

Collaborative learning in intercultural information literacy – the case of the Intercultural Perspectives on Information Literacy and Metaliteracy (IPILM) course

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

1. INTRODUCTION

The fast-changing landscape of higher education requires innovative methods to prepare students for the future job market and lifelong learning. As digital technologies rapidly transform knowledge creation, sharing, and application, educational strategies must evolve to develop critical skills like collaboration, problem-solving, and metacognitive reflection. Institutions must equip students to succeed academically and navigate the complexities of a globalised and digital world. Metaliteracy addresses these challenges by promoting critical thinking and collaboration in digital environments. It goes beyond traditional information literacy by fostering students' ability to engage in social media, responsibly create knowledge, and participate in intercultural contexts [1]. Metaliteracy helps students become adaptable, informed, and self-directed learners, essential for navigating today's digital age. Collaborative learning, another transformative approach, enhances cognitive and interpersonal skills in higher education. It encourages active participation, fosters critical thinking and problem-solving, and shifts the focus from teacher-centred to student-centred learning [2]. Through collaborative learning, students build confidence in addressing academic and professional challenges together.

2. METODOLOGY

This study employs an illustrative case study method to analyse how the Intercultural Perspectives on Information Literacy and Metaliteracy (IPILM) course fosters metaliteracy competencies within an intercultural context. The illustrative case study approach is appropriate because it provides rich, context-specific insights into the processes and interactions involved, contributing to theoretical generalization [3]. The IPILM course brings together students from diverse cultural and academic backgrounds and promotes critical information literacy, intercultural competence, and metacognitive reflection through collaborative learning. This course exemplifies an innovative learning model encouraging students to co-create knowledge in global, digitally mediated environments. Participants in the course engage in various collaborative activities that foster the development of metaliteracy skills, such as critical thinking, adaptability, and ethical content production in online settings [4].

3. RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The *Intercultural Perspectives on Information Literacy and Metaliteracy* (IPILM) course exemplifies how metaliteracy competencies can be fostered through collaborative learning in an intercultural setting. Initially launched in the winter of 2019/2020 as a collaboration between the University of Hildesheim (Germany) and Symbiosis College of Arts & Commerce (India), the course has since expanded globally. The course promotes metaliteracy and intercultural competence by bringing together students from diverse cultural and academic backgrounds. Its core features, such as international group learning and a closing online conference, have been refined over time, and the course continues to evolve. The IPILM course has created an international community of practice, with instructors managing the organisational and technological infrastructure for transnational group learning. Participation is voluntary, with instructors integrating students from existing classes, making IPILM adaptable to different institutions' courses and administrative regulations. This flexibility makes it an appealing model for broadening students' global educational experience.

Using the GLAID framework [5], this case study explores key components of collaborative learning within the course:

- **Interaction:** The IPILM course emphasises synchronous and asynchronous interactions facilitated by platforms like Moodle and BigBlueButton. Weekly live sessions and asynchronous group projects foster peer-to-peer collaboration across cultural boundaries, ensuring dynamic engagement regardless of time zone differences.
- **Learning objectives and outcomes:** The course aims to develop metaliteracy and intercultural competence by encouraging students to critically assess and apply information in diverse contexts. Learning outcomes focus on reflective learning, critical thinking, and collaborative skills. A significant feature is research presentation at an online conference, emphasising global perspectives on information literacy.
- **Assessment:** Assessment in IPILM is both formative and summative, focusing on group collaboration. Students create research artefacts, such as screencasts, which are presented at the final conference. Formative feedback throughout the course enables students to refine their work, emphasising individual and collective learning.
- **Task characteristics:** Tasks are designed to promote deep engagement. Each course edition includes new topics, such as the influence of AI on culture and politics. Groups define their learning objectives and select collaboration tools, encouraging students to synthesise diverse perspectives and produce meaningful artefacts.
- **Structuring:** The course follows a phased structure, beginning with onboarding and progressing through group work on artefact creation. Weekly sessions provide specific milestones, ensuring students stay on track. This approach promotes engagement and culminates in public presentations where students share their work as open educational resources.
- **Guidance:** Instructors provide continuous support through virtual meetings and feedback sessions, assisting with research methodologies and artefact presentation. This guidance is essential for navigating intercultural collaboration and ensuring high-quality outputs.
- **Group constellation:** Diverse groups, typically composed of six students from different cultural and geographic backgrounds, enhance the learning experience by fostering intercultural competence through collaboration.
- **Facilities:** The course leverages digital tools like Moodle, BigBlueButton, and OBS Studio to manage content, facilitate communication, and support artefact creation. Students also use platforms like Google Meet and Zoom for independent group work, ensuring flexibility and accessibility.

The IPILM course provided insights into the challenges and opportunities of implementing an international collaborative learning project. Involving students and instructors from six different institutions across countries, the project highlighted complexities such as navigating diverse educational systems and academic calendars, cultural differences, and varying grading systems. Despite these challenges, the course enriched students' learning by exposing them to multiple academic approaches, enhancing their intercultural competence and broadening their perspectives on metaliteracy. A continuous design improvement process led by instructors played a crucial role in addressing unforeseen challenges. Regular instructor meetings allowed for real-time adjustments to task complexity and pacing. The balance between synchronous and asynchronous learning activities was particularly challenging due to students' participation from different time zones. Instructors adapted by shifting specific tasks to asynchronous formats, ensuring meaningful engagement across geographical boundaries. Finally, cultural sensitivity and inclusivity were emphasised throughout the course. Instructors modelled respectful communication, and scaffolding activities ensured that all students, including quieter ones, contributed equitably to group work, creating a balanced and inclusive collaborative environment.

In conclusion, the IPILM course demonstrates the potential of combining intercultural and collaborative learning to foster metaliteracy in higher education. The lessons learned from this initiative highlight the importance of thoughtful design, flexibility, and feedback in preparing students for the demands of a globalised digital world.

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