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Assessing the Dimensions of Virtual Exchange: A Quantitative Evaluation of Japanese Students in a Thai-Japanese COIL Project

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Abstract

Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) has become an increasingly prominent form of internationalisation at home in Japanese higher education, yet research often lacks theoretically grounded frameworks for assessment. This quantitative study investigates Japanese university students' perceptions of a six-week COIL project conducted with a partner institution in Thailand. Adopting the triad-based scale validated by Rozo-García et al. (2024), the research measures student perceptions across three core dimensions: (1) interaction in digital environments, (2) collaborative work in multicultural teams, and (3) reflection on differences and similarities during collaboration.

Data were collected from 21 participants using a 19-item Likert-scale questionnaire. The findings indicate generally positive evaluations across the three dimensions, with the highest levels of agreement found in the intercultural reflection pillar, particularly regarding the importance of respect and the recognition of shared commonalities. However, results were more varied in the digital interaction dimension; while most students agreed that digital tools were sufficient for communication, a significant portion reported that learning together in a digital environment was not easy. These results suggest that while the COIL model successfully facilitates intercultural awareness, the digital interface remains a primary hurdle for students. The study concludes that the effectiveness of COIL in EFL contexts depends on the convergence of these three dimensions and highlights the need for targeted pedagogical scaffolding to support student interaction in digital spaces.

Keywords: Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), Japanese Higher Education, Internationalisation at Home, Student Perceptions, Quantitative Study, Intercultural Reflection