

Preface

In the Fall of 2000 I took my first online class during my master's in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). The course was offered online which made sense considering the course was Using Media in the Language Classroom. More than the content made a lasting impression on me, the course resonated with me because of the format. I was able to engage with the material during the time of day when I was most productive (after midnight) and I took chances and shared ideas in discussions like no other time in my college career. As an example, I clearly remember recording myself singing for a lesson plan to use demonstrate use of audio with English Language Learners (ELLs). I don't sing. Ultimately that class that was designed and orchestrated by an amazing professor led me to pursue my doctorate.

During my doctorate in the early 2000s online learning started to become popular. I had the opportunity to teach my first class online in 2003, that same class I described above, and fell in love with instructing courses online. I have been teaching that way ever since either fully online or face-to-face classes with an online component. My dissertation research focused on the affordances of idea exchange for ESL (English as a Second Language) teachers and my study confirmed that for teachers learning about how to use technology in the classroom the online environment worked. There is continued confirmation that online learning, when designed and supported correctly, can provide unique learning opportunities for students in countless disciplines.

Around 2010 I was selected to be a faculty fellow for SUNY (State University of New York) COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) where I was introduced to the idea of faculty and students working together across universities, schools, disciplines, borders, and topics to engage in a global experience tied to coursework. I formally learned the tenants of COIL and heard about previous COIL courses and experiences. In addition, I was paired up with a faculty member in Turkey and was supported by excellent instructional designers to plan a six-week exchange between ELLs in the United States with English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in Turkey. Ultimately, the partnership fell through and I didn't get to deliver that project to my students. Nowadays, in my field, we call these projects virtual exchange. In this book the authors use different words such as tele-tandem and telecollaboration as synonyms for virtual exchange. All of these terms used to describe collaboration between those in different cultures are valid, storied, and researched so the authors in this book were free to use the label of their choosing. Although it has evolved over the time I have been involved, because of the research that is published much like the studies contained in this book, one thing remains clear to me- language

and culture exchange is mutually beneficial for faculty and students involved even when it doesn't materialize as planned. The failed exchange between my students and Turkey and communication failures between exchanges that do take place are significant points of learning. Over the last several years I have been doing exchanges in all my courses. All of them have successes and failures that we can learn and grown from and indeed my research shows that everyone involved has grown over time because of our global connections.

Being in the field of TESOL it has always been clear to me that virtual exchange makes sense for both language and cultural exchange. It is good for teacher candidates to collaborate with other teacher candidates to hone their pedagogical skills and learn about education in different cultures and it is beneficial for teacher candidates to learn from ELLs both cultural issues as well as how to support their language acquisition. In addition, it is constructive for language learners to learn from one another and get authentic language practice. I have had the pleasure to consult on many exchange projects, give presentations, and travel to talk to faculty in several fields to tout the benefits of global connections for students. The 21st century demands that students can communicate and work in diverse situations. The excellent news is the students on both ends of the exchange benefit in different ways. Also, during a global pandemic and Covid-19 online learning including virtual exchanges have gone on with little or no interruption when some other aspects of education were forced to stop.

My students and I have participated in virtual exchanges and I started collecting data formally on each exchange and publishing the results starting in the Fall of 2018. I have led virtual exchanges that pair teacher candidates learning about English linguistics and grammar with ELLs around the world. The authentic language produced allows teacher candidates to analyse authentic language based on course topics and the language learners receive native or near native speaker conversation partners. I have paired teacher candidates in their practicum work with other teacher candidates in Poland and Colombia to discuss the pedagogical practices within the four language modalities (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). I have devised exchanges where teachers candidates within the United States at different universities look at photos of technology use in the classroom at different time periods to discuss the evolution of teaching practices, TESOL teacher candidates paired with students working towards taking the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) to improve their speaking based around culture community topics and formal essay writing, and teacher candidates paired with other teacher candidates to discuss the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. From these exchanges not only have countless teacher candidates and language learners had the invaluable experience of working with partners outside of their own classrooms, I have had

the privilege to publish the fruits of that work on topics such as the use of video in teacher reflection (Lenkaitis, Hilliker, and Roumeliotis, 2020; Loranc-Paszyk, Hilliker, and Lenkaitis in press), the expansion of teacher candidates' linguistic knowledge as a result of a virtual exchange (Hilliker, Lenkaitis, and Ramirez 2020) including pragmatic awareness (Hilliker, Lenkaitis, and Bouhafa 2020), how virtual exchange can give teacher candidates more clinical experiences such as an alternative to study abroad (Hilliker 2020; Hilliker, Loranc-Paszyk, and Lenkaitis 2020), and the increase of global awareness as a result of virtual exchange (Lenkaitis, Loranc-Paszyk, and Hilliker 2019).

