



Intercultural Learning in the Speech-Language Pathology Degree: Global Online Classes Experiences Inside Laureate International Universities Network from a Moroccan Perspective

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Abstract Internationally, universities routinely send students from a range of disciplines as part of their professional experience in intercultural context [1]. As this practice has evolved in recent years, the Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) graduate programs inside the Laureate network have learned much by shifting this perspective to online classes. We believe such intercultural communication is an essential element that prepares students to work fluently across different cultural contexts and consequently become more likely to succeed in demanding contemporary work places. We also discuss in detail, on the one hand, that student learning and competency development in intercultural online training can significantly impact on perception of self and on professional identity in a positive and life-changing way. On the other hand, the development of such intercultural health programs will not only give students relevant information regarding culture, language, social and ethnicity but also include opportunities for group-based discussions regarding personal and professional goals.

Keywords Cultural-Speech and Language Pathology-Global classes-Health Programs- E-learning

Introduction

At the international level, Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) working in societies where needs are intense and services are few find they must search for service-delivery models and goals different from those used at home. For those SLPs working in countries with limited resources, a functionality of communication may become an important goal.

In this context, online instruction offers the potential to deliver high-quality education in health sciences. Global online classes inside the Laureate network provide students flexibility in scheduling and may help undergraduate and graduate students in SLP to collaborate and engage in critical thinking and cross-cultural training. Furthermore, the online course can be marketed by university programs as continuing education for practicing clinicians in the community as well.

This paper aims to share the experiences gained by offering an online environment for intermediate lectures in cross-cultural skills applied in SLP, aphasiology and cross-cultural neuropsychology for candidates enrolled in the undergraduate program in SLP at the Université Internationale de Casablanca (UIC). During the academic year 2016-2017, the experience started with a seminar by UIC in health sciences. The seminar was integrated with the aphasiology classes. The course was offered with prior training and knowledge in clinical aphasiology and neuropsychology. It was conducted online using distance education tools (e.g., Zoom™).



Background and Context for the Study

1. Learning Methods for Online Inter-Cultural Training in Laureate

Every in situation within Laureate's network defines its identity, programs, and approach according to the needs of its students, and community .Relationships among our universities

Are enhanced through shared curricula and degree programs, student, and faculty exchanges, sharing of academic best practices, scholarships and an active online network.

Laureate International Class courses are offered in a virtual classroom with students and faculty from different Laureate universities. In 2014, the program was implemented in Chile, Costa Rica, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, and Peru, and carried out in Morocco in the SLP program in 2017. The Laureate International Class promotes student and faculty mobility within the Laureate network in a fully-virtual international environment. Inter culturality is the force that inspires the Laureate International Class, seeking to foster global thinking through its academic offer.

This characteristic is a competency that is:

- Intentionally promoted during the course design through learning activities
- Developed within the course through two elements: knowledge of other cultural contexts and inter cultural team work
- Implemented throughout the online sessions that develops the students 'ability tow or kin multicultural environments.

2-The communities of practice (CoP) as a model for intercultural Training for Faculty

The CoP also allows faculty members inside the Laureate network to set up dynamic groups by subject area ,create virtual events ,open online meeting rooms ,and much more .The benefits of this community aim to develop a culture of collaboration through connecting and sharing information within the Laureate network .It also gives internal and externals take holders a place to discuss and share best practices ,to gain experience from other professionals from Laureate in situations and implement new skills and learning into their daily work .Furthermore ,it allows leveraging regional expertise to improve performance and increase engagement.

3-Traditional learning v\ Online learning

George *et al* [2] performed a systematic review of the effectiveness of online e-Learning through a comprehensive research of the major data bases for randomized controlled trials that compared

Online e-Learning to traditional learning or alternative learning methods. There search period was from January 2000 to August 2013. The included articles primarily focus on students' knowledge, skills, satisfaction and attitudes towards e-Learning and on cost-effectiveness and adverse effects on secondary out comes. The authors of the systematic review concluded that the current evidence base suggests that online e-Learning is equivalent, possibly superior to traditional learning. These findings present a potential incentive for policy makers to cautiously encourage it sad option, while respecting the heterogeneity among the studies. The following examples provide an overview of the online Problem-Based Learning (PBL) versus online global classes (Table 1).

Table 1: The Online Problem-Based Learning (PBL) versus Online Global Classes

Online PBL	Online global classes
Ng <i>et al</i> [3] reported on a study to evaluate The effectiveness of an online PBL environment for undergraduate speech- language pathology students. A group of eight PBL students were randomly selected to participate in the study during 4 weeks of online PBL using the Adobe Connect interface. At the end of the experiment, they were assessed using a self-reported questionnaire and a quantitative comparison with traditional PBL students.	Fiberg & Sawyer [4] suggested that there are substantial benefits of online education including the ability to better understand students through shared discussions. They reported that students have increased their knowledge by interacting with instructors and peers. Finally, students have many opportunities to express themselves, publish their work, and produce high quality work in a flexible format.



On the other hand, Sheepway *et al* [5] identified the clinical placement and supervisory models used within 45 speech-language pathology professional preparation programs in seven English-speaking countries and the drivers influencing the adoption of these models. “Traditional” placement models such as block and weekly placements, as well as traditional supervisory models utilizing a speech-language pathologist as supervisor in a 1:1 student-to-supervisor ratio were the most widely used in the clinical education of speech-language pathologists. “Non-traditional” models, where the overall structure of the practicum experience or the delivery of supervision within the practicum experience has been altered from the traditional models, were used with differing frequency across countries.

Method

The central purpose of the study described in this paper was to illuminate key processes in the development of intercultural knowledge and skills through Global classes between Université Internationale de Casablanca and other institutions inside the Laureate network.

These Global Classes were carried out typically 90 minutes in length in February, March and October 2017. They were taught in English. The research questions were:

- How do the students understand and make sense of the contextual dimensions of the Global class experience?
- How do the faculty and students understand and experience the intercultural context of topics in SLP?

Following informed consent from the students, both the final year and second year students from speech pathology undergraduate programs, chose pseudonyms to maintain anonymity. They completed a survey about the Global class experience and their perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the models in developing student competency. Responses from the survey were analyzed through thematic analysis.

Results

The results of the project here presented show that thanks to the implementation of the innovation, students' perception of the value of the learning acquired in the global classes course has very much improved. Thus, in the student satisfaction survey, highly significant changes are observed in the answers to one of the questions: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the course? In the second year in SLP, 15 students participated in the survey 100% female, 3 said to be dissatisfied (20%), 9 satisfied, 2 were indifferent, 1 doesn't know. In their answers to one of the questions: Do you plan to participate in another e-learning course within the next year? 12 responded positively however 3 didn't wish to participate in such experience. In the third year SLP, out of 25 students who responded, 4 said to be dissatisfied (16%), 19 satisfied, 2 were indifferent. In total, 70% of all the students found that the online learning is valuable. In their answers to one of the questions: Do you plan to participate in another e-learning course within the next year? 15 responded positively; however, 7 didn't intend to participate in such experience and 3 were still undecided. These results demonstrated that our students as a whole group increased their self-efficacy following the global classes experience. However, it is recommended that undergraduate entry level students from all health sciences should be enrolled in such intercultural online classes if they are to develop their clinical skill set as well as their critical reasoning.

Discussion

Results of our study encourage the need to continue working in this direction, so that SLP degree students appreciate the value of the online experience and skills acquired. The experience may likewise be useful for other professional areas of expertise in the health science graduate and undergraduate programs. The Global classes are the best way to bridge the gap in the context of a lack of locally normed assessment tools and the lack of appropriate materials which are the burning issues for many professionals, whether working domestically or internationally.

Ng, M.L. *et al* [3] conducted a questionnaire at the University of Hong Kong (HKU) which revealed that SLP students appreciated the online PBL experience without interfering negatively with their current learning. The statistical analysis showed no significant difference in assignment grades between the online and traditional PBL groups, indicating that PBL online learning appears to be as effective as face-to-face learning. Loewen *et al* [6] stipulated that practice-based learning is important in developing clinical and professional competence in



health disciplines. They carried out a qualitative systematic review of published English- language literature. Regardless of the learner: preceptor ratio chosen for its expected benefits, their results illuminate challenges that can be anticipated. Patient perspectives should be incorporated into future studies of learner: preceptor ratios analysis.

Generally speaking, in many countries, individuals who wish to become Speech-Language Pathologists must go to a foreign country to receive professional academic education and training. When the student and the lecturer are from different countries, cultures, and linguistic backgrounds, cultural diversity is brought into sharp focus. In our study, using Global online classes students were appreciative that they were able to have different topics related to their specialty and were constructive in how they provided feedback to the course instructor. Students' comments were taken under consideration for the implementation of the subsequent semester's curriculum, with several positive changes being made on the recommendations of students. The following discussion explores the challenges that students will face in undertaking clinical courses in cross-cultural contexts via an online platform. The challenges will naturally vary depending on (1) each individual student's background, goals and perceptions; (2) the characteristics of the contexts in which the students attempt to work; and (3) the people they intend working with.

The idea of a curriculum based on principles of socio-cultural inclusion is postulated as a way of responding to international and intercultural issues in the professional preparation of health professionals in general. Additionally, the pilot study tried to address the main issues of cross- cultural professional preparation as a third link between intra-cultural and inter-cultural SLP.

Atrill *et al* [7] addressed an interesting topic in SLP which is the increasing proportion of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) students and modalities of providing intercultural learning opportunities for them. This study gathered descriptive information about CALD speech-language pathology students in Australia. Students were categorised according to defined or perceived CALD status, international student status, speaking English as an Additional Language (EAL), or speaking a Language Other than English at Home (LOTEH). Overall, 32.1% of students were either defined or perceived CALD. A total of 14.9% spoke EAL and 25.7% identified speaking a LOTEH. CALD students were more likely to speak EAL or a LOTEH than non-CALD students, were prominently from Southern and South-Eastern Asian backgrounds and spoke related languages. These results confirmed that many students showed direct or indirect links with their cultural heritage and/or contributed linguistic diversity backgrounds. These students may represent broader acculturative experiences in communities. Furthermore, the sociocultural knowledge and experience of these students may provide intercultural learning opportunities for all students and promote culturally responsive practices. This model of learning should be incorporated in the intercultural curriculum of SLP in Morocco as an example of multilingual and multicultural country. Cheng [8, 9] reported that there are many cultural and linguistic challenges, socioeconomic factors that impact the lives of CALD students, adding to the complexity of assessment for special education and related services [10].

Another study carried out by Doble *et al* [11]. They investigated the self-efficacy of speech pathology students in conducting evidence-based practice (EBP) before and after a comprehensive evidence-based practice course, and the impact of timing of the course. The evidence-based practice confidence scale (EPIC) was used to measure the students' self- efficacy pre- and post-training. The results showed that students began the evidence-based practice course with high confidence in asking patients their preferences but low confidence in interpreting and analyzing statistics. A significant improvement in confidence in all evidence- based practice areas was found, with greatest improvement occurring in the critical appraisal of research. According to the authors, an evidence-based practice course made a significant difference to student self-efficacy across all aspects, with few differences related to timing of the course. Application of such skills in multicultural clinical and academic settings should take into consideration a student-centered approach then a patient-centered approach instead of the traditional approach centered on disease [12, 13]. In this context, another way of approaching cross-cultural communication disorders has been formulated by Yoshikawa [14] in his discussion of four modes of intercultural encounter and communication: the ethnocentric, the control, the dialectical, and the dialogical. In the ethnocentric mode, person A (clinician) perceives person B (patient) only through person's A worldview. In the control mode, person A attempts to control or manipulate person B. In the



dialectical mode, ideally, A and B collaborate to create a viewpoint outside or beyond their different views. Finally, in the dialogical mode, both an intercultural (interpersonal) interdependence and a cultural (personal) independence is acknowledged by both A and B. this last pattern of performance should be use with caution in enacting such strategy in intercultural learning as well as the clinical reasoning and practice.

Finally, based on this study, the following recommendations are suggested for future research. On the one hand, a multi-institution, national study that quantifies the scope of intercultural programs undertaken through the Laureate network (from student and stakeholder perspectives). On the other hand, an in-depth ethnographic study of health professional/SLP students undertaking Global classes and the perceived benefits and impacts within the communities they are located, from a stakeholder perspective. Such a study would inform planning and development of new programs in cross-cultural issues. We recommended that students must be confident implementing evidence-based practice throughout the course of their careers, as best practice changes over time. Also, an intercultural online study/course for undergraduate speech pathology students should be implemented in undergraduate programs is SLP which could empower them and improve their self-efficacy.

Conclusion

The aim of this research was to establish a baseline of current online Global classes in speech- language pathology across the Laureate network with a focus on the Université Internationale de Casablanca (UIC). The transformation of a course from a traditional, classroom-taught format to an online endeavor is not to be taken lightly. Opinions of university students reflect that the online models are more effective in developing students' competency. However, these opinions are starting to shift. While opinions have some effect on the choice of models used, other factors are more influential on the adoption of models. This internet-based framework guides SLPs students toward understanding the extent and nature of cross-cultural practice, the depth, and expression of their ethnocentrism. Finally, through students' commentary, we are reminded of the basics that should underpin intercultural training programs: respect, communication, and 'joining,' that is, being with, rather than 'doing to' [15, 16].

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest. The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

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