was actually first used by the State University of New York (SUNY) back in 2006. Its specific features have been thoroughly outlined by Rubin (2017), the State University of New York's COIL Center, and Rubin and Guth (2022). COIL itself fits into a larger category called Virtual

Exchange (VE). O'Dowd (2018) describes VE as a broad term that covers many different online teaching and learning methods, all of which focus on encouraging interactions and collaboration across cultures.

What makes COIL stand out as a unique teaching approach is its strong institutional backing and the specific collaborative tasks designed by the professors involved. Experts like Rubin (2017) really emphasize COIL's effectiveness in getting both instructors and students engaged and involved in international learning. Among all the different Virtual Exchange initiatives, COIL is particularly distinct because of its strong emphasis on collaborative learning.

At its core, COIL builds on the principles of collaborative learning (CL). It's all about students working together, in person or online, to tackle problems, complete assignments, or create something new, a concept well-established in research by Dillenbourg (1999) and Laal & Laal (2012). What is neat is that COIL encourages this spirit of teamwork for both educators and students alike (Rubin, 2017). It brings together teachers from different places, who work online to craft a joint syllabus, complete with shared group projects and co-created learning goals.

But COIL is not just about working together; it also zeroes in on boosting subject knowledge and growing intercultural competence – skills that are valuable across just about any academic field. Rather than simply being a tech platform, COIL's real strength lies in how it focuses on designing activities that genuinely foster cross-cultural awareness within shared, multicultural learning environments (Rubin, 2017). Teachers deliberately weave intercultural learning into their assignments, actively nurturing it from start to finish in every COIL course. The main aim is twofold: to boost students' understanding of the subject matter and to equip them with vital intercultural skills, essentially bringing an authentic global learning experience right to their doorstep.

What's more, COIL's foundation in social-constructivism really solidifies why it is so important for this particular study. Rubin (2017) actually emphasized that learning through social interaction is absolutely critical for developing intercultural competence. That idea totally aligns with our objective: we want to use intercultural awareness to push and expand students' perspectives, helping them grow into a more inclusive and culturally savvy mindset. Just a heads-up, though, COIL is still a pretty new method, so while literature is emerging, it can not be found a lot of experimental studies on its effectiveness out there just yet.

The strong theoretical and empirical support for COIL justifies its inclusion as a key component in this research. However, despite its established efficacy in higher education, the lack of existing studies on COIL implemented at the high school level presents both a challenge and an opportunity. This gap emphasizes the potential impact of the current research on the field of English language learning, particularly in secondary education contexts.

Transitioning from COIL, it is essential to explore its intersection with online learning. The digital framework that COIL operates within relies heavily on online platforms to facilitate intercultural exchanges and collaborative tasks, making online learning a crucial component of its success. Understanding how COIL integrates with online learning environments will further strengthen its role in transforming educational experiences and promoting global competence.

4.3 Online Learning

Online learning has been used since the 1980s to give students the chance to learn in a non-traditional way using technology. In the 1990s, this method evolved, offering students platforms where they could access information, structured environments, guided instructions, and

assessments. Poe and Stassen in their book *Teaching and Learning Online* (2002), provide understanding about online learning, its approaches, and how it should be conducted. According to Poe and Stassen, online learning is ‘faculty-delivered instruction via the internet’ (2002, p. 5), allowing students to access bachelor’s programs through educational platforms. These instructions can be synchronous or asynchronous.

Synchronous learning allows students to receive instruction and collaborate in real-time through live chat, audio and video conferencing, shared whiteboards, multimedia presentations, and more. Asynchronous learning, on the other hand, involves a time delay and uses tools like email, bulletin boards, and threaded discussions. Although a teacher facilitates asynchronous learning, it does not happen in real-time.

Online learning has several advantages, such as student-centered learning that focuses on individual learning styles, collaborative learning in online groups, and access to global resources. However, it may not be suitable for students who have not developed autonomous learning skills and need constant instructor assistance. Additionally, people who struggle with technology might find it challenging to succeed with this learning method. Online learning laid the groundwork for the development of the COIL approach; they both use technology as means for learning, but they differ on their purposes. COIL points to collaborative learning and intercultural exchanges while online learning only provides remote education.

4.4 COIL to develop intercultural awareness

Rubin (2017), a leading expert in this field, discusses COIL providing an overview of its beginnings and how online learning facilitated the development of COIL. Rubin explains how the

internet has enabled teachers to reach students worldwide, thanks to the ability to connect regardless of location and the technological resources that made this possible. Professors then began using these resources to connect with each other, allowing students to interact and exchange cultural aspects, forming a team-teaching work. According to the author, COIL can serve as a bridge to ‘link students to each other without the cost and risk of travel’ (2017, p. 30), enabling meaningful connections without the challenges that physical mobility might bring.

Rubin defines COIL as a ‘new teaching and learning paradigm that develops cross-cultural awareness’ (2017, p. 33), where multicultural environments come together in a learning setting supported by two teachers from different cultural backgrounds. Rubin asserts that these teachers ‘work together to develop a shared syllabus, emphasizing experiential and collaborative student learning’ (2017, p. 33). He emphasizes that COIL is not a technology platform but a bridge that brings two cultures together in a learning environment.

Certainly, COIL presents a challenge for teachers and students as it requires openness to diverse cultures. However, Rubin highlights the positive outcomes of COIL, noting that ‘after participating in a COIL course, students are more open to the idea of studying abroad’ (2017, p. 35). This outcome is relevant to this study, as the goal is to identify how connecting with different cultures through COIL can change students’ beliefs about learning English and help them find opportunities after graduation. Rubin’s work enriches the purpose of this study.

Curtindale (et al. 2020), highlight the advantages of applying COIL due to the opportunity the students gain to experience interculturality in a broader way staying in their own community. Curtindale (et al.) claim that ‘a primary goal of COIL is to increase students’ ability to communicate effectively in intercultural interactions’ (2020, p. 82). Based on this, COIL aims to

enhance communication and intercultural exchanges, preparing students to interact competently in a globalized world.

Curtindale (et al. 2020) state that to have a meaningful experience, it is important to consider common communication, cultural, technical, and language issues in virtual exchanges. These considerations can help students and teachers face the experience successfully and avoid frustration or discouragement. These elements can be included in the present study, to assure the students' involvement during the application stage aiming to make the experience as meaningful as possible.

In terms of limitations, the researchers did not evaluate the equivalence of the groups before the start of the course, meaning that any differences observed in the survey results could be attributed to pre-existing differences rather than the implementation of IIT itself. Additionally, the study primarily assessed changes in the frequency of intercultural interactions rather than directly measuring changes in intercultural awareness, leaving the actual development of intercultural awareness unmeasured. Lastly, the lack of statistical criteria for the quantitative analysis of the results limits the robustness of the findings and their interpretation.

Hackett et al. (2023) assess whether the COIL approach enhances students' intercultural skills more effectively than traditional methods. Hackett et al. categorize COIL as a social-constructivist approach rooted in collaborative learning and emphasize its reliance on social interaction to foster intercultural competence. The authors highlight the importance of preparing students for a globalized world, where competencies like respect and openness are essential for successful interaction. They argue that COIL offers students an authentic international learning experience (Hackett et al., 2023, p. 3). Further, the authors stress that collaborative learning focuses on "learning and building on knowledge through social interaction" (Hackett et al., 2023,

p. 3), and note that the design of such assignments plays a crucial role in promoting interaction and cooperation, which directly impacts learning outcomes.

This article significantly contributes to this research paper since it offers evidence on COIL's effectiveness in cultivating intercultural competence. This insight supports the idea that similar methodologies may positively influence students' beliefs and attitudes towards EFL learning. Additionally, the study presents collaborative learning as the basis of COIL that involves problem-solving, completing tasks and creating a product and promoting social interaction as a goal and learning through interacting with each other, constructing and building on knowledge (2023, p.5).

Building on research that indicates the importance of collaborative learning, Humes (2015) proposes some insights into the benefits and challenges of integrating technology and structured group work to enhance student engagement and performance. His findings closely align with the COIL framework, as both focus on how structured, technology-driven projects can reshape students' beliefs about the importance of learning English. Hume's methods—such as structured projects, daily logs, and pre- and post-surveys—provide a useful framework for understanding how collaboration can be effectively implemented in diverse educational settings.

Humes (2015) focuses his study on the impact of technology and collaborative work and how they affect learning. In his work, he discusses some elements that are involved in learning. Firstly, he presents cooperative learning as an integral part of education (2015, p. 6) and presents collaborative learning as a space where students can develop higher levels of understanding. He also points out that cooperative learning fosters learning outcomes through interaction. Moreover, Humes examines the students' attitudes towards collaborative projects and states that 'positive

attitudes lead to greater participation and learning’ (2015, p. 7), so it is important to identify attitudes that hinder processes in the classroom and allow students to experience learning through sharing and communicating.

His study presents three strategic components: achievement, engagement and build positive interdependence and accountability in-group members which are useful to plan lessons to improve group processing and interpersonal skills and ensure that the group members accomplish their role’s purposes and learning become effective and enjoyable (2015, p. 10).

Regarding technology, Humes highlights the importance of bringing online experiences to the classroom since many of the students are *internet savvy*, which are students with technology abilities. Therefore, the learners feel challenged and involved when online activities are carried out. Jillian Wendt (2013) states that ‘online collaborative projects for adolescent students are most effective when only partially online when most of the collaboration is face-to-face in school’ (cited by Humes, 2015, p. 12). Although online collaborative projects is a promising tool to enhance learning, the author emphasizes that some students have limited access to the internet and they may need extra support since they may be *internet unsavvy*.

Hume’s contributions are relevant for our study since he focuses on collaborative learning and technology integration which are fundamental elements of the COIL approach. His study adds insights on how planned collaborative projects and technology working together can influence students’ engagement and beliefs.

Jessica Borger (2022) presents a study about the dynamic between technology and cultural understanding in communication. Borger examines the importance of the internationalization of curriculum to expand the classroom into a global community and discusses

how the classroom dynamics suffered a transformation after the COVID pandemic in 2020. Education and other industries around the world turned into technology to communicate to navigate the interaction difficulties. Although the COVID pandemic is part of the past, technology and communication are in motion in terms of connection and communication. With this expansion, intercultural communication became fundamental to support the word interaction and people need skills to interact with others from different backgrounds.

COIL is used to integrate technology and communication, and Borger explains it as ‘an innovative and effective learning approach to foster global ICC in students, and provides a rich international experience compared to traditional forms’ (2022, p. 2). To develop intercultural competence, the author acknowledges the effectiveness of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) that combines content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge through experience and defines it as a process of continuing development knowledge to obtain topic-specific and student-oriented skills (2022, p. 3). PKC supports educators to reflect and analyze their teaching practices and consequently, adjust the class contents to cover the students’ needs towards interculturality. She argues that educators need to enable students to participate in the world, understanding that culture is embedded in the interaction and important to promote interculturality to navigate in these differences and succeed in the communication.

Borger contributes to this study for its focus on promoting COIL approach to reinforce intercultural communicative competence and empowers learners to interact with other communities, recognizing differences in terms of diversity and enabling educators to reflect and reestablish the language classroom purposes and content goals.

Anzai and Shimizu claim that ‘COIL provide authentic language and cultural experience in the natural context’ (2022, p. 53) allowing students to interact and collaborate in an online and international community in which communication takes place without direct eye contact but real experiences.

The authors present some pedagogical concepts that support the COIL implementation which are transactional distance, interaction, social networking approach, and social emotional learning. These concepts help educators to understand how COIL facilitates intercultural and collaborative learning experiences effectively and meaningfully. This understanding supports our study since it presents a guide of how COIL may be implemented but also how teacher-students interaction takes place and the factors that may affect it. In Anzai and Shimizu’s view, ‘to successfully implement COIL, teachers need to be flexible and adaptable to unexpected technological and other issues which do not happen in the conventional classroom’ (2022, p. 53). So, educators and learners must remain open-minded and willing to embrace new ways to envision language classroom since the world is evolving, education and learning are not behind.

4.5 Beliefs in EFL Learning

Wenden, a prominent figure in the field of applied linguistics, has extensively explored the concept of metacognitive knowledge, which holds learners' beliefs about their own learning processes. Wenden (1999) defines beliefs as characteristics that identify metacognitive knowledge and value-related tending to be held more tenaciously. Wenden highlights that beliefs are not just passive thoughts but are deeply embedded in learners’ metacognitive frameworks and

are strongly influenced by their values, making them persistent and influential in the learning process.

Beliefs have been analyzed in different settings and its definition is not simple. In language learning has gained significant attention in recent research. Barcelos has defined it as emergent, dynamic, and context-dependent (Barcelos, 2003). Moreover, she distinguishes three main elements that participate in belief towards language learning: interactions, experiences and context. In this sense, it presents the contextual approach which defines context as learners' constructions of their experiences, as a socially constructed, interactively sustained, time-bound phenomenon. Consequently, the learners' interaction could modify the existing context and reshape the process of meaning-making in the language classroom bringing a dynamic between individual experiences and social interactions.

The Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) approach and beliefs about language learning can meaningfully align to foster intercultural awareness and shape attitudes in EFL learning. Through context, self-reflection on experiences, and engagement with diverse cultures, these elements interact to deepen students' learning experiences and highlight important nuances. This literature review explores various dimensions of learners' beliefs in language learning, focusing on a contextual approach to reveal their impact on students' learning processes. Barcelos and Kalaja (2011) provide understanding into the nature of beliefs, highlighting their complexity, variability, and the ways they are shaped within specific contexts—offering a foundation for understanding how beliefs intersect with language learning.

Barcelos and Kalaja define beliefs 'as complex, dynamic, and context-dependent constructs'. (2011, p. 285). The authors state that beliefs are influenced by the specific contexts in which learners and teachers operate. They can vary not only across different educational settings

but also within the same context over time. These variations may depend on cultural backgrounds, school policies, and individual experiences. Additionally, the dynamic nature of beliefs means that ongoing interactions with peers, teachers, and the broader educational environment may change anyone's mind towards preconceptions.

Nevertheless, the authors highlight the sociocultural approach in the belief framework as a complementary approach to exploring beliefs as contextually situated social meanings (2011, p. 286). They mentioned the terms fluctuation and remediation to refer to how beliefs change in terms of participation and interaction in different contexts and to explain the relationship between learners' beliefs and their environment, respectively.

This sociocultural framework is based on beliefs as emerging from social and cultural interactions and focuses on the importance of constructing and negotiating beliefs in a learning community. In a COIL approach, students engage in cross-cultural exchanges, which can lead to an intercultural awareness since learners from different cultural backgrounds interact and collaborate.

In 2008, Barcelos developed discernment about beliefs in language learning. In this article, she does not limit beliefs as a cognitive dimension but points out that it includes a social dimension as well which involves interaction with others and environment. Barcelos mentions the importance of understanding students' beliefs to understand their world and their identity. For instance, educators should consider not only what the student is learning but also the environment where the process is taking place. In some moments, beliefs are directly related to culture so students' learning problems are connected to their practice. Cultural contexts are intertwined with beliefs when specific practices and attitudes towards education can either facilitate or hinder language acquisition. At this point, an important role in students' perspectives toward learning a

language is played by intercultural development, since their immediate environment is or is not affected in their process, leading to productive or unproductive beliefs, according to Barcelos (2008).

Beliefs about language learning are deeply intertwined with cultural contexts, and how students approach and engage with their learning is shaped by them. In many cultures, specific practices and attitudes towards education can either facilitate or hinder language acquisition. For instance, valuable insights into students' learning challenges can be provided by understanding the cultural foundations of their beliefs, and more effective teaching strategies can be informed by it. From this perspective, students may be helped by developing intercultural awareness to open to a broad stance about language learning and understand that what has been learned in their context is just one side of the coin. Students can gain a better understanding of language use and their difficulties to share meanings by recognizing and appreciating diverse cultural practices and beliefs. COIL approach and intercultural awareness development may encourage students to value and improve pragmatic competence through self-reflection and critical thinking.

Also, Barcelos recognizes three approaches, the normative, the metacognitive and contextual approach. In general, the normative approach focused on beliefs based on standards or norms. This approach points out how beliefs are associated with educational goals, ethical standards, or societal values. With this approach, beliefs are seen as analyzed and descriptive statistics and beliefs are not seen in context. Regarding the metacognitive approach, the author defines beliefs as metacognitive knowledge. Wenden (as cited in Barcelos, 2008) adds that this approach students' metacognitive knowledge also constitutes their 'theories in action' to reflect on what they are doing and develop potential for learning. Alexander and Dochy (as cited in Barcelos, 2008) explain that beliefs are viewed as 'individual, subjective understandings,

idiosyncratic truths' (2008, p. 16). According to this approach, learners' beliefs are deducted based on their action and/or intentions; their main intentions are taken as what they consider important and valuable.

The author presents the contextual approach as a dynamic and social model, framing beliefs as embedded within students' specific contexts and shaped by their interpretative meanings and perspectives. This approach adopts an emic perspective, focusing on understanding a culture's beliefs, values, and practices from the viewpoint of its members. Barcelos (2008) describes context as a socially constituted and interactively sustained phenomenon, suggesting that students' experiences and interactions play a significant role in shaping their beliefs about language learning, which is inherently a social construct. In this view, students' beliefs are influenced not only by what they learn but also by where they learn it, underscoring the importance of providing them with meaningful resources to support successful changes in beliefs.

4. Methodology

This study was conducted with an action research approach to investigate the impact of COIL intervention on students' beliefs about EFL learning. Action research was considered appropriate for the study since participants were allowed to be involved in the process, and their perspectives and experiences were considered. Also, students were given the opportunity to take an active role in their own engagement and process. It is stated by Kemmis that 'action research aims to change practices, people's understandings of their practices, and the conditions under which they practice' (2007, p. 2). In accordance with this study's objectives, changes in our students' beliefs towards EFL learning were aimed to be measured, for which the guidelines were supplied by action research.

This study focused on understanding participants' lived experiences, personal interpretations, and the meanings they attach to the research topic. Instead of numbers or statistics, the work centered on stories, reflections, and conversations. Data came from small group discussions, participants' personal journals, and pre- and post-questionnaire. These methods aimed to capture the depth and complexity of people's perspectives, paying close attention to the why and how behind their thoughts and feelings. By prioritizing participants' own voices and contexts, the analysis highlighted patterns and themes that emerged organically from their accounts.

The action research cycle involved planning the COIL intervention, implementing it, observing student interactions, and reflecting on the findings. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality, will be adhered to throughout the research process. This methodology emphasized collaborative inquiry, reflection, but not iterative cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting due to the short time for application.

4.1 Setting

The setting was the IEO Carlos Holguín Mallarino Sede Niño Jesús de Atocha. It was a small facility with 300 students. It managed primary and secondary on opposite schedules. The school's infrastructure had a tech-room, 2 small break time yards and 1 restaurant. Classrooms were small, they had video projectors, there was no internet connection and on average, there were 30 students per classroom. Most of the students had an afro-Colombian background, fewer indigenous students as well as some with Venezuelan citizenship.

4.2 Participants

Study's Participants

The sample of the setting were 24 11th-grade students, with ages 15-16 years old on average. These participants had an English level of A1 with particular students' cases of A2. They were strong in the workgroup with active participation and their own initiatives. Their weaknesses were homework responsibility and some of them manifested a block with English in terms of attitude and disposition. They were selected because they were in the final year of high school and were expected to face English needs and demands sooner than other students.

We, the researchers, were participants as well as English teachers. We have taught English as a Foreign Language for around 10 years in private and public schools. Our teaching identity has been shaped by communicative language teaching and the creation of interactive learning environments. In our classrooms, we have consistently prioritized meaningful interaction, student engagement, and the use of games and dynamic activities not merely for entertainment, but as tools to support language development and foster motivation. These principles have informed our pedagogical choices and continue to guide our practice, especially in contexts where students face social and educational barriers.

The Role of our U.S. partner: Eagle Valley High School

The international exchange component of our study involved 10th-grade students from Eagle Valley High School (EVHS), located in a semi-rural, mountainous region of Colorado, United States. In total, 17 EVHS students, all between 15 and 16 years old, took part in the interaction. Many of these students grew up in bilingual homes, often speaking both Spanish and

English. This background was super helpful for cultural exchange. They already knew how to understand different cultures and felt that language was a big part of who they are.

Even though the EVHS area gets a lot of visitors because of tourism, many students actually come from families who work in regular jobs or on farms. This mix of backgrounds helped challenge common ideas people have about how rich U.S. schools are. It also led to more honest and real talks about culture. Also, EVHS really pushes students to help their community. So, these students were already used to joining in local projects and helping others, which taught them to be good citizens. They were also pretty good with computers and online tools for school. This made it very easy for them to join online meetings and do activities like writing down their thoughts or telling stories online. Being comfortable with technology made EVHS a great and helpful partner for our COIL exchange.

It's important to clarify that while the EVHS students were crucial to facilitating the intercultural exchange and providing a rich context for our Colombian students' learning, they were not the primary subjects of our analysis. Our study's focus, and where our data collection instruments (journals, questionnaires, focus groups) were applied, remained only on our Colombian 11th-grade students. The EVHS students provided the essential "other side" of the exchange, creating an environment where our participants' beliefs and intercultural awareness could be observed and measured.

4.3 COIL Intervention design and implementation

For the COIL implementation, we contacted a teacher in the USA who expressed interest in promoting intercultural interaction through the COIL framework. After initial meetings, we presented the USA teacher with the activities we had designed, the aims of our research and what our expectations regarding students' intercultural learning and potential shifts in beliefs about

English. We also coordinated the scheduling considering the time zone differences and availability of both groups to organize synchronous and asynchronous activities. During the implementation, three synchronous and three asynchronous activities took place (one weekly each); Google Meet was used for live video calling the USA peers during the synchronous sessions whereas the asynchronous activities took place using Padlet allowing students to post comments, share photos and interact in a more flexible way. In terms of ethical consideration were also discussed and addressed before the implementation.

Overview of the COIL activities

The activities were structured to facilitate both synchronous and asynchronous interactions, progressing from an exploration of personal identities to an understanding of global identities/citizenship, as illustrated in the following chart:

ACTIVITIES OF THE COIL IMPLEMENTATION		
Objectives: 1. Help students become aware of these visible differences without judgment, fostering curiosity and openness toward understanding. 2. Encourage students to dig deeper into cultural nuances and realize that culture is dynamic, not fixed. 3. Develop students' ability to navigate and appreciate cultural differences while working together toward a shared outcome.		
Phase 1 Perspective taking (Self-identity- Exploring their own culture)	Phase 2 Explore Cultural Relativism	Phase 3 English Language and Global Citizenship (Intercultural communication)
Week 1	Week 2	Week 3

Focus: As students start interacting with their COIL partners, they'll notice <i>surface-level cultural differences, like greetings, common phrases, or everyday behaviors</i> (Baker, 2011).		Focus: As students continue their interactions, they'll start to understand that culture is more complex than initial appearances. They'll notice how and why their partners communicate differently. <i>"Understanding Cultural Complexity and Context"</i> (Baker, 2011)		Focus: By this stage, students should start to use their intercultural skills to negotiate communication effectively, recognizing the importance of shared understanding, even if they use English in different ways. <i>"Active Engagement and Communication Across Cultures"</i> (Baker, 2011)	
Session 1: Asynchronous Preparation Resources introduction	Session 2: Synchronous Welcome meeting - Ice breaker	Session 3: Asynchronous Collaborative Activities	Session 4: Synchronous Collaborative Activities	Session 5: Asynchronous Collaborative Activities	Session 6: Synchronous Reflection - Closure

Continuing the implementation display, we present an overview of the activities carried out during the implementation, which is part of phase 2 of this study (three weeks in total), highlighting the synchronous and asynchronous modalities used. The details presented here are extracts, for an in-depth look at these activities and Padlet links please refer to Appendix C.

Session 1: Shared spaces, traditions, and personal introductions.

Modality: Asynchronous class

Platform: Padlet

Time: 50 minutes

This session was the opening activity that served to create an initial engagement with the US peers. So, both groups, local and US peers, were asked to participate in the Padlet post sharing basic information about themselves such as name, age, school's name and any preference they had (e.g., music, books, movies, food, hobbies). Besides, they could share a photo or image that represents them.

Afterward, students were asked to investigate favorite traditions or holidays that were meaningful for them and post their findings on Padlet. For this task, they could choose any presentation format: images, videos, or drawings. Each group participated in commenting on others' posts. After this activity, the local students wrote down in their reflective journals their insights and learnings over this experience. The Padlet posts were designed for us as researchers, and the links to access were sent in advance to the associate teacher in the US.

Session 2: Welcome meeting & icebreaker

Modality: Synchronous class

Platform: Google Meet

Time: 50 minutes

As a pre-session activity, students reviewed all the profiles posted on Padlet and they were asked to find a student with similar preferences. With the students' name in mind, they then prepared icebreaker questions for a quick, 3-minute chat.

During the synchronous activity, the US peers and teacher connected with us via Google Meet and had a 3-minute face to face chat. A US peer named a local student to chat and vice versa. This dynamic took place until several couples from each school met. The local and US teachers served as moderators, keeping conversations active as students were unfamiliar with each other. The activity lasted 30 minutes.

The activities continued with the synchronous modality but posting on Padlet to have a real time interaction. This collaborative post was named '*our schools, our world*' and aimed at the students exploring their surroundings. Students from Eagle Valley and Cahoma shared differences and similarities between their schools. Each school had its own Padlet wall to post. Students posted about their school environment, daily routines, subjects, important events, school values, etc. Once students had completed their posts, they did a Padlet Walk, visiting their

assigned partner post. This activity lasted 30 minutes. At the end of the session, CAHOMA students wrote their reflections in the journal.

Session 3 Explore cultural awareness - Explore cultural relativism

Modality: Asynchronous

Platform: Padlet

Time: 50 minutes

This implementation phase involved exploring cultural relativism. So, some concepts were presented to CAHOMA students focusing on the concept of cultural relativism and how celebrations could vary significantly across cultures. The students were asked to share their experiences celebrating birthdays, weddings, or holidays. Cultural, historical, and social contexts that shape each celebration in the students' culture were involved in the discussion.

After the general exploration, students were assigned to research some celebrations 1 or 2 from their own culture and were encouraged to focus on the cultural significance, traditions, and rituals associated with each celebration. Afterwards, presentations and discussions took place. Students presented their findings to the class, using visual aids to illustrate their ideas (digital posters, authentic photos and/or videos, canvas, PowerPoint, etc.). A discussion was facilitated in which they had to establish similarities and differences between celebrations, emphasizing the cultural context and underlying values.

Session 4: Explore cultural awareness - Explore cultural relativism

Modality: Synchronous

Platform: Google Meet

Time: 35 minutes

To start the interaction, students introduced themselves by pairs or individuals and presented their findings towards the celebrations they found out about by taking turns, local and the US peers. Teachers facilitated the exchange by moderating the students who participated and giving assistance when needed.

After this activity, both groups of students had a synchronous exchange activity via Padlet. Students created posts on the Padlet wall and wrote their names and chose one of these options to share their experiences at the celebration they chose previously, such as:

- Sharing traditional recipes and cooking.
- Present typical dances or songs.
- Creating virtual cultural exhibits – Photos, videos (authentic) to illustrate.

After they had created their post. They reviewed their exchange partners' posts and commented on some questions we provided them with in advance. To close, students reflected and wrote down in their journal the answers of some questions related to the earlier exchange.

Session 5: Our environmental footprint: A visual dialogue

Modality: Asynchronous

Platform: Padlet

Time: 50 minutes

For this session, teachers explained to the students what global citizenship involved and how their community's environmental actions impact the world. Teachers presented to the students what actions may affect our environment and how good actions contribute

to the environmental impact. Students socialized the terms related to environmental education and solved their questions. Then, teachers applied an online quiz to check understanding and awareness of environmental education.

For the synchronous preparation, students carried out a task focused on environmental actions. Each class created two pre-recorded videos or slide presentations (using authentic photos) about a *local environmental issue* (e.g., pollution in Cali or waste management challenges in the school area) that had *not been addressed*. Also, they had to prepare one video or slide presentation about *positive actions* the community had taken to protect the local environment. Students posted their presentations on Padlet before the synchronous activity. Teachers set up Padlet with two sections:

- a. Cali-Cahoma: Our Environmental Actions
- b. USA: Our Environmental Actions.

Session 6: Our environmental footprint: A visual dialogue

Modality: Synchronous

Platform: Google Meet

Time: 30 minutes

This was the last video call exchange. Each school chose two or three students who presented their findings during the video call (video or slide presentation).

At the end of the synchronous video call, the students worked simultaneously on Padlet for 30 minutes. Each school checked the others' Padlet post and commented on similarities or differences in the positive actions that had been undertaken and giving suggestions and ideas for overcoming unaddressed issues.

Finally, we had a live farewell greeting from both groups in which some students selected an exchange partner to write a farewell letter. The content of the letter included things he/she liked about him/her during the experience, some things in common or different, emotive and surprised impressions, etc. Mainly, it was a free letter taking into account all the reviewed personal aspects during the COIL program. This phases conclude with a last journal entry for the local students in which their shared their experiences and feelings towards the exchange.

Facilitation and guidance during the implementation

As researchers, we served as facilitators throughout the activities. This involved providing essential connectivity equipment such as Internet, cameras, audio devices, and PCs. Each activity was shared in advanced to the USA teacher to guarantee their preparation and completion, in this way, both groups of students (Colombia and USA) would have the opportunity to participate and be engaged. During synchronous sessions, we moderated interactions to ensure a smooth flow between Colombian and U.S. students; Activities were structured to include one-to-one and paired interactions, specifically designed to guarantee direct engagement and discussion. In terms of platforms, all necessary setups were handled in advance; for instance, Google Meet links and Padlet entries were created before each encounter.

4.4 Data collection

As action research, the following cycles were developed:

- Planning: A detailed plan for the COIL intervention was developed Develop a detailed plan for the COIL intervention, incorporating Baker's (2011) insights on intercultural awareness.

- Acting: The COIL activities were implemented Implement the COIL activities, facilitating intercultural exchange and promoting reflective learning.
- Observing: Data was collected through the focus groups, reflective journals, and online discussions on the platform.
- Reflecting: The data were analyzed, emerging themes were identified, and conclusions were drawn Analyze the data, identify emerging themes, and make conclusions.

A pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire helped to measure changes in students' beliefs about EFL learning. The data from these questionnaires were analyzed from a qualitative lens by providing a baseline and a comparison point to assess the impact of the COIL intervention. Also, a focus group was selected for in-depth exploration of students' beliefs and experiences. The qualitative data from the focus group could provide insights into the nuances of their perspectives and how they evolved. The COIL intervention took part in the planning and acting stages. This intervention provided the opportunity for intercultural exchange and observed and analyzed the interactions during the COIL activities to gain insights into how students' beliefs were shaped.

During the application of the COIL activities, students wrote down in a reflective journal their experiences and reflections based on prompts that the researchers submitted. Analyzing these journals, we gained a deeper understanding of their evolving beliefs and the factors influencing them. To analyze the students' interactions, a platform was used for posting and commenting, this facilitated ongoing discussion and interaction among local and international students. By analyzing the content of these discussions, we identified emerging themes and patterns related to students' beliefs.

For the implementation, we divided the study into 3 phases to develop the action research. The phases were developed as follows:

Phase 1: Pre-COIL implementation

Pre-Survey. In the first week, students completed a structured Likert-scale questionnaire to explore their initial beliefs about learning English. The survey focused on three areas: the perceived importance of English locally and globally, motivation for learning the language, and cultural awareness. Responses were coded to identify patterns in attitudes and served as baseline data for later comparison.

Pre-COIL- Focus group semi-structured discussion. A semi-structured discussion was held before the exchange to deepen understanding of students' expectations, beliefs, and intercultural awareness. The session was transcribed and analyzed to identify common themes, supporting the pre-survey findings and providing qualitative baseline data.

Phase 2: During COIL implementation

Journal. Over three weeks, students kept reflective journals to document their interactions with U.S. peers. They wrote four entries in total. These reflections captured their thoughts on communication, challenges, and evolving views on English and culture. Entries were analyzed thematically to trace shifts in beliefs and emotional engagement with the language.

Phase 3: Post-COIL Implementation

Post-Survey. After the program, students answered a follow-up survey mirroring the initial one. The results were coded to identify changes in beliefs, motivation, and cultural perceptions.

Journal (final entry). At the end of the exchange, students were asked to look back on their experiences communicating with their U.S. peers, covering both how they used English and their cultural interactions. These reflections were key to exploring how their views on learning English had changed throughout the COIL program. This whole process also made it possible to compare their final thoughts with what they'd shared in the initial focus group, giving us a really clear picture of how their perspectives evolved over time.

COIL IMPLEMENTATION- DATA COLLECTION				
	TIME	DATA COLLECTION	INSTRUMENT	DATA ANALYSIS
PHASE 1	1 week	Survey	Pre-Structured questionnaire using Likert-scale	Categorical coding
		Focus Group	Semi-structured discussion	Transcribe entry Coded thematically
PHASE 2	3 Weeks	Journal	Journal entries	Coded thematically
PHASE 3	1 Week	Survey	Post Structured questionnaire using Likert-scale	Categorical coding
		Journal	Final Journal entry	Coded thematically

Table 1. COIL's structure

4.5 Instruments

4.5.1 Surveys

Changes in students' beliefs regarding English learning and intercultural awareness were evaluated before and after the COIL program by means of a pre- and post-intervention Likert-scale questionnaire. Perspectives across three primary areas were assessed by this instrument: (1) beliefs about English as a foreign language (EFL) learning, (2) attitudes toward intercultural exchange, and (3) motivations toward the role of English in local and global contexts. A fourth section was also explored for students' self-description, including personality and dispositions relevant to intercultural communication.

Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Below are selected sample items from the instrument:

- *"English will help me access more job opportunities in the future."* (Section 1 – EFL Beliefs)
- *"Interacting with people from other cultures will help me understand my own culture better."* (Section 2 – Intercultural Exchange)
- *"Learning English is important for communicating with people from other countries (not just native speakers)."* (Section 3 – Motivations)
- *"I consider myself more creative than conventional."* (Section 4 – Self-description)

The full questionnaire is available in the appendix B.

4.5.2 Reflective Journals

As the COIL program unfolded, students regularly kept personal journals, recording their thoughts and reactions at different points. These entries became a valuable way to see how their views on learning English and intercultural exchange shifted over the course of the project. The journal facilitated individual and personal reflection and gave each student the opportunity to express themselves freely. The structure of the journal had four important moments, and in each entry the students had open-ended prompts to facilitate writing and reflection and encourage genuine and unguided responses. The entries were the following:

Entry 1 – Cultural identity and everyday life.

At the beginning of the project, students were invited to reflect on their own background and sense of identity:

- What is one thing about your culture or daily life that you wish more people knew? How does it shape who you are?
- If your life were a movie or book, what would the title be?

Entry 2 – First impressions of the partner school

Once initial contact had been made with the U.S. school, students responded to prompts about similarities, differences, and their reactions:

- What was something surprising or different about the other school?
- What similarities did you notice between their school and yours?
- If you could experience something from their school, what would you choose, and why?

Entry 3 – Cultural celebrations

This entry focused on the cultural exchange around local traditions and celebrations:

- What was the most surprising thing you learned about their celebrations?
- What similarities and differences did you notice between their celebrations and yours?
- How did learning about another culture's celebrations make you reflect on your own?

Entry 4 – Final reflection

At the end of the COIL process, students looked back on the experience as a whole:

- What was the most valuable thing you learned from this exchange?
- How has this experience influenced your thoughts about learning English?
- What similarities and differences stood out most between your culture and your partner school's culture?
- Describe one moment from this experience that you will always remember.

4.5.3 Focus group

The focus group was structured into three segments, lasting approximately 45 minutes in total. It was chosen as a method because it allowed students to speak freely, interact with their peers, and build on each other's ideas, creating a more open and collective space for sharing compared to individual interviews. The discussion was guided by open-ended questions, but space was left for spontaneous dialogue and follow-up comments when relevant:

1. Warm-up: Self-reflection and cultural identity (15 minutes)

Students were invited to share an object, image, or idea that represented their culture or

something about their community they felt proud of. This was meant to activate prior knowledge and bring their own culture into focus as something meaningful and worth sharing.

Prompt: *“What is something special about your culture or community that you’d like others to know about?”*

This moment helped set the tone for the intercultural experience, placing their local context as an important reference point before encountering other ways of seeing the world.

2. Discussion on beliefs about English and intercultural exchange (15 minutes)

After the warm-up, the group moved into a set of guiding questions related to English learning and cultural exchange:

- *What do you think are the main reasons for learning English?*
- *How do you feel about interacting with students from another country?*
- *What expectations or assumptions do you have about your partner school’s culture?*
- *In what ways do you think learning about another culture might affect you or your community?*
- *What role do you think English plays in your future?*
- *Have you had any previous experiences interacting with people from different cultures? What was it like?*

These questions were designed to prompt students to speak about their current thoughts, including any uncertainties or previous experiences that shaped their views. While some responses were brief, others led to longer conversations and comparisons among students.

3. Final reflection: Goals and expectations for the COIL experience (15 minutes)

The session ended with a reflection on what each student hoped to gain from the COIL project and what they imagined the experience might be like:

- *What do you hope to learn about other cultures and yourself through this experience?*
- *What concerns or challenges do you think might appear during this exchange?*
- *What do you think about the opportunity to connect to another culture in real time?*

This initial focus group provided valuable qualitative insights that complemented the questionnaire and the journal's data. It offered a more personal view of students' perspectives and gave space for emotional and cultural dimensions of language learning to emerge.

5. ANALYSIS

This chapter presents an analysis of data collected during the implementation of a COIL project, which aims to explore how intercultural experiences influence students' beliefs about English learning. Grounded in the central research question: to what extent does the implementation of the COIL approach in developing intercultural awareness reshape 11th-grade students' beliefs about the importance of learning English? This analysis studies the impact of virtual intercultural exchanges on students' beliefs toward language learning.

To address this question, the study focused on three interrelated objectives: first, to measure changes in students' beliefs about the importance of learning English before and after the COIL experience; second, to analyze how intercultural exchange contributes to reshaping

these beliefs; and third, to understand how students reframe the role of English in both their local context and globalized world. These objectives guided the interpretation of the qualitative data collected throughout the project.

The data analyzed in this chapter were collected through three instruments: a focus group interview conducted prior to the COIL implementation (Week 1), reflective journals completed after the six-session synchronous and asynchronous exchanges (Weeks 2–4), and pre- and post-questionnaires administered at the beginning and end of the experience (Weeks 1 and 5, respectively).

A qualitative approach guided the analysis of the focus group and journal data, using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012) to identify and categorize key themes emerging from students' voices; this method was chosen for its flexibility and its emphasis on participant-centered meaning-making. For the questionnaire data was used a categorical coding method to group Likert-scale responses into qualitative categories (positive, neutral, negative), allowing for the identification of trends and changes in students' beliefs and attitudes before and after the implementation.

Overall, the analysis revealed that students began the project with generally positive beliefs about English. Their reflective journals showed a growing awareness of intercultural issues and a deeper sense of connection with international peers. The questionnaire results confirmed a consistent positivity toward EFL learning, while also indicating subtle shifts in students' perceptions of intercultural communication and their motivations to learn English. Together, these findings offer meaningful insights into the central research question.

This chapter is structured as follows:

Section 5.1 analyzes the focus group data to explore students' initial beliefs, motivations, and expectations before the COIL experience.

Section 5.2 presents the analysis of reflective journal entries, highlighting how students internalized and reflected on the intercultural exchange.

Section 5.3 examines the pre- and post-questionnaire data, identifying changes in beliefs, attitudes, and motivation toward learning English within an intercultural context.

Section 5.4 presents the integration of findings from the instruments applied and data triangulation.

This analysis chapter concludes with a discussion on how these three sources of data collectively contribute to answering the central research question. The next section turns to the focus group analysis, based on students' initial perspectives on English learning and intercultural awareness before the COIL implementation.

5.1 Analysis of focus group data

In Phase 1 of this research, before the COIL implementation, a focus group interview was conducted with 10 students who were also part of the larger participant group involved in the subsequent implementation phase. The primary purpose of this focus group was to gather data on their initial states regarding three key areas: self-reflection and cultural identity, their beliefs towards English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and their reflections on personal goals related to the upcoming COIL implementation.

To analyze the data collected from the focus group interview, a thematic analysis was employed which is a widely used method in qualitative research for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Thematic analysis was

appropriate for this study as it allowed for an in-depth examination of participants' beliefs, perceptions, and experiences regarding English learning and intercultural communication in the context of the COIL project.

The audio recordings from the focus group were transcribed verbatim. Initially, Notta, an assistant notetaker, was used to gather the initial transcription to capture the general content. Subsequently, the researchers independently reviewed the transcripts against the audio recordings on two separate occasions to ensure accuracy and reliability of the transcription. Any discrepancies were discussed and resolved to create a final, accurate transcript for analysis.

Then the transcript was coded, identifying relevant features of the data that captured key aspects related to students' beliefs, motivations, and intercultural experiences. Meaningful segments were labeled, staying close to the participants' language at this stage. Once initial codes were generated, they were organized into potential themes by grouping similar or related codes together. This helped identify broader patterns that reflected underlying ideas in the students' responses. At this stage, the themes were reviewed in relation to the coded data and the entire data set to ensure that they accurately represented the participants' perspectives.

Some themes were refined, combined, or discarded based on their coherence and relevance and they were named to reflect the essence of what each one captured. Subthemes were also identified where relevant in order to provide a more nuanced understanding of the data and these are the major themes the analysis and interpretation revealed:

Pride in their cultural identity

The participants were asked in advance to think about features of their own culture they were proud of and were meaningful to them and their responses led them to take pride in their

rich traditions, food, dances, and biodiversity. They value these aspects as defining elements of Colombian identity and extend their pride to traditions celebrated all through the country. Among the aspects they brought up were gastronomy (bandeja paisa, masamorra, sancocho, lechona), music (Salsa and folkloric dances):

“En Cali la mayoría de la gente es afrodescendiente y para mí siento que viene como ligado a la salsa. Casi todos los caleños bailan salsa. Escuchan salsa. Escuchan salsa.”

Other student highlighted how the region is enriched with other rhythms typical of the Pacific coast:

“En Cali se enfoca a la salsa pero pues Cali también da la oportunidad de meter más ¿cómo se llama? Ritmos. Ritmos.”

And other student added:

“Por ejemplo en los pueblos que bailan como el currulao, a veces en la feria viene gente por ejemplo de pasto y hace presentaciones en la feria de Cali.”

Additionally, the participants brought up the diversity in terms of Colombian accents (Bogotá, Cali, Medellín, etc.), festivals and carnivals, local traditions like Feria de Cali. Some of them mentioned biodiversity in Colombia (unique fauna and flora) and how important COP 16 was for the city since citizens could explore even more about Colombian fauna and flora richness.

A student states: *Yo nací en el Chocó, pero también hay algo que me siento orgullosa es que hay como mucha biodiversidad y también me recuerda que me gusta también los manglares.*

Motivations for learning English

Then, the interview was about motivations for learning English. These questions looked for establishing students' initial beliefs about EFL importance and uses in daily life.

The students stated that speaking English provides better career opportunities (job advantage).

“...digamos usted no habla inglés, yo hablo inglés y yo nada más que tenga... que hable inglés, a usted no lo van a no lo van a contratar por los más años de experiencia que usted tenga”.

They also mentioned that English is not limited for a group of people but it is fundamental to keep the demands of the work market.

“...en Colombia comienzan a hablar más fluido en inglés para necesitar en empresas para que otras personas estudien en inglés y así haga que en inglés sea más natural. Se convierte como comercial”.

The students understand the importance of English as means of communication and interaction with the world, and providing access to entertainment:

“...si yo voy en estos momentos a China es más probable que me entiendan el inglés que me entiendan el español”.

“Yo también lo utilizo bastante en inglés ya que más que toda la música a la hora de escuchar música o jugar juegos o hacer películas para poner el subtítulos”.

“Yo pienso que cuando uno empieza a consumir como contenido en inglés uno empieza como que entender con más facilidad... comprende más palabras que las personas que no escuchan música en inglés”.

Intercultural exchange and perceptions

In terms of the intercultural exchange-COIL, the participants expressed curiosity about U.S. culture in particular elements such as Hip-hop, celebrations like Thanksgiving, which appear to be assumptions students set up based on the limited exposure to USA culture.

“Más que todo pues de los mundos bajos que siempre se ve el hip hop todo eso”.

They also presented anticipation of cultural differences in terms of personalities and joy expression.

“...nosotros los colombianos nos identificamos como más alegres y ellos como que más calmados como que en ese término vamos a chocar un poco. Ellos tienen un concepto diferente de alegría Vamos a chocar un poco Ellos tienen...”.

Nevertheless, a sense of self-confidence regarding EFL learning was evident, as one participant stated they felt they were at a good stage in their language learning process.

“Pero pero yo siento que uno no se debería sentir nervioso porque primero nadie, nadie, nadie ya se ha aprendido nosotros somos de Colombia nosotros hablamos español

y que estemos intentando aprender otro idioma eso es como que algo que hay que adorar porque por ejemplo la mayoría de los gringos no saben hablar español... ”.

This student’s perspective aligns to Zhu Hua (2014) who states that “the lingua franca paradigm focuses on intercultural communicative practices rather than native speaker norms”, for instance, the student participated and got involved in each activity focused on to communicate her ideas instead of concerning about rules or grammar structures.

A largely deductive approach guided the thematic analysis, shaped by the three central areas addressed in the focus group discussions: students’ beliefs about English, their sense of cultural identity, and experiences with intercultural exchange. Although these categories offered an initial structure, the analysis also allowed space for participants’ voices to guide the interpretation. This flexibility enabled the identification of emergent subthemes and subtle insights that arose naturally from their contributions.

5.2 Analysis of reflective journal data

This section presents the analysis and interpretation of the data collected from students’ reflective journals, written in 4 entries throughout the implementation of the sessions. A qualitative approach was employed, with thematic analysis guiding the process. This allowed for patterns and categories to be directly derived from the students’ words, with no imposition of preconceived codes. A deeper exploration of their reflections, beliefs, and intercultural experiences was facilitated by this method.

The process was initiated with familiarization, where the journals were read to grasp their overall tone and content. Initial coding followed, by which meaningful segments were identified

and descriptive labels assigned. Next, these codes were grouped into larger themes, which naturally revealed recurring ideas about what students believed regarding English, their cultural perceptions, and emotional responses to the COIL experience. A grounded and insightful interpretation of their reflections was enabled by this step-by-step approach.

Five core themes emerged across the entries:

1. English as a means of connection
2. Building intercultural awareness
3. Transformation of learning beliefs
4. Cultural pride and identity
5. Growth in confidence and communicative intent

Each theme reflects how students experienced and internalized the intercultural interaction and how their beliefs about English evolved throughout the process. The themes are discussed below, supported by students' voices.

English as a means of connection

Early reflections reveal that students viewed English not merely as an academic subject, but as a bridge to global communication. In Entry 1, many students expressed excitement at using English “to meet people from another country” or “to speak with real Americans.” In later entries, they reported that despite initial nerves, they successfully communicated and felt “understood.”

This sense of connection grew stronger through the synchronous meetings. As one student wrote in Entry 4:

"I was nervous at the beginning, but then I saw they are just like us. I could speak, and they listened to me."

The interactions led to a redefinition of English as a living, useful tool, which aligns directly with the objective of understanding how beliefs about EFL can shift through intercultural exposure.

Building Intercultural Awareness

Throughout the journal entries, students expressed genuine interest in learning about U.S. peers' lives, especially when they discovered shared hobbies or contrasted their school experiences. They began asking more questions and engaging in deeper reflection about cultural differences.

Curtindale et al. (2020) pointed out these kinds of exchanges are vital because they help students open up to new information and see things from various perspectives. This curiosity is a strong indicator of intercultural openness as some students wrote:

"Now I want to know more about other cultures, not only the U.S., but people from all over the world."

Another student wrote,

"It caught my attention that there is a gym in that school and they can use it."

This comment perfectly captures their curiosity and engagement with different cultural practices and educational environments.

These reflections clearly show that the COIL experience impacted the students' worldview far beyond just learning English. They frequently mentioned the value of learning about other cultures, and being exposed to unfamiliar traditions like Bread Day or St. Patrick's Day really fostered an appreciation for cultural diversity and inclusion. This, in turn, positioned English as an essential skill in our globalized world. While students certainly noticed cultural differences, they also found common ground in areas like the importance of family, education, and celebrating traditions. This helped reinforce a powerful sense of global connectedness. As Zhu Hua (2014) highlights, effective intercultural communication isn't about knowing every single thing about another culture. Instead, it's about negotiating meanings and being flexible in interpreting signs, language, and behavior. This exact perspective was mirrored in the students' growing openness and curiosity as they engaged with both cultural contrasts and shared values.

Transformation of Learning Beliefs

Students frequently noted a change in how they saw English and their own abilities. Initially, many associated English with pressure and fear of mistakes. However, over the course of the exchange, they began to describe English as something “useful,” “interesting,” or even “fun.”

In Entry 3, one student wrote:

“Before I only studied English for grades. Now I see that English is a way to speak with the world.”

Another student wrote:

“I think English is more important than I thought it was.”

This belief shift from obligation to opportunity is one of the central findings of the COIL implementation and speaks directly to the research question.

Cultural Pride and Identity

As students shared about their communities, many expressed increased pride in their cultural heritage. Through Padlet posts and asynchronous exchanges, they described local foods, traditions, music, and daily life with enthusiasm. Journal Entry 4 revealed how students began to see their own culture as “important” and “interesting,” especially when their U.S. peers showed genuine curiosity.

In entry 1, one student wrote:

“Colombian food is a fundamental part of my identity and my culture...it makes me feel proud to be Colombian.”

This theme reflects not just intercultural awareness, but a deepening of self-awareness, a crucial dimension of intercultural competence.

Growth in Confidence and Communicative Intent

Over the sessions, students’ reflections showed increasing confidence in using English, even when making mistakes. By Entry 5, several wrote that they “spoke more than expected,” or that they “could understand and respond.” The emphasis gradually shifted from grammatical accuracy to meaningful interaction, as students mentioned that being understood and listened to was more important than speaking perfectly.

5.3 Analysis of pre and post questionnaire data

To complement the thematic analysis of focus group data and the reflective journal, the pre- and post-questionnaire responses were analyzed using a categorical coding method. Although the questionnaire employed Likert-scale items (1–5) across three main sections, the analysis adopted a qualitative interpretive approach, focusing on overall patterns in students' beliefs about English as a foreign language (EFL), attitudes toward intercultural exchange, and motivation toward English learning. The categorical coding method allowed for the conversion of quantitative Likert-scale scores into qualitative categories, providing a structured and an interpretive way to analyze the results, so this method enabled the identification of shifts in students' general perceptions

Scores were grouped into three categories:

Positive (average between 4.0 and 5.0)

Neutral (average around 3.0 to 3.9)

Negative (average between 1.0 and 2.9)

Each section of the questionnaire contained a different number of statements:

Section 1: 5 statements

Section 2: 6 statements

Section 3: 7 statements

So, to categorize student responses, the total score of each section was divided by the number of items in that section to calculate the average response per item. For instance, if a

student's total score in section 2 was 20, the average would be $20 \div 6 = 3.33$, which falls into the *neutral* category.

This approach allowed to place each student within one of the three categories per section, both for pre- and post-questionnaire data. The goal was not to measure agreement or disagreement with isolated items but rather to explore broader shifts in students' perceptions and beliefs after participating in the COIL experience. The results of this categorization are presented in Table 1, showing how student responses were distributed across categories before and after the intercultural exchange. This overview provides insight into how learners' views on English and intercultural interaction evolved during the implementation.

SECTION 1				SECTION 2				SECTION 3			
PRE		POST		PRE		POST		PRE		POST	
Positive	22	Positive	22	Positive	12	Positive	7	Positive	15	Positive	12
Neutral	2	Neutral	2	Neutral	12	Neutral	17	Neutral	9	Neutral	12
Negative	--	Negative	--	Negative	--	Negative	--	Negative	--	Negative	--

Table 2. Categorical coding of student responses (pre- and post-questionnaire).

The questionnaires, pre and post, were divided into three sections:

1. Beliefs about English as a foreign language (EFL)
2. Attitudes toward intercultural exchange
3. Motivation towards the role of English

Section 1: Beliefs about English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

In this section, student responses remained overwhelmingly positive both before and after the COIL implementation. Out of 24 students, 22 were categorized as positive in both the pre- and post-questionnaires, while only 2 students were identified as neutral. No student responses were categorized as negative in either instance.

In this section, in statement 1 of the pre-questionnaire, the students 9 and 18 went from 2 and 1 respectively to 5 and 3 in the post-questionnaire. This score indicated a positive shift in terms of the importance of English in their everyday life in these two students who scored the lowest responses in this section. The student number 3 in the statement 5 went from a 2 in the pre-questionnaire to 4 in the post-questionnaire showing an improvement in the perception of necessity of English to communicate with people from other countries.

In general, this stability suggests that students already held strong beliefs regarding the importance of English in global communication, education, and employment contexts. The COIL experience did not significantly alter these beliefs, possibly because they were already deeply settled. According to Barcelos (2011), core beliefs are related to emotions and to a person's identity which makes them more resistant to change. In this sense, the experience may not have transformed these beliefs but rather reaffirmed them, reinforcing students' emotional investment and long-standing motivations toward English learning.

Section 2: Attitudes toward intercultural exchange

In this part of the questionnaire, students were asked to reflect on how ready they felt, both emotionally and cognitively, for intercultural exchange. There were six statements, each touching on different aspects like excitement, anxiety, self-awareness, and language learning. Interestingly, this section showed the clearest change in how students responded. Before starting the COIL project, 12 students leaned toward positive perceptions, and another 12 gave more neutral responses. After the project, though, the number of positive answers went down to 7, and neutral responses increased to 17. This shift may suggest that the experience prompted more reflection or uncertainty about intercultural interaction than students had initially anticipated.

There are some interesting shifts in a few participants within this section. For instance, Student 2's score regarding nervousness when communicating with different cultures improved dramatically, moving from a 1 on the pre-questionnaire to a 5 on the post-questionnaire. This really suggests they gained confidence during the exchange. Another fascinating case is Student 7. She consistently scored a 1 on that same nervousness statement in both surveys, yet she was one of the most active and engaged participants throughout the entire exchange.

In short, when a shift from quite positive to a more neutral stance was observed in attitudes, it likely points to a journey of growing awareness, emotional processing, and thoughtful self-reflection. While students initially expressed enthusiasm and openness toward interacting with people from other cultures, the post-responses of some suggest a more cautious stance. As Curtindale et al. (2020) described, Interdependent Intercultural Tasks (IIT) are designed so that culture-specific information is introduced to create a productive "mental discomfort," which then prompts students to truly examine another culture. Therefore, it is possible that the real-time interaction with international peers challenged their expectations or made them more conscious of cultural differences and communication implications. Rather than reducing interest, this shift may reflect a deepening of intercultural sensitivity and an understanding that such interactions can involve both excitement and discomfort.

Section 3: Motivation toward English learning

This section explored students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for learning English through seven statements. The items addressed emotional engagement, academic goals, travel aspirations, intercultural communication, global connections, and cultural awareness.

In terms of motivation, a smaller but still significant shift was observed since in the pre-questionnaire 15 students demonstrated positive motivation, while 9 were categorized as neutral. Consequently, in the post-questionnaire, the number of positive responses slightly dropped to 12, and neutral responses increased to 12. Although no student responses were classified as negative, the slight decrease in positive motivation might reflect a move from idealized or external motivators to more pragmatic or internalized motivations. In both the pre- and post-questionnaires, there was a slight shift, with the number of responses scored as 2 decreasing from eight to six.

The number of responses scored as 5 increased from 53 in the pre-questionnaire to 57 in the post-questionnaire, respectively; this modest growth can suggest a reinforcement of strong agreement with statements related to motivation since it indicates that for some students, the COIL experience may have served as a validating or enriching moment in their language learning process, supporting their positive attitudes and emotional investment in English

The COIL experience may have encouraged students to reconsider the reasons why they are learning English, not simply as a tool for academic success or travel, but as a means for engaging meaningfully across cultures. This shift can suggest a redefinition or reorientation of motivational drivers rather than a loss of interest or engagement.

5.4 Integration of findings from multiple instruments

In this section, it is examined how insights from the focus group, journals, and questionnaires are brought together and how light is shed on the main research question. By bringing these sources into conversation, a fuller picture of how 11th-grade students' ideas about learning English began to shift during the COIL experience is captured by the analysis. Points of

convergence, complementarity, expansion, and possible contradictions across the findings are identified by this integration. How these different sources relate to one another is looked at not just for the support of the findings' strength; the quieter, more personal ways that intercultural experiences can reshape how students think about English are also brought to light. For many, it seems English began to feel less like a school subject and more like a bridge to connect with others, to share their own culture, and to better understand who they are.

Triangulation: Convergence of findings

Significant convergence is observed among the three data sources regarding students' evolving perceptions of English as a valuable tool for communication, personal growth, and intercultural exchange. In all instruments, students mainly recognized English for its practical uses, things like getting a job, traveling, or accessing content from around the world. However, their beliefs deepened and shifted throughout the COIL process, as reflected in later journal entries and post-questionnaire results as Rubin (2017) claims, COIL brings a fresh approach to education, fostering cross-cultural understanding within collaborative, multicultural learning spaces.

For instance:

- In the focus group, students initially expressed a pragmatic understanding of English as primarily useful for job opportunities, global mobility, and access to entertainment. Yet, as the COIL sessions progressed, this perspective started to shift.
- In the journals, especially in the later entries (entries 3 and 4), this view began to take a personal turn because it was enriched by lived experiences. Students started to associate English with interpersonal connection and cultural discovery; one student wrote, "*I could*

speak, and they listened to me,” capturing a moment of being heard and communicating confidence.

- The post-questionnaire results further confirmed this trend, because students increasingly agreed with statements like, *"English helps me connect with people from other cultures,"* and *"To be a truly global citizen, learning English is key."*

While the questionnaires revealed that a lot of students already had good positive beliefs about English before the COIL project started, all the data convergence points to one thing: those beliefs were both solidified and expanded through their intercultural engagement.

This convergence shows that the COIL experience did not just confirm pre existing beliefs but also got them to see English as a dynamic, socially relevant skill that is important for more than just school or work.

Complementarity: Distinct but interrelated insights

Each data collection method brought its own perspective, offering unique but complementary insights into how students' beliefs evolved over time:

- The Focus Group was a rich tool for catching those raw, spontaneous conversations. IT gave a solid picture of what students initially assumed about other cultures and what they expected. It spotted early hints of curiosity about other places, alongside a real sense of pride in their own background. For instance, when they chatted about things like salsa,

local biodiversity, or regional accents, you could really feel their strong connection to being Colombian.

- The Reflective Journals captured the personal and emotional dimensions of the COIL journey. Here, students not only documented what they learned but how it made them feel including excitement, nervousness, growing confidence, and moments of realization. These reflections revealed internal transformations that were not accessible through the more structured questionnaire format.
- The Questionnaires provided a structured overview of beliefs and allowed for quantifiable comparisons before and after the implementation. While numerical in nature, their interpretation required a qualitative lens. Increases in agreement with items such as “English helps me understand people from other cultures” were not only statistical indicators but also signals of belief shifts. These shifts, made visible through patterns in the data, aligned with the more narrative based reflections from journals and discussions in the focus group.

These complementary strengths allowed for a fuller picture of the impact: focus groups mapped the starting point, journals charted the journey, and questionnaires confirmed the destination.

Expansion: Deepening the findings across tools

The three instruments also enriched and expanded one another’s findings. For example, the focus group revealed students’ initial stereotypes and limited knowledge of U.S. culture often shaped by media or music (“hip hop,” “Thanksgiving,” “calm personalities”). The reflective journals expanded on this point by showing how these perceptions evolved. In later entries,

students began questioning their assumptions and appreciating the diversity and complexity of U.S. peers' experiences "*They are just like us,*" or "*We can learn from each other.*" (reflective journal)

Similarly, while the questionnaire showed an increase in students' positive beliefs about English after COIL, the reflective journals elaborated on the reasons behind that shift:

"Before, I thought English was only for exams or jobs, but now I see it helps me know people and ideas from the world."

Another expansion was observed in the theme of confidence and communicative intent. While the focus group expressed modest self-assurance before COIL, the journals depicted how interactions in the COIL sessions led students to recognize their ability to communicate meaningfully, despite linguistic limitations: "*They listened to me*" and "*I felt I could speak and they understood me.*" The post-questionnaire responses aligned with this change, with more students identifying themselves as "confident English users." Through this layered approach to data, trends were confirmed, and deeper insight was also gained into the emotional and cognitive processes that supported those changes.

Potential Discrepancies: Inconsistencies and interpretations

Although the different data sources largely converged and offered complementary views, a handful and few discrepancies did appear. These moments of divergence, however, proved important, revealing the subtle complexity of belief transformation

Disparity in expressed vs. measured confidence. In the focus group, one student confidently stated: "*Yo siento que uno no se debería sentir nervioso... estamos intentando*

aprender otro idioma eso es algo que hay que adorar.” However, journal entries from some students described feeling “afraid to speak” or “worried about making mistakes,” particularly during the early COIL sessions. This contrast suggests that some students may project confidence publicly, especially in group settings, while experiencing private anxiety, which only surfaces in individual writing.

Questionnaire ambiguity vs. journal Specificity. A small group of students, particularly in the questionnaires, continued to express insecurity or detachment, indicating that the COIL experience had a limited impact on their beliefs or that they did not feel confident in their language skills. This was less evident in the focus group, possibly due to peer influence or group dynamics that encouraged more optimistic responses. However, journals also revealed variation in the depth of engagement, some students developed meaningful curiosity and asked follow-up questions about their partners’ lives, while others remained at a surface level of observation.

Idealized Cultural Perceptions. In both the focus group and early journal entries, students expressed a romanticized view of U.S. culture (e.g., wealth, advanced technology, “more serious” behavior). Although these were later challenged through the COIL experience, some remnants of these perceptions persisted in the final journal reflections. This suggests that beliefs related to culture may be more resistant to change than beliefs about language utility, possibly due to long-standing societal discourses and media representation. For instance, Aragão highlights that core beliefs are related to self-concepts and are more resistant to change (2011, p. 304); they can either foster openness and understanding or create biases and misunderstandings.

Additionally, some journal entries suggested that a few students were still navigating cultural misunderstandings or retained a limited view of U.S. culture (e.g., associating it mainly

with consumerism or fast food), which might reflect surface-level intercultural awareness rather than deeper intercultural competence (Baker, 2012).

These inconsistencies are not to be perceived as contradictions, but rather as indicators of differing stages in the intercultural learning process. The layered and occasionally contradictory nature of belief formation and change is reflected by them, especially within socio-educational settings where intercultural exposure has been limited. The layered and occasionally contradictory nature of belief formation and change is reflected by them, especially within socio-educational settings where intercultural exposure has been limited.

6. CONCLUSION

This research intended to understand how the COIL experience shaped the way 11th-grade students from a public school in southeastern Cali think about the English language and its place in their lives. The study followed three guiding objectives: to observe changes in their beliefs before and after the COIL intervention, to analyze how interactions with international peers affected those beliefs, and to understand how students reframe the role of English in both their local context and globalized world.

What emerged after this study's implementation was not just a shift in thinking, but a realignment. Many students initially viewed English as something imposed by the school curricula and formality, something needed for exams, future job prospects, or university access. But those perceptions were distant from their own realities. It was formal, external, and detached from their daily lives. But through the COIL dialogues, at times casual, at times emotional, and grounded in culture, students began to see English differently. It was no longer just a school subject; it became a tool for saying who they are, for talking about their neighborhoods, their music, their traditions, and the things they care about. In those spaces of exchange, English started to matter not because it was a means to an end, but because it became a medium through which their stories could travel.

Aragão states that beliefs and emotions in language learning/teaching are inter-related, they disclose feelings and core beliefs about themselves as students (2011, p. 302). The reactions were evident in their journals and focus groups responses. They wrote about surprise, even joy, when peers from the United States showed genuine interest in Afro-Colombian culture, in the slang used in Cali, in the pace and rhythm of their lives. For these students, who often move

through an education system that often marginalizes their cultural backgrounds, this recognition meant something. It gave weight to their experiences. English, in this space, no longer erased their identity, it amplified it. It gave them a presence. This transformation challenges the traditional, top-down approach to English instruction common in under-resourced public schools. There, English is often associated with exclusion, it belongs to others, to a world out of reach. What COIL demonstrated is that when students are given a space to speak from their reality, their engagement changes. They become participants rather than recipients. Some even began to reflect critically on stereotypes they held about the U.S., while also becoming more aware of how their own culture is misrepresented or simplified abroad.

For Afro-Colombian youth in particular, this was not just a linguistic shift; it was a cultural and emotional one. Their voices, typically sidelined in school discourse, gained presence in a space where difference was not minimized but valued. That shift matters. It signals to educators that teaching English should not mean replicating foreign norms or imposing cultural models that do not speak to students' lives. Instead, it can become a way to build bridges rooted in mutual recognition.

The emotional dimension of this experience is impossible to overlook. The challenges students faced, misunderstandings, limited vocabulary, insecurity, became opportunities for growth. They practiced patience, empathy, and resourcefulness. They listened in ways they had not before. They realized that being fluent was less important than being understood and willing to understand. These are human lessons, not just academic ones, and they deserve more attention in language classrooms.

Yet, it would be misleading to suggest the process was uniformly positive. Some students remained uncertain, especially those who felt less confident in English. This reminds us of the importance of emotional scaffolding, of making space for doubt, and of giving students tools to process complex experiences. The reflective journals were vital in this regard. They allowed for honest engagement and private processing, something rarely prioritized in rigid curricula. Naturally, the study had its limitations. Variations in language proficiency between the Colombian and U.S. students affected the depth and flow of interaction. Also, the focus remained on belief transformation rather than the formal measurement of intercultural competence. Future studies could build on this work with mixed methods and longer-term tracking to see if these new beliefs persist and evolve. But even with these limitations, one conclusion stands out: COIL created a break from the usual way English is perceived in marginalized classrooms. It opened a space where students didn't have to choose between their culture and another's. They could share, listen, and feel that they belonged. In doing so, English became more than grammar exercises and foreign textbooks. It became a language of connection.

This research makes a case for rethinking English language education in Colombia. Rather than framing it from a place of deficiency, "you lack this," "you must sound like that", we can begin from abundance: students' own stories, traditions, curiosities, and voices. COIL may not be a flawless model, but it opens a path. A path where language learning is not about conformity, but about connection. Where students not only learn English, but also learn what it means to be seen, to speak up, and to build understanding on their own terms.

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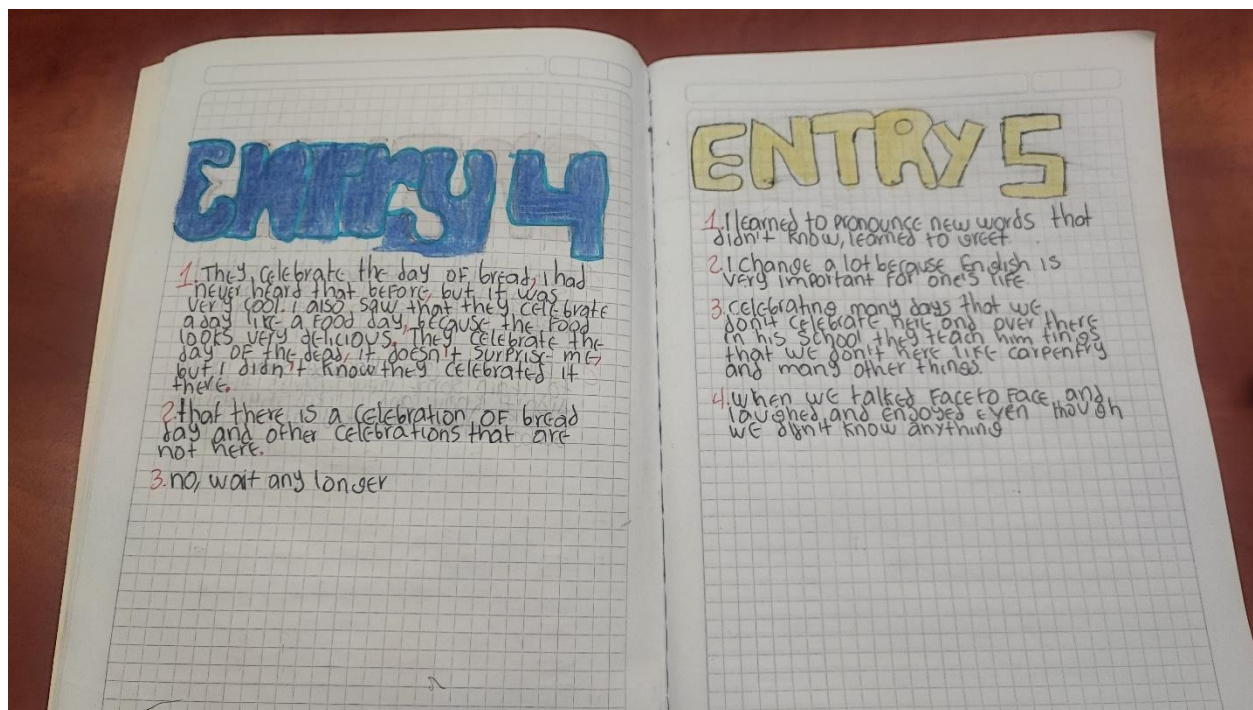
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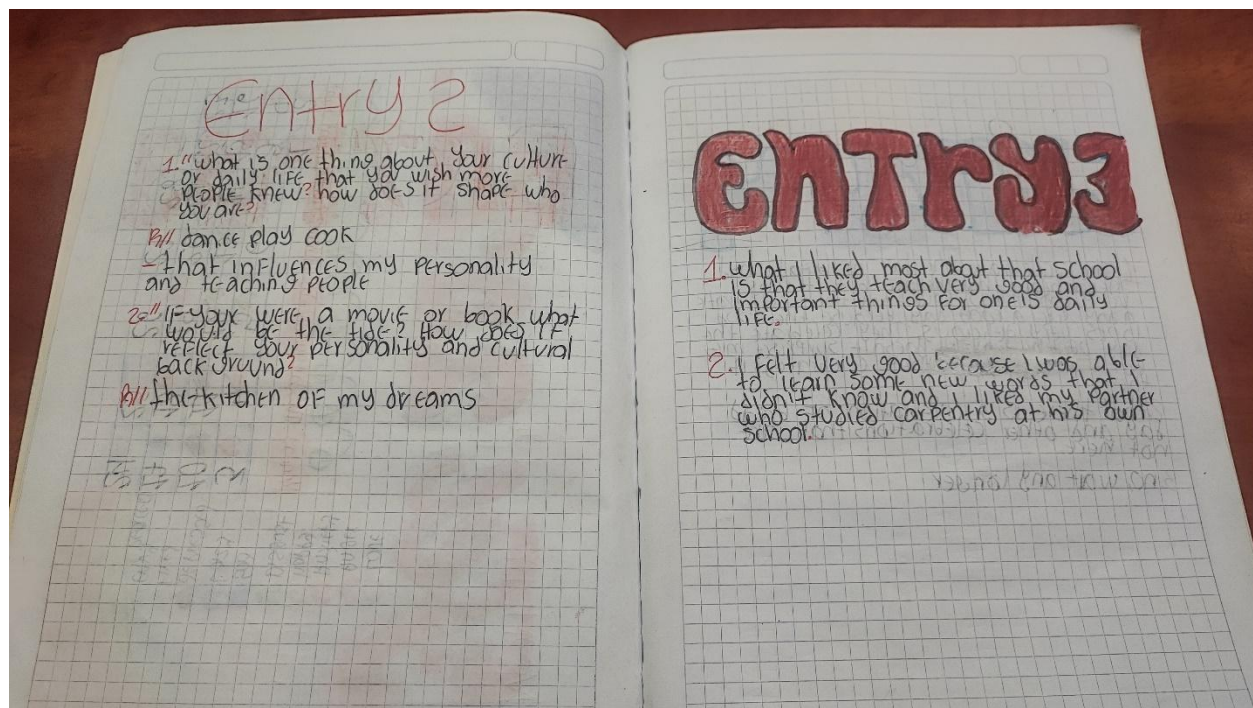
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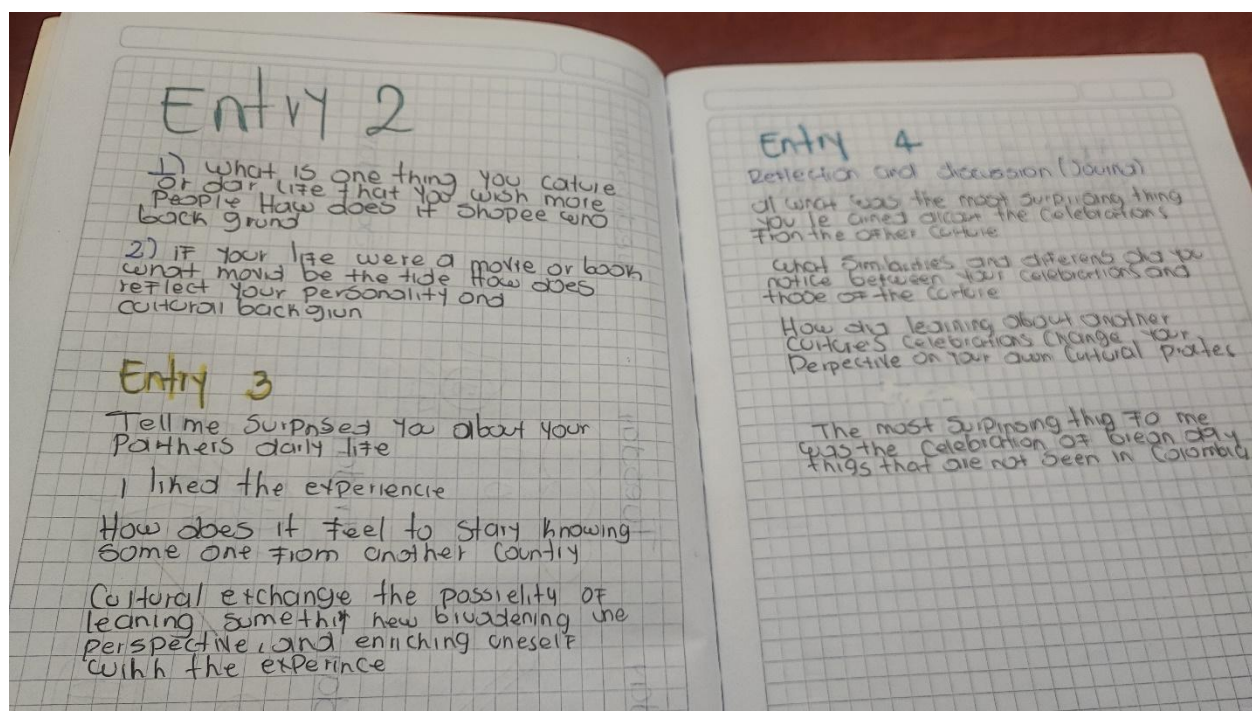
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8. APPENDICES



Appendix A. Journals





Entry 3

• Tell me surprised you about your partner's daily life

♥ I am surprised by many things that happen to my partner

• How does it feel to start knowing someone from another country?

♥ It feels really fun to learn other things about another country and learn a little more about the world

Entry 4

• Reflection and discussion (journal):

♥ What was the most surprising thing you learned about the celebrations from the other culture?

• What similarities and differences did you notice between your celebration and those of the other culture?

• How did learning about another culture's celebrations change your perspective on your own cultural practices?

Solution

♥ The most surprising thing for me was the celebration of Good Day, things that are not seen in Colombia

• Because there are stronger and different things are celebrated than in our country

• Now they are perspectives are more different

Appendix B. Questionnaires

Pre-COIL: Likert Scale survey - Pre and post questionnaire

Purpose: To measure students' initial and final beliefs about learning English, their perception of intercultural exchange, and how they view the importance of English in their lives before participating in the COIL program.

Instructions:

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements by circling a number on the scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Self-description: We are interested in how you think about yourself. Please circle a point on the scale below that best represents your personality.

Beliefs about the importance of English in Local and global contexts

1. = Strongly Disagree (*Totalmente en desacuerdo*)
2. = Disagree (*En desacuerdo*)
3. = Neutral (*Neutral*)
4. = Agree (*De acuerdo*)
5. = Strongly Agree (*Totalmente de acuerdo*)

Section 1: Students' beliefs about EFL learning (*Creencias de los estudiantes sobre el aprendizaje de inglés como lengua extranjera*)

Purpose: To measure students' initial beliefs about the value of learning English. (*Medir las creencias iniciales de los estudiantes sobre el valor de aprender inglés.*)

1. English is an important part of my everyday life. (*El inglés es una parte importante de mi vida diaria.*)
○ 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
2. English will help me access more job opportunities in the future. (*El inglés me ayudará a acceder a más oportunidades laborales en el futuro.*)
○ 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
3. Learning English is essential for success in today 's globalized world. (*Aprender inglés es esencial para el éxito en el mundo globalizado de hoy.*)
○ 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
4. People who speak English have more advantages in life than those who don't. (*Las personas que hablan inglés tienen más ventajas en la vida que aquellas que no lo hacen.*)
○ 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
5. English is necessary to communicate with people from other countries. (*El inglés es necesario para comunicarse con personas de otros países.*)
○ 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

Section 2: Attitudes toward intercultural exchange

Purpose: To gauge students' attitudes towards intercultural exchange and expectations for the COIL program.

1. I am excited to communicate with students from another country. (*Me emociona comunicarme con estudiantes de otro país.*)

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

2. Interacting with people from other cultures will help me understand my own culture better. (*Interactuar con personas de otras culturas me ayudará a comprender mejor mi propia cultura.*)

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

3. I believe working with students from another country will improve my English skills. (*Creo que trabajar con estudiantes de otro país mejorará mis habilidades en inglés.*)

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

4. I feel nervous about communicating with people from different cultures. (*Me siento nervioso/a al comunicarme con personas de diferentes culturas.*)

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

5. Learning about other cultures is important for my personal growth. (*Aprender sobre otras culturas es importante para mi crecimiento personal.*)

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

6. English allows me to learn about the customs and traditions of other countries. (*El inglés me permite aprender sobre las costumbres y tradiciones de otros países.*)

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

Section 3: Motivations towards the Role of English (*Motivaciones hacia el rol del inglés*)

Purpose: To assess how students view the role of English in a global and personal context. (*Evaluar las actitudes de los estudiantes hacia el intercambio intercultural y sus expectativas sobre el programa COIL.*)

1. I enjoy learning English, and it motivates me to learn more. (*Disfruto aprender inglés y eso me motiva a seguir aprendiendo.*)

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

2. I feel confident when speaking English. (*Me siento seguro/a al hablar inglés.*)

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

3. I am learning English because I want to achieve academic success. (*Estoy aprendiendo inglés porque quiero alcanzar el éxito académico.*)

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

4. Being able to travel to English-speaking countries motivates me to learn English. (*Poder viajar a países de habla inglesa me motiva a aprender inglés.*)

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

5. Learning English is important for communicating with people from other countries (not just native speakers). (*Aprender inglés es importante para comunicarme con personas de otros países, no sólo hablantes nativos.*)

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

6. I believe learning English can improve my understanding of other cultures. (*Creo que aprender inglés puede mejorar mi comprensión de otras culturas.*)

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

7. Knowing English makes me feel more connected to the world. (*Saber inglés me hace sentir más conectado/a con el mundo.*)

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

Appendix C. Coil implementation documents

ACTIVITIES OF THE COIL IMPLEMENTATION					
Objectives: 4. Help students become aware of these visible differences without judgment, fostering curiosity and openness toward understanding. 5. Encourage students to dig deeper into cultural nuances and realize that culture is dynamic, not fixed. 6. Develop students' ability to navigate and appreciate cultural differences while working together toward a shared outcome.					
Phase 1		Phase 2		Phase 3	
Perspective taking (Self-identity- Exploring their own culture)		Explore Cultural Relativism		English Language and Global Citizenship (Intercultural communication)	
Week 1		Week 2		Week 3	
Focus: As students start interacting with their COIL partners, they'll notice <i>surface-level cultural differences, like greetings, common phrases, or everyday behaviors (Baker, 2011).</i>		Focus: As students continue their interactions, they'll start to understand that culture is more complex than initial appearances. They'll notice how and why their partners communicate differently. <i>"Understanding Cultural Complexity and Context"</i> <i>(Baker, 2011)</i>		Focus: By this stage, students should start to use their intercultural skills to negotiate communication effectively, recognizing the importance of shared understanding, even if they use English in different ways. <i>"Active Engagement and Communication Across Cultures"</i> <i>(Baker, 2011)</i>	
Session 1 Asynchronous Preparation Resources introduction	Session 2 Synchronous Welcome meeting - Ice breaker	Session 3 Asynchronous Collaborative Activities	Session 4 Synchronous Collaborative Activities	Session 5 Asynchronous Collaborative Activities	Session 6 Synchronous Reflection - Closure

Session 1: Asynchronous class - “Shared spaces, traditions, and personal introductions on Padlet”

Objective: Begin exploring each other’s spaces, traditions, and personal interests through Padlet posts, building a foundation for personal introductions in Week 2’s live session.

Activity flow (aligned with basic cultural awareness, Baker 2011):

Ask the students to be members of the padlet classroom. Padlet link for students to be members: <https://padlet.com/Yescoil/student/EFt6pcwnvGGpDG3v>

7. Personal introduction (*Creating the profile*)

- a. Each student creates an introductory post to share in the session 2, including:
 - i. Name, age, short greeting and the school name.
 - ii. Share any particular preference that is considered essential in his/her daily life: music, books, movie genre, food, hobbies, etc.
 - iii. Photo or Drawing: An image or drawing that represents them.

Goal: Allow students to think through their self-introductions, creating a digital “profile” they can present live in session 2.

Padlet wall link: <https://padlet.com/Yescoil/personal-introduction-gvi3u96os73jfvcl>

8. Padlet wall: “Places & traditions that shape us”

- a. Students from each school post on padlet ONE of the following options:
 - a. Pictures, videos, or descriptions of places important to them (e.g., school, favorite park, neighborhood) or a
 - b. A favorite tradition or holiday with images, videos, or drawings and a brief explanation.

Padlet wall link: <https://padlet.com/Yescoil/places-traditions-that-shape-us-82eazczj9acm7r21>

Goal: Introduce students to each other's cultural practices, promoting curiosity through friendly social media-style interactions.

3. Task for next session:

9. Go to the padlet wall "**Personal introduction**" and interact/comment in the exchange students' posts, answering this question:
 - a. Based on the preferences, what can you say about his/her personality?
10. Go to the padlet wall "**Places & traditions that shape us**" and interact/comment in the exchange students' posts, answering these questions:
 - a. What's one thing you'd love to try from this tradition?
 - b. What seems interesting from this place?
 - c. What does this place/tradition tell you about the person who shared it?

4. Reflection journal - Entry 1

- **Questions:**
 - "What is one thing about your culture or daily life that you wish more people knew? How does it shape who you are?"
 - "If your life were a movie or book, what would be the title?"
- **Creative element:** Encourage students to add stickers, drawings, or visuals to personalize their reflection.
- **Goal:** Use the journal as a reflective space, encouraging them to think about what they would like to share with their new international friends.

Session 2: Synchronous class - "Welcome meeting & icebreaker"

Objective: Kick off the synchronous session by having students introduce themselves in a fun, social media-inspired format to establish rapport and begin building basic cultural awareness.

Activity flow (aligned with basic cultural awareness, Baker 2011):

2. Padlet post introductions

- Pre-session activities: Students must look and read all the profiles and find a student with almost the same preferences (e.g., "Find someone who likes the same music as

you"). With the students' name in mind, the students must think in Icebreaker questions in order to have a quick, 3-minute chat:

- "What's one food you could eat every day?"
- "What do you like to do after school?"
- "What caught your attention?"
- "What did you like about the student?"
- "Who is your favorite singer?"

3. Interactive icebreaker

- During session **"Face to face friend" 25 mins**

In pairs, students have quick, 3-minute face to face chat to answer the mentioned questions in exercise 1:

- A student from Eagle Valley names a student from Carlos Holguin Mallarino (Cahoma) and then, the chat begins. After a while, a student from Cahoma names a student from Eagle Valley he/she considers or shares something in common. This dynamic takes place until several couples from each school meet.

- **Goal:** Build rapport through short, engaging conversations.

4. Collaborative post - **"Our schools, our world"** (*real time interaction*) **30 mins**

- Students from Eagle Valley and Cahoma will share differences and similarities between their schools through a Padlet exchange. Each school will have its own padlet wall.

Eagle Valley: Students will post about their school environment, daily routines, subjects, important events, school values, etc.

Eagle valley padlet wall: <https://padlet.com/Yescoil/eagle-valley-6gto2b09sapgmtuv>

Cahoma: Students will do the same on their own Padlet.

Cahoma padlet wall: <https://padlet.com/Yescoil/cahoma-yz9cl1hj4h0pultw>

Examples: *“Our school starts at 7:00 a.m., and we have lunch at 12:00 p.m.”* or *“Every year, we celebrate Student’s Day with a sports fair.”*

Once students have completed their posts, they will do a Padlet Walk, visiting their assigned partner post.

Guiding questions for comments:

- What is something surprising or different compared to your school?
- What similarities did you find with your school?
- If you could experience something from their school, what would you choose and why?
 - **Goal:** Introduce cultural contrasts in an informal, visually engaging way.
- **Journal entry (wrap-up):**
 - **Prompt:** “What’s one thing that surprised you about a friend’s daily life? How does it feel to start knowing someone from another country?”
 - **Goal:** Encourage personal reflection, helping students process and appreciate early cultural insights.

Session 3 Explore cultural awareness - Explore cultural relativism

Objective: Foster understanding by exploring and comparing cultural celebrations, enhancing an appreciation for cultural diversity.

Pre-exchange activities- Preparation (aligned with advanced cultural awareness, Baker 2011):

1. Warm-up:

- a. Introduce the concept of cultural relativism and explain how celebrations can vary significantly across cultures. Present the video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uzT-RDrWbZo&ab_channel=GotQuestionsMinistries

asking students to share their experiences with celebrating birthdays, weddings, or holidays.

- c. Discuss the common elements of these celebrations (gifts, food, decorations, gatherings).
- d. Discuss the cultural, historical, and social contexts that shape each celebration in the students' culture.

Examples:

Día de las Velitas (Dec 7)

- **Cultural:** Marks the beginning of Christmas with candle-lit streets.
- **Historical:** Honors the Virgin Mary's Immaculate Conception.
- **Social:** Strengthens family and community unity.

Thanksgiving (Nov, 4th Thursday)

- **Cultural:** A time for gratitude and family feasts.
- **Historical:** Dates back to a harvest meal shared by Pilgrims and Native Americans in 1621.
- **Social:** Focuses on family unity but also raises discussions about colonization.

2. Cultural research:

- a. Assign students to research some celebrations 1 or 2 from their own culture

- Birthdays
- Quinceañero
- Mothers' day
- Love and friendship: amigo secreto
- Halloween
- Christmas: novenas, días de las velitas
- New year: año viejo/grapes/yellow underwear
- April Fool's Day
- Easter
- Memorial Day

- Thanksgiving
- St. Patrick's Day
- Día de los Muertos
- Las Posadas

- b. Encourage them to focus on the cultural significance, traditions, and rituals associated with each celebration.

3. Presentation and discussion:

- a. Students present their findings to the class, using visual aids to illustrate their points (Digital posters, authentic photos and/or videos, canvas, powerpoint, etc).
- b. Facilitate a discussion about the similarities and differences between celebrations, emphasizing the cultural context and underlying values.

Session 4: Explore cultural awareness - Explore cultural relativism

COIL exchange activities (Aligned with advanced cultural awareness, Baker 2011):

1. Virtual cultural exchange: Synchronic activity. (35 mins)

- A. Connect with the class from a different country through googlemeet.
- B. General greetings of all students
- C. Have students introduce themselves by pairs or individuals and present their findings towards the celebrations they found out about. This will be in turns. The students will ask questions about something they found interesting.

Focus on key aspects such as:

- The purpose and meaning of the celebration
- Traditional rituals and customs
- The role of family and community
- The significance of food, music, and decorations

Example of Questions:

- Do families celebrate together or individually?
- When does this celebration take place? (Date/Month/Season)
- Do people dress in a special way for this event?
- Why is this celebration important?
- What are some traditional activities people do during this celebration?

- What special food, music, or decorations are used?
- What is one interesting fact about this celebration?
- What kind of music is played?

2.. Cultural exchange activities (Padlet wall): Synchronous activity (30 mins)

<https://padlet.com/Yescoil/cultural-exchange-d0le2m41vteh5y4q>

Students will create a post on the padlet wall. They will write their names and they will choose one of these options to share their experiences on the celebration they chose, such as:

- Sharing traditional recipes and cooking.
- Present typical dances or songs.
- Creating virtual cultural exhibits – Photos, videos (authentic) to illustrate.

After they have created their post. They will look for their exchange partners' posts and comment taking into account this questions:

- What did you find most interesting about this celebration?
- How is this celebration similar or different from one in your culture?
- What do you think about the food, dance, or decorations shared?
- If you could experience this celebration, what would you like to do the most?
- Is there anything else you'd like to know about this tradition?

4. Reflection and discussion (journal):

- a. What was the most surprising thing you learned about the celebrations from the other culture?
- b. What similarities and differences did you notice between your celebrations and those of the other culture?
- c. How did learning about another culture's celebrations change your perspective on your own cultural practices?

Session 5: Asynchronous class - Our environmental footprint: A visual dialogue

Objective: Enable students to explore environmental issues relevant to their communities, fostering perspective-taking, cultural empathy, and global citizenship through reflective, asynchronous activities.

Activity flow (Aligned with intercultural awareness, Baker 2011):

1. Mini-presentations on local environmental issues

- Explain to the students that as global citizens, their community's environmental actions impact the world.

- Present the students what actions may affect our environment:

1. Waste Management:

- Improper disposal of waste, leading to pollution of land, water, and air.
- Lack of recycling programs, resulting in increased landfill waste.
- Burning of trash, releasing harmful toxins into the atmosphere.

2. Pollution:

- Industrial discharge into waterways.
- Agricultural runoff containing pesticides and fertilizers.
- Noise pollution from various community activities.

3. Resource Consumption:

- Excessive water usage, leading to depletion of water resources.
- Overconsumption of energy, particularly from fossil fuel sources.
- Deforestation for development or agriculture.

- Good actions to contribute to the environmental impact:

- Reducing Waste and Promoting Recycling:

- *Enhance Recycling Efforts:*

- Advocate for and participate in community recycling programs.
- Organize or join local clean-up events to remove litter from parks, streets, and waterways.
- Educate others on proper recycling practices.

- Embrace the "*Reduce, Reuse, Recycle*" Philosophy:

- Minimize single-use plastic consumption.

- Support businesses that prioritize sustainable packaging.
 - Promote and participate in clothing swaps or repair workshops.
 - Composting food waste.
- Conserving Energy and Water:
 - *Energy Efficiency:*
 - Encourage the use of energy-efficient appliances and lighting.
 - Promote the adoption of renewable energy sources like solar panels.
 - Participate in community initiatives to improve home insulation.
 - *Water Conservation:*
 - Educate on water-saving practices, such as fixing leaks and using water-efficient fixtures.
 - Support initiatives to protect local water sources.
 - Plant drought resistant native plant species.
- Promoting Sustainable Transportation:
 - *Encourage Active Transportation:*
 - Advocate for and support the development of bike lanes and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure.
 - Organize community bike rides or walking groups.
 - Promote the use of public transportation.
 - *Support Electric Vehicles:*
 - Advocate for the installation of electric vehicle charging stations.
- Protecting and Enhancing Green Spaces:
 - Tree Planting and Reforestation:
 - Participate in tree-planting initiatives to increase carbon sequestration and improve air quality.
 - Support efforts to protect and restore local forests and natural habitats.
 - Community Gardens and Urban Agriculture:
 - Establish or support community gardens to promote local food production and reduce food miles.

- Advocate for the preservation of green spaces in urban areas.
- Protecting local wildlife:
 - Planting native plants that support native pollinators.
 - Reducing pesticide use.
- Education and Advocacy:
 - Raise Awareness:
 - Organize educational workshops and events to inform the community about environmental issues.
 - Use social media to share information and inspire action.
 - Support environmental education programs in schools.

2. Students socialize the terms related to environmental education and solve their questions.

3. Teacher applies an online quiz to check understanding and awareness of environmental education.

https://quizizz.com/admin/assessment/67c9a9b755fc6ea5445a68e1?source=lesson_share

4. Task for next session:

Environmental actions Highlights:

Each class creates two pre-recorded videos or slide presentations (using authentic photos):

1. One video or slide presentation about a *local environmental issue* (e.g., pollution in Cali or waste management challenges in the school area) that has *not been addressed*.

2. One video or slide presentation about *positive actions* the community has taken to protect the local environment.

3. Students post their presentations on Padlet before the synchronous activity.

TEACHERS Padlet setup: Create a Padlet with two sections:

a. *Cali-Cahoma: Our Environmental Actions*

b. *USA: Our Environmental Actions.* <https://padlet.com/Yescoil/our-environmental-actions-10ej8d1o7exbmgre>

Within each section, create two columns: Positive actions and unaddressed actions.

Session 6: Synchronous class - Our environmental footprint: A visual dialogue

Objective: Reflect on intercultural communication, celebrate the learning journey, and encourage students to share final thoughts on kindness, safety, and global citizenship.

Activity flow (aligned with intercultural awareness, Baker 2011):

1. Community issue highlights sharing: 30 min – video call

Each school chooses two or three students to present their findings during the video call (video or slide presentation): Positive actions and unaddressed environmental issues.

Google Drive folder for presentations:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/18Lu9X2-O6fygbVsitF-Q5IGvyL9WXEsW?usp=sharing>

2. Collaborative solution brainstorming: Padlet interaction – 30 minutes

Each school checks the others' Padlet post and comment:

- a. Similarities or differences in the positive actions have been undertaken.
- b. Suggestions and ideas for overcoming unaddressed issues.

<https://padlet.com/Yescoil/our-environmental-actions-10ej8d1o7exbmgre>

3. Closure activity

- Live Farewell greetings of both groups
- Each student selects an exchange partner to write a farewell letter. The content of the letter might include things he/she liked about him/her during the experience, some things in common or different, emotive and surprised impressions, etc. Mainly, it's a free letter taking into account all the reviewed personal aspects during the COIL program.

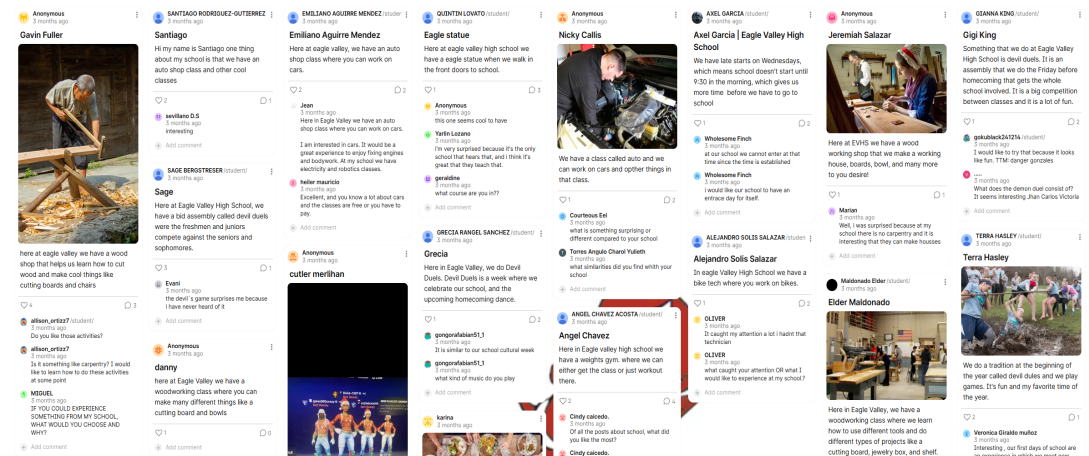
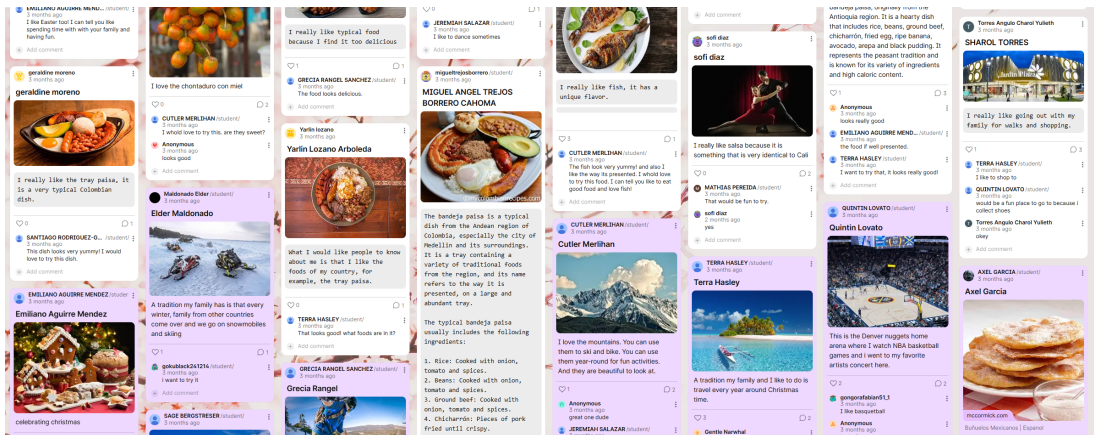
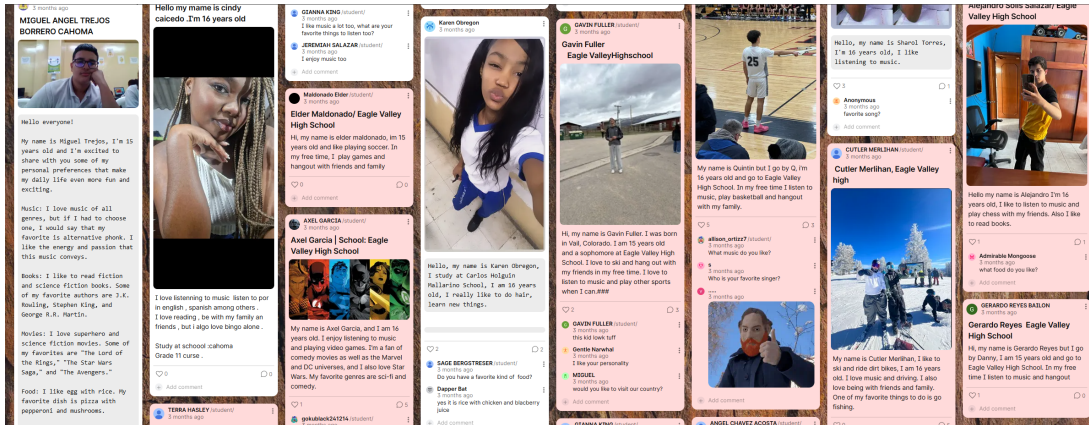
Google Drive folder of the letters:

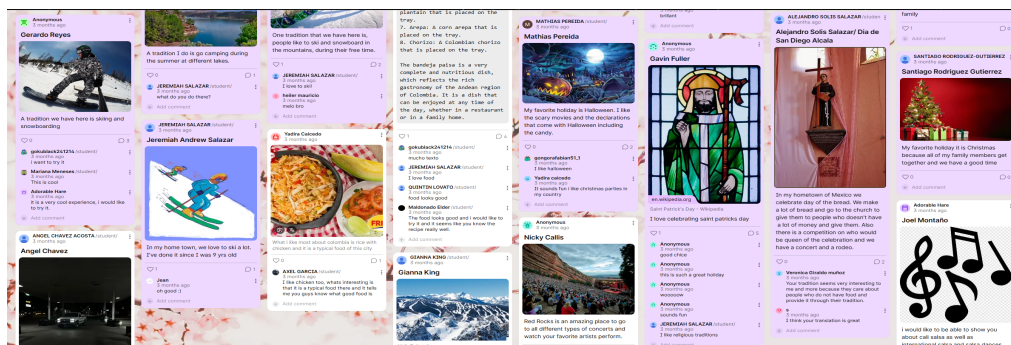
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1etzs_9lOQkUJAAPKRbqy-NcYkE8Xz9tq?usp=sharing

4. Journal questions to closure

1. What is the most valuable thing you learned from this exchange?
2. How has this experience changed your thoughts about learning English?
3. What similarities and differences did you notice between your culture and your COIL partner's culture?
4. Describe one moment from this experience that you will always remember.

Appendix D. Pictures of work in Padlet walls





Dear Allison Fajardo Ortiz,

My name is Gigi King and I go to Eagle Valley High School. I thought your profile was very interesting, and I want to get to learn more about you and your culture. I saw that you liked to read, listen to music, watch movies, and relax. Those are some of the things that I like to do too. You said that you liked romance books and movies and I was wondering what your favorite ones are. I was also wondering what you like to learn and experience. Excited to get to learn about you!

Sincerely,
Gigi King