



Graduate Student Panel: The Col Framework

**Cultural presence in diverse
online environments**

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CIDER SESSION

December 2014

The Problem

- ✓ **Culture plays a major role in online learning** (Bates & Gpe, 1997; Morse, 2003; Hewling, 2005; Moore, 2006; Edmundson, 2007, 2009).
- ✓ **Literature is in its infancy and there are deficiencies in research-based studies especially in regards to globalization of education and cross-cultural issues** (Gunawardena, Wilson, & Nolla, 2003; Edmundson, 2007; Zawacki-Richter, Bäcker & Vogt, 2009).
- ✓ **Asynchronous text-based computer-mediated communication (CMC) learning communities have afforded a growing number of cross-cultural learners the opportunity to study in internationally renowned universities or institutions** (McIssac, 2002).
- ✓ **Some of the factors that hinder successful online learning are: inability to understand specific cultural references, language limitations, inability to question authority (instructor or peers), differing emotional needs, time zone limitations, and technological limitations** (Zhao & McDougall, 2008; Uzner, 2009; Zhang & Kenny, 2010).



Culture and the Col Model



- ✓ **The Col model does not consider cultural issues and multicultural online engagement** (Morgan, 2011).
- ✓ The underlying assumption of this study is that, **as instructors project their personalities in the online environment via their teaching and social presence, both of which are largely rooted in their dominant culture, their values, beliefs and attitudes will significantly affect learners' social and cognitive presence.**

Culture: *“the set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by a group of people, but different for each individual”* (Matsumoto, 1996, p. 16).

“Cross-cultural” refers to interaction among individuals from different cultures (<http://tinyurl.com/44vlwv3>).

The Study

- ◆ **Purpose:** to explore how instructors of online courses accommodate and make provisions for culturally diverse learners in an online community of inquiry.
- ◆ **Theoretical frameworks used:** Col framework & MES Framework (Guyton & Wesche, 2005) → **Adapted Multicultural Efficacy Scale (AMEQ)**
- ◆ **Sample population:** 10 online instructors from two Alberta post-secondary institutions volunteered to participate in the study.
- ◆ **Methodology:** Mixed methods with more more emphasis placed on the qualitative phase than on the quantitative phase.



Data Collection

◆ Three-phase approach with intramethod mixing (Johnson & Turner, 2003).

- **Phase 1:** Collecting qualitative data using the Adapted Multicultural Efficacy Questionnaire (AMEQ).

❖ The AMEQ, Online Survey 1, was designed to assess instructors' perceived multicultural efficacy in teaching cross-cultural students online. This survey contained fifteen open-ended survey questions. The AMEQ was administered to all ten participants during the months of June and July, 2011.

- **Phase 2:** AMEQ data underwent inductive qualitative analysis.

- **Phase 3:** Administering revised Col instrument to target population.



Qualitative Data Collection

- ◆ **Qualitative data (open-ended AMEQ survey responses):**
 - ✓ “grounded theory approach”
 - ✓ “open coding”
 - ✓ “axial coding”
 - ✓ “selective coding”



Cultural Indicators and Matrix Results

Indicator abbreviation	Definition
ACC	accommodation - instructor adapts or modifies instructional material to address cross-cultural students' needs (also includes ways in which instructor adapts or modifies instructional material for cross-cultural learners)
CON	contextualization - instructor takes into account specific cultural factors when adapting curricula and activities
CSS	creation of safe spaces - instructor develops and incorporates activities designed to promote the success of cross-cultural learners
ENC	encouragement - instructor encourages cross-cultural collaborative online engagement
ANT	anticipation - instructor can anticipate online cross-cultural learner difficulties
PREV	prevention - instructor can take preventative measures to lessen or relieve learner difficulties
ADAP	adaptation - instructor can adapt to concerns and expectations of culturally diverse learners
ID	identification - instructor can identify solutions to possible online cultural clashes
KOD	knowledge of diversity - instructor can identify ways in which culturally diverse learners contribute to the online learning community and environment
SOD	supportive of diversity - instructor encourages online learners to assimilate and accept the perspective of ethnic and cultural groups different from their own

	A : SP - OC	B : SP -GC	C : SP- AE	D : TP - D	E : TP - DI	F : TP - F
1 : ACC	0	0	0	8	0	6
2 : ADAP	3	0	0	6	2	9
3 : ANT	0	0	0	0	2	4
4 : CON	1	0	0	7	3	3
5 : CSS	4	0	0	3	3	5
6 : ENC	4	0	1	0	0	7
7 : ID	4	0	0	2	1	6
8 : KOD	8	0	0	1	1	1
9 : PREV	1	0	0	3	4	6
10 : SOD	5	0	0	1	0	6
Total Frequ ency	30	0	1	31	16	53

Building onto the Col instrument

Core Codes	Cultural indicator
Teaching presence – design and organization	Q 35. The instructor allows for adjustments to the design and organization when necessary to accommodate cultural diversity.
Teaching presence – facilitation	Q 36. The instructor supports interaction among culturally diverse learners.
Social presence – open communication	Q 37. Open communication in this community allows for culturally diverse presentation.



Quantitative Data Analysis

- ◆ Quantitative data (phase 2) : collected using the revised version of the original 34-item Col survey instrument. The revised Col instrument was administered to the same sample population during the months of August and September, 2011. Nine participants ($N = 9$) from the original sample population responded to the questionnaire.

Data results for Spearman's rank correlation test

	Teaching Presence	Social Presence	Cultural Indicators
Teaching Presence	1.00	0.91	0.86
Social Presence	0.91	1.00	0.73
Cultural Indicators	0.86	0.73	1.00



Conclusion

- **Qualitative data results revealed that:**

- Instructors appear to be quite cognizant of cultural diversity and have strong multicultural efficacy in terms of their knowledge of diversity and the strategies that they use to promote learning and prevent conflict.

- In the absence of any cross-cultural design, instructors use facilitation activities that take into account cultural diversity when assigning group work that encourages learners to apply the course contents to their own personal contexts and that encourages multiple perspectives in online discussions.

- Open communication seems to be a strategy for promoting learning and preventing conflict.

- **Quantitative data results indicated that:**

- Most instructors are not only aware of the importance of design and organization in the Col context, but also willing to make necessary adjustments to accommodate culturally diverse learners.

- Supporting interaction between culturally diverse learners via facilitation is a practice adopted by most respondents.

- 56% of the respondents agreed that open communication enables learners to present themselves as culturally diverse.

