

Insights from combining COIL & short-term study abroad: Using blended mobility to enhance international business communication learning

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ABSTRACT

EN Rapid cultural and digital transformations are disrupting higher education. Focusing on unique areas referred to as “human intelligence” (HI) is critical to meet students’ changing needs. This paper explores the design, pedagogy, and outcomes of an international business communication course integrating a blended mobility model. This study investigates student outcomes in a blended mobility format combining a COIL course with a brief study abroad experience, culminating in a cross-cultural team presentation to a real business client. Content analysis of student reflections identifies core learning outcomes, comparing and expanding upon blended mobility “employability skills”. Five additional skills emerged, consistent with intercultural competency communication research as well as ten sub-themes related to belonging. Findings highlight the potential of blended mobility to foster “HI” professional skills as well as a sense of belonging among student participants.

Key words: INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION, BLENDED MOBILITY, LEARNING OUTCOMES, HUMAN INTELLIGENCE (HI), RELATIONAL/BELONGING, PEDAGOGY

ES Las rápidas transformaciones culturales y digitales están alterando radicalmente la educación universitaria. Es fundamental concentrarse en áreas específicas denominadas «inteligencia humana» (IH) para satisfacer las necesidades cambiantes de los estudiantes. Este artículo explora el diseño, la pedagogía y los resultados de un curso de comunicación empresarial internacional que integra un modelo de movilidad mixta. Este estudio investiga los resultados de los estudiantes en un formato de movilidad que combina un curso *COIL* con una breve experiencia de estudios en el extranjero, que culmina con una presentación grupal intercultural a un cliente real. El análisis de las reflexiones de los estudiantes identifica los principales resultados del aprendizaje, comparando y ampliando las “competencias de empleabilidad” de la movilidad combinada. Surgieron cinco habilidades adicionales, coherentes con la investigación sobre la comunicación de la competencia intercultural, así como diez subtemas relacionados con la pertenencia. Los resultados resaltan el potencial de la movilidad mixta para fomentar las competencias profesionales «HI», así como el sentimiento de pertenencia entre los estudiantes participantes.

Palabras clave: COMUNICACIÓN EMPRESARIAL INTERNACIONAL, MOVILIDAD MIXTA, RESULTADOS DEL APRENDIZAJE, INTELIGENCIA HUMANA (IH), RELACIONES/PERTENENCIA, PEDAGOGÍA

IT Rapidi cambiamenti culturali e digitali stanno rivoluzionando l'istruzione universitaria. Per soddisfare le esigenze in evoluzione degli studenti, è fondamentale concentrarsi su aspetti specifici, definiti come “intelligenza umana” (HI). Qui si esplora progettazione, didattica e risultati di un corso di comunicazione aziendale internazionale che integra un modello di mobilità mista. Questo studio analizza i risultati degli studenti in mobilità mista che combina un corso COIL con una esperienza di studio all'estero, culminata in una presentazione interculturale di gruppo a un cliente reale. L'analisi del contenuto delle riflessioni degli studenti rivela i principali risultati dell'apprendimento, confrontando e ampliando le “competenze di occupabilità” della mobilità mista. Dallo studio emergono cinque competenze aggiuntive, coerenti con la ricerca sulla comunicazione delle competenze interculturali e dieci sottotemi legati all'appartenenza. I risultati evidenziano il potenziale della mobilità mista nel promuovere le competenze professionali di HI e il senso di appartenenza degli studenti partecipanti.

Parole chiave: COMUNICAZIONE AZIENDALE INTERNAZIONALE, MOBILITÀ MISTA, RISULTATI DELL'APPRENDIMENTO, INTELLIGENZA UMANA (HI), RELAZIONI/APPARTENENZA, PEDAGOGIA

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1. Introduction

Technology continues to transform higher education, including allowing increased global interconnectedness and the development of new instructional techniques. Interest and attention to the internationalism of higher education has seen dramatic increase and can be viewed as a contemporary trend driven by Western nations (Ainsworth, 2013; Tight, 2022). As institutions of higher education navigate a complex landscape reshaped by digital transformation, the need for innovative pedagogical approaches has become urgent and necessary.

For instance, research conducted by Gartner forecasts that generative AI will disrupt and transform education in ways yet to be fully understood (Sheehan et al., 2023). A recent Forbes article speculates that generative AI and other technology will progressively replace professor roles, along a continuum from assistance to full replacement, potentially as early as 2035 (Andriole, 2024). In response, new teaching modes and practices, including those in business discourse, must adapt by developing instructional approaches to contribute to this digital age. Thus, a pressing question arises: how should higher education and the professorate respond?

The answer may lie in embracing and helping to steer technological change. Emerging technologies present opportunities to attract students, enhance student (and staff) experiences, and improve educational outcomes (Fernandez et al., 2023). All organizations must come to grips with how AI will impact them, but certain invaluable abilities and traits that are wholly (or mostly) human skills and that will be in more demand than ever in the age of AI cannot be easily replicated (Forbes Technology Council, 2024).

Business schools, in particular, should lead the way in engaging students with technology and creating curricula that prioritize fostering the unique, what I call “*Human Intelligence*” (HI), skills—those nuanced, “human touch” capabilities not easily replaced by machines. Some “new” curriculum ideas, suggested on a recent Harvard Business Publishing webinar, highlighted “soft skills” such as creativity, critical thinking, prompt engineering, teamwork, empathy, and collective intelligence (Lefevre & Shrier, 2023), which would certainly fit the bill as areas of HI. Other areas, deeply rooted in the human experience and likely challenging for AI and machines to replicate fully, include but are not limited to: emotional intelligence, intuition, moral and ethical reasoning, adaptability, wisdom, interpersonal skills, and self-awareness. Pedagogy methods, such as problem-based and experiential learning, offer considerable promise for enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes. To this end, alongside technological adaptation, important HI skills fostering international awareness and cultural competence are crucial for preparing students for the global business environment that will be increasingly impacted by AI.

Cross-cultural communication strategies are essential for business professionals to navigate the increasingly interconnected world. Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) projects—a type of experiential learning model—leverage virtual conferencing to connect classrooms across countries and cultures, bridging gaps in knowledge, and fostering global understanding (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, 2021). These virtual exchanges support active learning through positive interdependence and the development of rapport between individuals working towards shared goals (Johnson & Johnson, 2005; Compagnoni & Serragiotto, 2024). This approach aligns with calls for innovative technological and pedagogical offerings to create novel educational services—identified as an imperative for future research (Rahmadi, 2024) and represents a forward-thinking strategy preparing students for international collaboration.

This study represents a further investigation into the outcomes reported by students participating in a blended mobility program—a COIL course augmented by a brief study abroad experience—developed in partnership between universities in the United States and Hungary. This inquiry takes up calls for further investigation into the deployment of collaborative skills, transferable to digital and real-life settings of professional and social nature (Compagnoni & Serragiotto, 2024) and exploring qualitative outcomes of international teaching and learning practices to help better inform institutions of higher education (Eiras, 2024). Through qualitative analysis of student reflections, this research examines self-reported outcomes, uncovering thematic insights into how blended mobility programs might better prepare students for digital and real-world professional contexts.

2. Short-term study abroad, COIL, and blended mobility

2.1. The rise of COIL in Higher Education

With today’s demanding and rapidly changing environment in the professional world, cultivating international and cross-cultural teamwork and business communication skills is vital; however, these

important skills remain underdeveloped in many undergraduate curricula (Escudeiro & Escudeiro, 2018) despite the known promise of virtual education in business contexts (e.g., Taras et al., 2013). Facilitating transnational relationships—such as bilateral university partnerships—could offer an intriguing and beneficial path for skill enhancement. Scholarship exploring the rationale, implementation, and outcomes of such collaborations remains needed (Fehrenbach & Huisman, 2022). Short-term study abroad often offers students a more affordable option than longer duration study-abroad; short-term study abroad offers a number of increased intercultural communication skills (e.g., Drews & Myer, 1996; Campbell, 2016; Coker, Heiser, & Taylor, 2018) as well as broadening knowledge of global business practices (e.g., Marlowe et al., 1998; Henthorne et al., 2001). Likewise, initial studies show that COIL experiences have been met positively by students as a valuable format for building skills within undergraduate international business classes and can have a positive impact on their ability to work in global teams (Garcia et al., 2023).

Traditional COIL courses seek to enhance student learning by incorporating an international education component co-developed and co-taught by professors from different countries. This setup allows students to engage in online collaborative group projects that foster sustained interaction and communication in a guided, cross-cultural setting (Liu & Shirley, 2021). By integrating this type of virtual exchange, COIL courses allow faculty and students to collaborate with global peers in co-taught, culturally-focused online environments, promoting intercultural awareness, disciplinary content knowledge, as well as essential skills in communication and teamwork (Vahed & Rodriguez, 2021). Faculties collaborate to design diverse learning activities, such as shared assignments, co-teaching sessions, guest lectures, social engagements, group projects, and other undertakings, to offer students multiple points of interaction.

COIL has become increasingly popular as a tool for developing intercultural competence among students who might otherwise lack access to study or internship abroad programs. Since 2015, Italy's Università Cattolica Del Sacro Cuore has coordinated multiple COIL projects, with U.S. and European partners, covering a variety of management courses including business communication (Università Cattolica Del Sacro Cuore, 2021). Three key elements of COIL—pedagogy, technology, and cross-cultural learning—have been found to strengthen the integration of multicultural perspectives and can offer unique learning experiences for both students and faculty (Asojo et al., 2019). Research supports COIL's effectiveness in fostering intercultural competence in higher education students (e.g., Hackett et al., 2023) and suggests additional benefits for developing other key workplace skills (Mestre-Segarra & Ruiz-Garrido, 2022).

Importantly, a sense of belonging has been reported via technology-based and blended learning environments. A sense of belonging is created when students feel included and connected to a group, class, subject, and/or institution (Armelli et al., 2021; Mendoza & Venables, 2023; Metzger & Taggart, 2020; Peacock & Cowan, 2019). Technology-based learning, through COIL has been positively associated with an increased sense of connectedness and belonging among college students. For instance, a recent study on COIL outcomes found significant improvements in intercultural competence as well as an enhanced sense of global community and belonging among undergraduate students from partnered U.S. and U.K. institutions (Nowak et al., 2023). Similarly, U.S. and Dutch students reported perceptions of personal growth, intercultural sensitivity, intercultural competence, and professional development (Harris & Seo, 2024). Another study observed that students in a U.S. international business class valued COIL-based experiences for fostering empathy, understanding of global issues, connections with international peers, and perceived applicability of these skills in the workplace (Garcia et al., 2023).

Instructors looking to implement COIL should be mindful of potential challenges, including coordinating across time zones, motivating team members, managing group dynamics, addressing language and content requirements, and growing students' intercultural communication competences. Establishing a final task as a common goal, supporting baseline technological competency, and preparing for logistical difficulties require proactive planning and preparation (Mestre-Segarra & Ruiz-Garrido, 2022). Faculties also report difficulties in sourcing high-quality, relevant materials, often needing the creation of custom resources (Orzech, Zhang, & Greenfield, 2023). Supporting students' cognitive development, critical thinking, and self-confidence can enhance engagement and commitment but may require extra instructional effort (Vahed, 2022).

2.2. The rise of blended mobility courses in Higher Education

Blended mobility can be defined as virtual mobility (e.g., COIL) plus physical mobility (e.g., short-term study abroad). Blended mobility combines joint online teaching and learning phases with periods of short-term physical mobility to one (or both) partner universities. This approach allows for a deeper, more sustained cross-cultural engagement to enrich and reinforce global/intercultural learning outcomes. In the wake of the

global pandemic, which necessitated a shift to online education, some universities are now exploring blended mobility as a durable model for international learning (Giralt et al., 2022).

Contributing to the emergence of this new type of mobility are the new universities alliances throughout Europe. Recognizing its potential, the European Commission (2022) has promoted blended mobility as an integral component of future educational frameworks, particularly within the Erasmus+ program. The European Universities initiative aims at establishing cooperation between higher education institutions from across Europe, supported through Erasmus+ funding.

Despite this growing interest, blended mobility research is relatively sparse. Helm and O'Dowd's (2020) position paper about virtual exchange suggests that blended mobility supports a range of 21st century "employability skills" including media and digital literacy, communication, global awareness, empathy, critical and analytical thinking, foreign language proficiency, and intercultural competencies. Additionally, they note early returns on the Erasmus+ research adds the employability skills of teamwork and problem-solving. This range of skills aligns with areas of HI and requires added research support.

Implementing a blended mobility course offers potential high outcome rewards but often comes with challenges. In a study by Malichova, Marton, and Tokarcikova (2022), researchers reported on a blended mobility initiative aimed at enhancing teaching methods, business and social skills, and simulating real-world work environments that was developed by a consortium of twelve universities and one registered organization. Although challenges were noted, such as logistical and coordination issues, the program yielded encouraging outcomes for students. In another study, Perfolz and Lopez-Varela (2022) evaluated the outcomes of a blended mobility course by surveying students on whether the course facilitated international learning. Results showed that 75% of students felt the course fully met this goal and an additional 20% agreed it was effective to a considerable extent. However, the study also listed challenges, primarily in the planning stages, such as financial framework, availability timeframes, personnel capacity with division of labor, and technical aspects.

2.3. An overview of the blended mobility course for this study

At the University of North Carolina's Kenan-Flagler Business School, students can enroll in faculty-led courses that involve short-duration international travel. These courses, known as Global Immersion Electives (GIE), typically consist of a sequence of pre-departure curricula leading to an in-country experience. The in-country component usually includes company visits, sightseeing, and cultural immersion activities. Upon return, students participate in a debriefing session.

In 2017, partially in response to student surveys expressing interest in a more extended client engagement, the blended mobility course was developed in collaboration with two professors from the Corvinus University of Budapest's Business and Management program. The course was first offered during the Spring term of 2018. In addition to the standard GIE short-duration study abroad activities in Hungary, the course incorporates a COIL component. It consists of a project-based learning experience, via cross cultural teams, working together on an actual client engagement with the culminating task of a case competition while in-country. Pedagogically, the course has three phases: 1) pre-departure (including COIL experience); 2) in-country; and 3) debrief and reflection.

Early in the pre-departure phase, students are placed into "global" teams. A typical team consists of two students from Kenan-Flagler working with two students from Corvinus. A class normally consisted of 8-12 cross-cultural teams, and the professors make an effort to mix the teams based upon student experience, background, interest of study, etc.

Each institution conducts separate, face-to-face "local" sessions for its students as well as online, synchronous joint sessions at mutually agreed upon times as part of the COIL component. Early in the engagement, all students attend a virtual kickoff meeting with the client, where they receive an overview of the project, and have the opportunity to ask questions. Throughout the pre-departure phase, student teams are expected to independently meet at least once per week. The pre-departure work lasts from January to the arrival in Hungary in mid-March. Table 1 outlines the pre-departure activities associated with the course.

Table 1
Phase 1 pre-departure activities associated with the course

Grouping	Description	Activities & Deliverables
(US Institution) local class sessions	4 face-to-face classes at (institution)	Class 1: Course introduction, ice breakers, syllabus review, assignment briefings, journaling assignment kickoff Class 2: Hungarian culture exploration (GlobeSmart, team presentations), travel logistics and preparation checklist Class 3: Maximizing the experience (session with career services), in-class SMART goals exercise Class 4: Travel logistics and safety, project consultation
(US Institution) student homework activities	Students complete assignments, including some asynchronous work, to develop skills	Review GlobeSmart self-analysis and compare with Hungarian averages Complete async module on working in virtual teams Earn IBM design thinking badge Work on journaling/self-analysis Project research Readings on Hungarian culture, cross-cultural teaming, developing team norms, running meetings, consulting methodologies, design thinking, basics of using MURAL, etc.
Joint sessions	7 virtual meetings US Institution + HU Intuition	Class 1: Introductions, icebreakers, overview, testimonials from past participants Class 2: Client kickoff meeting (come with questions) Class 3: Working in intercultural teams and case solving tips Class 4: Data, financials, and consulting methodologies Class 5: Ideation (multistep exercises facilitated on the MURAL platform) Class 6: Client consultation (come with questions) Class 7: Client presentation best practices: structure, story, delivery, and slide design
Global team virtual working sessions	4 meetings (minimum)	Teams schedule regular meetings designed to generate team bonding, socializing, learn from each other, and work on the client project. Teams normally use other mediums to communicate as well including email, WhatsApp, social media, text messages, etc.
Global team project consultation	2 virtual meetings	US professor sources experienced consultants to provide two half-hour checkpoint consultation sessions with each student team.

The in-country student experience (phase 2) spans over seven days (excluding travel time). During this phase, student teams worked on their projects in designated morning time blocks, with additional opportunities to meet during scheduled free time. Toward the end of the week, students participate in a case competition, presenting their project solutions to a panel of judges composed of client representatives and professors. The competition is structured in two flights. The top team, from each flight, advances to a final presentation in front of all teams; afterward, a winner is selected.

While the case competition is the culminating task of the trip, sightseeing, cultural immersions, company visits, socials, and opportunities to explore Budapest are highly enriching aspects of the short-term study abroad program. Table 2 overviews the in-country experience.

Table 2
Phase 2 in-country key activities

Day	Key activities for the day
1	Afternoon arrival, orientation, walking tour, welcome dinner
2	Budapest sightseeing & cultural immersion (full-day)
3	<i>Morning:</i> working session with student groups <i>Afternoon:</i> cultural immersion/sightseeing <i>Evening</i> social coordinated by HU students
4	<i>Morning:</i> working session with student groups <i>Afternoon:</i> cultural immersion & company visit <i>Evening</i> social coordinated by HU students
5	<i>Morning:</i> working session with student groups <i>Afternoon:</i> company visit <i>Evening:</i> team prep/free time
6	<i>Morning:</i> case competition (2 flights of student presentations) <i>Lunch</i> with client and HU institution administration <i>Afternoon:</i> finalist presentation round, winners announced, and team pictures <i>Evening:</i> farewell dinner, awards ceremony, and t-shirt swap with Hungarian students and faculty
7	Sightseeing/cultural immersion in small towns outside of Budapest

Phase 3 focuses on reflection and debrief. Approximately three weeks after the in-country experience, participating UNC Kenan-Flagler students have a final class session. For this meeting, students write a single-spaced, two-page minimum reflection capturing the course experiences that had the greatest impact on them. Students are given latitude on their reflection but encouraged to consult their journal and consider personal, intercultural, and professional growth. During the final class, students share their insights. Additionally, a representative from the career services team lead a series of exercises (such as review of SMART goals, providing sample resume language, and practice answering common interview questions) designed to help students maximize the career impact of their experience.

2.4. Purpose of the study and research questions

Overall, COIL courses are increasing in popularity, and research is burgeoning. Blended mobility courses are less common but offer an intriguing option in Higher Education, resulting in increased attention; blended mobility is getting more funding as part of the Erasmus+ 2021-2027 Program (European Commission, 2022). However, research on blended mobility remains limited, highlighting a need for further investigation into its outcomes. This study aims to explore the specific areas in which students self-report benefits from participating in a blended mobility course, focusing on both professional skill development and relational aspects. Accordingly, this inquiry addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: Which of Helm and O’Dowd’s (2020) proposed blended mobility “employability” skill outcomes were supported by student experiences?

RQ2: What, if any, additional “employability” skills do students report being fostered by the blended mobility experience?

RQ3: What perceptions of relational connectedness or belonging do students report through participation in blended mobility (Nowak et al., 2023)?

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design & Participants

This study employed thematic analysis and a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze open-ended, narrative self-reflection accounts from students at UNC Kenan-Flagler, who participated in the blended mobility course. The course is an elective, typically capped at 20 students per cohort, to ensure an immersive experience, personalized interaction, and manageable team numbers for the case competition.

The data for this study was collected over a three-year period from three iterations of the course, encompassing Spring 2022, 2023, and 2024. All self-reflections submitted by Kenan-Flagler students during these three cohorts were included, resulting in N = 58 undergraduate students. All participants were enrolled in the GIE to Hungary. Of these participants, n = 18 were women and N = 40 were men. Participants' ages ranged from 18-22 at the time of data collection. All participants took part in the COIL+ course for roughly nine consecutive weeks, leading to the short-term study abroad period.

The self-reflection assignment, completed by all N = 58 Kenan-Flagler Business School students, provides key insights into their experiences and evaluation of the blended mobility course, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of student-reported outcomes. These reflections are particularly valuable for understanding perceived impacts on personal, intercultural, and professional development. Students were instructed to write at least two single-spaced pages for their reflection. The average text length of completed assignments was 3 pages (range of 2-5 pages). The average word count was 1,415 with a range of 483-2,980 words per assignment.

The Hungarian students did not complete a similar self-reflection exercise, so their data were not captured as part of this study.

3.2. Data collection and procedures

As previously noted, Kenan-Flagler students were asked to reflect and capture some of the course experiences that made the greatest impact on them. The assignment was to create a written reflection document (two-page, single space minimum), and students submitted the assignment to the course Canvas site. The reflection assignment prompt is included in the Appendix. Data were collected to ensure participant anonymity. Participants' names and personal information were removed from the collected data and replaced with codes.

3.3. Data Analysis

A thematic analysis was conducted by the researcher and a trained research assistant to analyze participants' self-reflection narratives and identify recurring themes, trends, and professional development. Thematic analysis provides a structured approach for identifying common themes and gaining insights into participants' experiences, beliefs, and/or attitudes. This study followed the six-step process developed and recommended by Braun and Clarke (2008): 1) familiarizing; 2) coding; 3) generating themes; 4) reviewing themes; 5) defining; and 6) naming themes. This same approach was effectively applied, in a similar recent study, creating insights from student reflections in a traditional COIL context (Harris & Seo, 2024).

The researcher and an assistant began by thoroughly reading participants' assignments to become familiar with the data, making initial notes to capture preliminary impressions. Categories were established with the assistance of concepts reported in previous research; specific codes were generated to represent key concepts within the data. The codes were manually examined and organized into potential themes, which were subsequently reviewed to ensure they captured meaningful aspects of the participants' experiences. Re-readings were conducted to confirm that each theme was well-supported by the data. In the final step, the themes were refined and defined. Terms and concepts from existing COIL, blended mobility, and intercultural communication literature were considered to enhance the rigor and contextual relevance of the findings.

4. Findings

4.1. Results for RQ1

As previously noted, Helm and O'Dowd (2020) suggest that blended mobility can foster a variety of 21st century "employability skills," including media and digital literacy, communication skills, global awareness, empathy, critical and analytical thinking, foreign language skills, intercultural competencies, teaming, and problem-solving. Given the relative scarcity of research devoted to blended mobility, finding support for these skills advanced our understanding of student outcomes. The thematic analysis of student reflections in this

study supported these nine employability skills as outcomes of the blended mobility experience, with the need to contextualize two themes.

First, for digital media literacy, student experiences, as noted in the extracts in Table 3, do not represent a direct reference to how they learned, discovered, or improved their knowledge of technologies. Rather, students articulate how using a specific digital technology or platform helped them to learn, discover, and improve other sets of skills. However, as discussed by Dezuanni (2016), a key consideration for digital media literacy is tapping into these literacies for connecting student identities to broader educational purposes. Thus, the media literacy theme does not relate to the precursor student learning to use a digital platform; rather, participant extractions showcase how gaining/possession digital literacy was leveraged to an enhanced learning outcome. Thus, this term was reclassified as “digital technology enabled learning.”

Second, since all course activities and student interactions were conducted in English, the “foreign language skills” component was reflected less in terms of multilingual proficiency and more as a skill in sense-making and overcoming communicative barriers across cultural contexts. This nuanced interpretation still highlights reported communication growth. Further, even though the majority of participants’ L1 is English, they had to communicate with other students, academics, and professionals whose L1 is not English. This necessarily involves a new set of language adaptations, both at the oral and written modes, because the context of communication is no longer a natural L1 context but rather a context where English is used as a *lingua franca*; L1 speakers, thus, often acquire a new set of oral and written skills that enable them to communicate with non-natives (Triki, Giacosa, & Li, 2023).

Table 3 provides sample quotes, three per proposed employability skill, from student reflections for each of the seven employability skills, illustrating the breadth and depth of the students’ skill development through their blended mobility experience. Using themes from Helm & O’Dowd’s white paper, the nine emergent themes are:

- 1) **Digital technology enabled learning:** Media and digital media incorporates a broad set of skills related to effectively using digital technologies including the ability to find, evaluate, use, share, and create content using digital devices. Here, students discuss the outcomes of using digital platforms versus learning about the platforms in the first place.
- 2) **Communications skills:** The ability to effectively convey, receive, and interpret messages. Students discuss professional communication enhancements.
- 3) **Global awareness:** Key aspects include cultural sensitivity, global issues, economic realities, and global citizenship.
- 4) **Empathy:** The ability to understand and share feelings, thoughts, experiences, and experiences of others, as well as responding with compassion. Students expressed a greater ability to place themselves in someone else’s shoes to build deeper connections, improve communication, and collaborate more effectively.
- 5) **Critical and analytical thinking:** Closely related cognitive skills that involve evaluating information and making reasoned decisions to solve problems.
- 6) **Foreign language skills:** In this context, as previously stated, this skill was reflected less in terms of multilingual proficiency and more in sense-making and overcoming communicative barriers across cultural contexts.
- 7) **Intercultural competency:** The ability to effectively and appropriately interact with people from different cultural backgrounds.
- 8) **Teaming:** Students frequently discussed the importance of working cohesively within their cross-cultural teams. They emphasized how the experience taught them to navigate interpersonal dynamics, appreciate diverse perspectives, and contribute meaningfully toward objectives.
- 9) **Case/problem-solving:** The project-based nature of the course encouraged students to develop strong problem-solving skills. Working on a real client case pushed them to analyze situations, ask questions, seek information, and propose feasible solutions.

Table 3

Sample student responses supporting Helm & O'Dowd's employability outcomes of blended mobility

Theme	Sample of student responses
Digital media enabled learning	<p>“Utilizing tools like GlobeSmart’s profile survey and cultural guides doing our joint virtual class sessions, my teammates and I were able to evaluate our respective strengths and weaknesses as well as address (and refine) some of the general preconceived notions we held.”</p> <p>“Working virtually with (HU students) before traveling to Hungary was truly a game-changer, meeting them online offered me a glimpse into the dynamics of real-world international business collaboration. It also served as a great icebreaker for our group, helping to break down any barriers, which built invaluable team rapport.”</p> <p>“I found the “Inclusive Virtual Meetings” module particularly helpful in learning how to effectively communicate across cultures...During this module, I found myself reflecting on past projects that I had completed on diverse teams and imagining how our outcomes would have changed if some of these cross-cultural communication strategies had been implemented. In most cases, our work produced would have been of higher caliber, due to a higher general understanding of the goals and needs of each member within the team. After completing the module, I internalized some of the most helpful tips I learned, such as sending meeting itineraries to team members prior to a meeting virtually as well as following up after meetings with the responsibilities/tasks of each member to be completed prior to the following meeting.”</p>
Communication skills	<p>“My group’s performance during presentation day gave me a boost of confidence as we effectively communicated out ideas and told the story of our recommendation convincingly. The experience proved to me that I can be an effective communicator in a professional setting.”</p> <p>“I believe this program significantly shaped my communication style and social behaviors for the better. Before this program...I was (or arguably still am a bit) naturally awkward and shy. In our in-class “Goal-Setting Assignment,” I challenged myself to improve my networking skills and intercultural awareness; through the experiences I will detail, I believe I’ve done both.”</p> <p>“The case competition was a completely new experience for me, as I have not done any prior work like this...Within all kinds of academic settings, I personally dread presenting in front of people. I always have this fear I am not good at it and have issues formulating my thoughts. However, this experience made me realize that I am not an entirely bad presenter although I do have lots of room for improvement. I am completely capable of presenting in front of different people...What I thought was going to be the worst presentation of my life turned into one of my best because I had become comfortable...”</p>
Global Awareness	<p>“Through conversation, I was able to learn more about the cultural significance of each Hungarian dish and the stories behind them. I also learned that for Hungarians it isn’t just about cooking it was also about preserving tradition, sharing stories, and building connection with others.”</p> <p>“...it was the warmth and hospitality of the Hungarian people that truly touched my heart. From the joyful vendors at the markets to the friendly locals I met at cafes, each encounter was a reminder of the power of human connection to transcend language and cultural barriers.”</p> <p>”Having gotten used to only seeing the wealthiest parts of Budapest, this moment placed me face-to-face with the fact that homelessness, poverty, pain and suffering exist all around the globe. This moment showed me that Hungary wasn’t all that different from the US. While the culture, time zone, food, and climate may have changed, financial inequality hadn’t.”</p>

Empathy	<p>“Throughout my time in Hungary, I had to reframe my perspective on the world and push myself to be more open to empathizing with experiences vastly different than the ones I already know. One of my most eye-opening experiences happened at Szechenyi, where a few of us met a young woman a little bit older than us who is currently fleeing Ukraine. She told us her story, explaining the details of suddenly having her life ripped out from under her and her family torn apart. I was struck by how sudden all of it was, and how similar she was to me.”</p> <p>“I learned to navigate through situations that were outside my previous realm of experiences (i.e., traveling out of my home country for the first time alone), honing critical life skills such as adaptability, problem-solving, and empathy.”</p> <p>“I feel more connected to other human beings than I ever have before, and feel empowered to think more empathetically every day, especially with the troubles of today’s world. As I graduate in May and enter a full-time position as a consultant this Fall, I feel prepared and confident in my own strengths and distinct perspective. These experiences and lessons give me new context for working in international teams and with international clients, I walk away from this experience knowing that there is much to learn from others...”</p>
Critical and analytical thinking	<p>“The project we undertook with (client) was a practical application of our COIL coursework. It demanded not just cultural awareness but strategic thought, leadership, and a global mindset. Exploiting the theories and frameworks we had all learned pre-arrival, my team and I developed strategic recommendations tailored to the unique challenges and opportunities (client) would face entering the US market. This project was a way for testing our accumulated knowledge and the consulting skills we had honed in preparation.”</p> <p>“We had to navigate new logistical complexities, coordinate in a foreign environment under tight deadlines, reconcile the theoretical specs of our analysis with the practical realities of (client) faced, and ensure our strategies were not only innovative but also actionable within the constraints of the U.S. market.”</p> <p>“Not only did the project help me learn to think outside the box through my own thinking and that of my peers, but it also reinforced my interest in analyzing the financial aspects of companies. This gives me even more confidence and eagerness to become a financial analyst and perform on the job in the years to come.”</p>
Foreign language skills	<p>“Going to Budapest was the first time I didn’t speak the language. I remember going to Mass at St. Stephen’s Basilica completely in Hungarian and feeling lost. And words on the street signs were so long and full of constants. I joked saying that I would have given up learning Hungarian as a kid if I had been born there as their language seemed so complex and difficult to learn. However, I was very glad to learn that most people in the city spoke English well.”</p> <p>“And amongst the laughter, there were moments of challenge and growth, like the time I attempted to correctly pronounce the longest Hungarian word which is "megszentségtelenítetlenségeseitekért" with my Hungarian friends. Despite the tongue-twisting struggle, it became a shared joke among us, a lighthearted reminder of the beauty and complexity of the Hungarian language.”</p> <p>“It seems silly to admit that one of the most formative experience I had during the in-country portion of our program was teaching my teammates American slang, but it’s the truth...Yet not slang we taught them had as significant an impact as “cooking” and “cooked”, two similar-yet-constraining terms...For reasons unbeknownst to me, these words unlocked something in our teammates; they absolutely loved them and started sing the describe everything we did...Through initiating simple and silly conversation, I believe I got to know our teammates on a deeper level, and this strengthened our working relationship and allowed us to collaborate more freely than we did virtually.”</p>

Intercultural competency	<p>“Getting to know the Hungarian students also forced me out of the comfort zone as I found it a bit challenging at first to break the ice...Being around them (Hungarian students) taught me how to break outside of my comfort zone, more easily start the conversation, and take an interest in others.”</p> <p>‘Getting to know them (Hungarians) not only deepened my appreciation for diversity but also taught me to approach differences with an open mind and genuine curiosity. Witnessing their willingness to share ideas, even when controversial, highlighted the importance of open dialogue and cultural exchange in fostering mutual understanding and collaboration.”</p> <p>“The intercultural aspect of the GIE was one of the most impactful, as it exposed me to the complexities and nuances of cross-cultural communication and collaboration...I learned to recognize and appreciate cultural differences while finding common ground to foster meaningful connections.”</p>
Teaming	<p>“We created a psychologically safe environment where no one was afraid to share ideas, this let our creativity shine.”</p> <p>“For me, this experience was a lesson in different working styles, managing expectations, and leveraging strengths. I also learned critical skills like navigating team meetings with time-zone differences, staying adaptable in constantly changing situations, and building meaningful cross-cultural relationships.”</p> <p>“We learned that effective collaboration under pressure was not just about dividing tasks, but also about converging different viewpoints into a unified, strategic direction, These experiences were instrumental in fostering a mindset that views obstacles not as setbacks but as opportunities for learning and growth.”</p>
Case/problem solving	<p>“(By) Working closely with my teammates and receiving guidance from our professors I was able to improve my design thinking, problem-solving, presentation, and teamwork skills.”</p> <p>“Conducting market research, analyzing data and developing recommendations for our client allowed me to hone my problem-solving skills and critical thinking abilities. Moreover, presenting our findings to the client and receiving feedback was a valuable learning experience that enhanced my communication and presentation skills.”</p> <p>“I have done a few case competitions before, but this was a real problem a company was facing which made the experience more authentic...The experience developed me heavily professionally.”</p>

4.2. Results for RQ2

4.2.2 Support for additional employability skills

In addition to the nine employability skills proposed by Helm and O’Dowd (2020), thematic analysis of student reflections revealed five additional skills reported developed through the blended mobility experience. While the following concepts are somewhat inherently interconnected to the previous skills, they are mutually exclusive as determined and coded by the research team. These emerging skills were highlighted by students as key takeaways from the program, enhancing their readiness for complex, real-world environments:

- 1) **Gaining “real world” experience:** Many students noted the value of applying classroom knowledge to the real problem set provided by the client. Working on an actual client project allowed them to experience the practical applications of their coursework.

- 2) **Self-awareness:** Reflections indicated that students gained a deeper understanding of their own strengths, weaknesses, and perspective. This self-awareness emerged as they navigated different roles and challenges, prompting them to consider their impact and growth areas.
- 3) **Adaptability:** Students highlighted adaptability as essential for describing situations requiring quick adjustments such as changing schedules, cultural norms, and project needs.
- 4) **Conflict resolution:** Students discussed the need to navigate disagreements and rejections productively.
- 5) **Increased confidence:** Many students reported increased confidence in their professional abilities and resilience. The immersive, hands-on nature of the course contributed to their sense of accomplishment and readiness for future challenges.

Table 4 provides sample quotes illustrating each of these five additional skills, three per additional employability outcome, from student reflections.

Table 4
Additional employability outcomes of blended mobility based on student responses

Theme	Sample of student responses
Gaining practical, "real world" experience	<p>"...I felt that I was able to improve my teamwork skills by working with foreign partners who had different mannerisms and coming up with creative solutions for problems we faced. These skills are very transferable to many fields and aspects of life, and I can see this benefitting me professionally in both the far and near future."</p> <p>"Moreover, this journey has been instrumental in my professional growth, equipping me with essential skills such as consulting frameworks, teamwork, and communication (skills)."</p> <p>"The opportunity to work on a real business project for [client name] also helped me gain insights about international business and how it differs from the practices I previously took for granted in the US. For example, when creating a discounted cash flow model for our [client name] financial projections, we had to use a much higher weighted average cost of capital assumption to account for Hungary's extremely high treasury bond yields. There were also other factors to consider, such as the fact that European cities are often more compact and more walkable."</p>
Growing in self-awareness	<p>"After visiting Hungary, I experienced many things that challenged what I thought about myself and about the world in general. Interacting with the Hungarians showed me a whole new perspective. For example, I learned that in every trip I make, I come back home with not only new memories and new friends, but also with a deeper understanding of myself and fresh insights into the world."</p> <p>"We had a conversation about what we appreciated about each other one night. I learned that I came off as a very genuine person who isn't afraid to admit "embarrassing" things about myself. That completely threw off my self-impression. I'm very caught up in people-pleasing. To hear that I came off as vulnerable and authentic helped me realize how I compensate for my people-pleasing tendencies by being honest and transparent. I would never have known that about myself if I hadn't had these conversations."</p> <p>"My time in Hungary has significantly shifted my perspective on the world and my place within it. Living and studying in a foreign country compelled me to develop a greater self-awareness and self-sufficiency...This journey was as much about self-discovery as it was about exploration of the world, shaping a more nuanced understanding of my values and aspirations."</p>
Adaptability	<p>"These experiences have taught me the importance of adaptability, the value of diverse perspectives, and the strength found in community."</p> <p>"To make progress in our meetings, my American colleague and I took on the challenge of starting our conversations. For me this was quite difficult at first since I am pretty reserved</p>

myself, but I learned to overcome and adapt. If I did not come out of my shell, we were not going to make any progress. I found though that I was able to understand and adapt to their cultural differences quite effectively...:

“Quickly adapting to communication styles, time zone differences, language barriers, and cultural norms will make a huge impact on my work-life relationships and an understanding that knowing my team enables better teamwork will motivate me to get to know them on a deeper level.”

Conflict resolution

“I also learned how to work with conflict. (Classmate) and I often bounced ideas off one another and frequently disagreed. I learned how to both take a rejection and respectfully give a rejection”.

“The biggest learning moment for me was on Wednesday, the day before presenting. It was the last hour and that teammate was complaining about the executive summary. He didn’t like the way the three of us had done it. I was frustrated because we had all been working on it and if he contributed then we wouldn’t be wasting time on this conversation. I quickly realized this mindset would not be helpful and took a deep breath. Instead of being annoyed, I had him sit down and asked him questions about to figure out what he didn’t like about the executive summary and how we could go about making a new one together. It led to a good conversation where we shared our opinions and created an executive summary that in the end was better than the previous two versions. Both of us walked away happy because we both felt heard and validated.”

“I will not go into detail, but in one case, I lost respect for someone due to their personal actions on the trip, yet I had to work and travel with this individual for a week. Fortunately, it was not someone I worked directly with. The question became: how do I separate personal and professional feelings on a trip of this nature to avoid any potential conflict? My solution, right or wrong, was to only attempt a professional relationship with the person and distance myself during any free-time. In consideration of this person’s feelings, I made no sign of being dismayed at their behavior and they would not have known my true thoughts about them. I mention this subject only because I believe it is important to recognize that in any professional setting, there will be people who you will need to work with effectively despite personal feelings.”

Increased confidence

“When it came to my turn to speak during our presentation, I lost that sense of fear and didn’t stumble over any thoughts or words as I went slightly off-script. I felt confident and the anxiety turned into an exhilarating feeling as I realized I had somewhat gotten over a long-time hurdle in my public-speaking journey. Even during the challenging Q&A, I felt poised as I formulated thoughts right before I spoke them.”

“I’ve noticed a newfound confidence in my ability to navigate complex cultural situations, a skill sharpened by the necessity to adapt quickly in a foreign context. Moreover, the team-building, leadership experiences, and consulting slide design frameworks have further informed my approach to group projects and class discussions, enriching my contributions and interactions with peers.”

“The main lesson that I learned from this project experience is to trust myself and realize that I am valuable and here for a reason...I believe that it is a combination of self and collaborative reflection that leads to effective and successful growth in character and professional development.”

4.3. Results for RQ3

As noted, recent research highlights that COIL experiences offer relational benefits, such as fostering a sense of global community and belonging. For instance, a public health course between U.S. and U.K. higher

education institutions found a significant change in students’ knowledge of cultural worldview, as well as reported positive impacts on a sense of belonging (Nowak et al., 2023).

The current study found that blended mobility fosters relational benefits. In fact, every student (N = 58) reported at least one statement that could be categorized as experiencing a relational benefit from the course.

A thematic analysis of student reflections identified ten sub-themes that characterize the relational dimensions fostered by the blended mobility experience:

- 1) **Broad cultural connection:** Students reported a sense of connection to the broader cultural environment, finding value in a shared experience and/or feeling part of a global community.
- 2) **Bonding among U.S. institution students:** This category reflects stated accounts of enhanced camaraderie and/or support among classmates from their own institution, fostering closer-knit peer group—especially during the in-country travel phase.
- 3) **Bonding between students from the peer institution:** Students highlighted the relationships they built with their Hungarian peers as meaningful and projected to be long-lasting.
- 4) **Interpersonal insights/overcoming misconceptions:** Students noted personal growth from overcoming preconceived notions, gaining a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives, and dispelling stereotypes thought direct interactions.
- 5) **U.S. faculty/staff closeness:** An expression of appreciation for connecting with faculty and staff.
- 6) **Peer institution faculty appreciation:** Students shared positive experiences working with the partner institution.
- 7) **Seeking to expand personal network:** Several students mentioned a desire to continue building their networks inspired by the connections formed during the course.
- 8) **Physical acts of promoting bonding:** Acts such as hiking, exploring, and even hugging were cited as catalysts for deepening student connections with peers.
- 9) **Improved intrapersonal self-talk:** Students reported enhanced self-concept.
- 10) **Spiritual connection or growth:** Multiple students described moments of spiritual awakening or growth, particularly during travel, which added a deeper layer of personal reflection and sense of connectedness.

Table 5 provides a representative quote for each of these sub-themes.

Table 5
Relational benefits & belonging outcomes of blended mobility based on student responses

Sub-theme	Sample of student responses
Broad cultural connection	“In that moment, surrounded by laughs and the smell of this delicious plate, I felt a huge sense of connection to the people and the culture of Hungary.”
Bonding among U.S. institution students	“I was impressed by how everyone from UNC Kenan-Flagle clicked together as a group and became friends...”
Bonding between students from peer institution	“This planted the most important takeaway from the entire trip: people are people, no matter where you go. My worries of not being able to culturally connect with the Hungarians faded away; because at the end of the day, we were all united by the same things: the feeling of being embarrassed, wanting to make friends, fears of loneliness, hopes of grandeur and happiness-- we were all deeply human at the end of the day and that was universal. Overall, what started as deep fear over not getting to know the Hungarians well due to cultural barriers...faded over the week as I would come to make some of the closest bonds I’ve had thus far in college.”
Interpersonal insights / overcoming misconceptions	“I was also was able to challenge my preconceptions about certain groups of people within the actual class as well; interacting with (and befriending) I most likely would have never spoken to on campus otherwise helped me realize that a lot of the things I held close to my heart were not necessarily true, but I operated as if they were cold, hard facts.”

Faculty / staff closeness	“(Faculty and staff) were all so understanding, funny, and nice. I do not think it would have been the same without you, and I thank you for who you all are. This course, this trip, and everything about this experience will go down as one of the best things I’ve done in my life.”
Peer institution faculty appreciation	“One of my favorite parts of this GIE has been the opportunity to engage with diverse cultures and perspectives. Interacting with the Hungarian students and faculty has broadened my worldview and made me reconsider my beliefs.”
Seeking to expand personal network	“I feel that my network of fellow students and friends that I can rely on has grown exponentially and has made me want to become more involved with campus life and to further build these meaningful networks.”
Physical acts promoting bonding	I am very used to simply hugging; I learned just how uncommon that is in Hungary, even between close friends. What became funny was that after we discussed this, to show respect, our Hungarian teammates would hug (us), as each other, every single time we saw each other.
Improved intrapersonal self-talk	“Any time I tried to engage with others, I convinced myself that I was encroaching on their pre-organized groups...all of my preconceived notions were in my head. In the end, I created new relationships with my peers, something my introverted self oftentimes struggles to accomplish.”
Spiritual connection or growth	“Being in such beautiful places of worship in Budapest took my breath away and I felt like I was reconnecting with God in my own way. I remember kneeling at one of the pews in the Basilica and saying a few prayers. Being in that moment almost brought me to tears because it was overwhelmingly fulfilling to feel so connected to God again.”

5. Discussion and implications

Blended mobility and intercultural communication are crucial components for modern business education, especially in the AI age. By 2027, an estimated 60% of higher education institutions will adopt a hybrid operating model that combines physical and digital capabilities to create a unified environment for learning, teaching, research, and operations (Sheehan, Riley, Farrell, et al., 2023). Blended mobility and intercultural business communication offer impactful components for modern business education. This shift aligns with the goals of AACSB-accredited business schools to make a positive impact on business, society, and the global community. As AI continues to transform industries globally, the ability to navigate diverse cultural contexts and adapt to various environments has become crucial. Business schools that prioritize these skills are not only preparing their students for current challenges but also equipping them with the tools to navigate future uncertainties. As AI and machine learning continue to evolve, the ability to work effectively in diverse environments and communicate across cultures will be invaluable to the human experience. Blended mobility can help equip students with these skills, ensuring they are prepared for the complexities of AI-driven workplaces.

Intercultural communication skills are essential for business students to thrive in a globalized world. Blended mobility, which combines physical and virtual mobility, allows students to gain international experience without the need for extensive travel. This approach not only broadens their cultural understanding but also enhances their ability to communicate effectively across diverse environments. The combination of blended mobility and intercultural communication could foster a more dynamic and resilient workforce.

The present inquiry aimed at exploring the self-reported student experiences with a blended mobility course found support for a range of HI learning outcomes. This research highlights the specific skills and themes that emerge from blended mobility experiences. Helm and O’Dowd’s (2020) position paper promoted the importance of blended mobility in cultivating student employability skills. Nine of the skills noted in their manuscript—digital technology enabled learning, communication skills, global awareness, empathy, critical and analytical thinking, foreign language skills, intercultural competency, teaming, and problem-solving—were supported with the current research. Five related, but differentiated, themes—gaining of practical, real-world experience, growth in self-awareness, adaptability, conflict resolution tools, and confidence—all emerged as well.

Previous research has shown that participation in technology-based and COIL learning is positively associated with a higher sense of belonging among college students (Long, 2016; Nowak, et al., 2023). This study indicates that a sense of belonging extends—and perhaps deepens—through blended mobility. Every student participant noted at least one positive relational, belonging outcome. Ten relational subthemes emerged from the student responses: cultural connection, bonding among U.S. institution students, bonding between students from the peer institution, interpersonal insights/overcoming misconceptions, U.S. faculty/staff closeness, peer institution faculty appreciation, seeking to expand personal network, physical acts of promoting bonding, improved intrapersonal self-talk, and spiritual connection or growth.

Many, if not all, of the major themes from this study's analysis have been covered in the literature on virtual intercultural exchange and/or short duration study abroad. However, the findings of this study underscore the potential of blended mobility to foster a wide-range of employability skills and relational benefits for students and seemingly exceeding the outcomes possible from a traditional COIL-only program or a short duration study abroad-only experience. Further, the belonging outcomes extended across all students and ten subthemes emerged. Thus, the blend of COIL and short-duration travel abroad seems to have a synergistic effect on outcomes—especially related to HI skills and belonging.

The support for a range of HI skills in this study offers a useful conversation into stimulating teaching practices and curricula design that can help meet the increased demands of an AI-equipped landscape. This study has identified reported student support for the varied rich outcomes of a combined COIL experience with cultural immersion. Further research into blended mobility courses is necessary to more fully understand their impact. Research involving participants from other universities might help complement or further inform this study. Seeking and comparing insights from the host institution would be potentially enlightening.

Blended mobility programs, such as the one explored in this study, illustrate a type of impactful educational approach that can provide students with meaningful, real-world experiences and expand their ability to operate in a globalized context. By embracing blended mobility and intercultural communication, higher education institutions can ensure their graduates are well-rounded, globally competent, and ready to make a positive impact in the business world. Despite the fact that implementing blended mobility well comes with a range of costs, these findings imply that blended mobility is a promising model for educators and program designers. Supporting faculty with training and resources tailored to blended mobility can help address challenges related to coordination, cultural integration, student engagement, and more.

6. Limitations and conclusions

Since this study used a thematic analysis, the findings cannot be generalized to all contexts. The results are based solely on self-reporting; the study's aim was to assess the students' reflections on personal growth as related to their participation and engagement within the course program.

Additionally, insights were collected from one of the two participating institutions. Collecting student's first language information, ethnic belonging, and other variables may have added deeper insights into student intercultural experiences.

In sum, this study highlights blended mobility as a powerful approach for preparing students to thrive in a globally interconnected world. The rise of digital advancements, particularly Generative AI, calls for higher education to embrace technological innovations while reinforcing HI aspects of education. This study suggests that blended mobility offers a valuable avenue for enhancing human-centered skills that technology alone cannot fully replicate. The strong student sentiment captured in reflection statements such as, "I would like to begin by saying that this was the best experience of my life" reflects the possibly profound impact blended mobility can have on providing students a rich, transformative learning experience.

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Appendix

The following prompt represents the student participant's final self- reflection assignment used for the blended mobility course each analyzed semester. This prompt generated the data coded for this study.

Final reflection assignment

Upon completion of this GIE, I want you to reflect and capture some of the experiences that have made the greatest impact on you. Please write a reflection document (minimum 2 pages, single spaced document using business writing best practices (including bold headings)). Be ready to discuss your reflections in our wrap-up class.

Content considerations: revisit the "Curiosity" Journal assignment; include a focus on personal, intercultural, and professional growth.

I'll consider content, structure, depth of learning self-reflection, overall work quality, and creativity!

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