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Does Participating in an Erasmus
Programme or a COIL Activity Increase
University Students' Global Competence?

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Abstract

This project aims at investigating the global competence of university students and whether participating in a COIL activity or in an international mobility programme contributes to making students globally competent. The three groups of students that are analysed are (1) university students who have participated in the Erasmus programme; (2) university students who have participated in COIL; (3) and university students who have never participated in any mobility programme or any virtual exchange activities (i.e. COIL). As for the methodology, I adapted the PISA questionnaire (2018) and I sent it to university students from an English Degree in a Catalan university. The results of my study show that it is important for students to develop global competence and the exchange programmes contribute in that.

Keywords: global competence, Erasmus, COIL, university students, education.

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1. Introduction

In this project, I am going to start defining the concept of global competence and its educational implications. Then, I am going to explain the concept of internationalisation at universities and I will include how the Erasmus programme and the COIL virtual exchange play an important role in the internationalisation of universities. As for the methodology of data collection, I employed an adapted version of the PISA questionnaire for global competence. The participants of this study are university students at an English Degree in Catalonia.

The motivation to conduct this study is mainly, that I have participated in an Erasmus programme. I studied the third course of my English studies in Sweden during 2020-2021. It was an experience that completely changed the way I looked at people from other cultures and I feel it made me become more mature and acquire higher global competence. Therefore, I feel thrilled by doing this project since I can contrast my points of view and own experience with those of the participants in this study.

The objective of this study is to analyse whether participating in an Erasmus programme and/or in a COIL activity has an impact on the students' global competence. I want to analyse the students' perspectives on intercultural, global, and social matters and see if participating in a virtual exchange programme and an international mobility programme makes a difference compared to those who have not participated in either of these exchanges. I intend to see whether the students' global competence increases with intercultural exchange experiences and if so, which kind of initiative is more effective to achieve it.

2. Theoretical Framework

In this part of my project, I am going to define the theoretical concepts of what my paper is about. First, I am going to explain what global competence is and its educational implications, then I am going to describe internationalisation at universities, and finally, I will analyse the Erasmus programme and the case of COIL activities.

2.1. Global Competence

According to the PISA study, global competence is based on multidimensional learning. People with a high level of global competence can analyse local, global and intercultural matters. They understand and appreciate different versions and perspectives of the world. Moreover, they are able to communicate and interact successfully with other people, respecting them and their cultures. Individuals with these characteristics are aware of sustainability and treat the environment respectfully so they contribute to the collective well-being.

Global competence is crucial for many aspects of our lives. Firstly, it helps to live in harmony with others in multicultural societies and to develop critical thinking. Global competence helps against discrimination, racism, and violence making people accept differences and find common solutions. Secondly, it helps to succeed in a changing employment market because people are willing to adapt easily and apply their knowledge to different and new situations. They are open to new cultures and they are respectful and communicative with people from other countries. Thirdly, global competence can make young people adapt to new technologies and think responsibly when writing and expressing themselves on social media thanks to a more developed critical thinking and common sense. Finally, people with a developed global

competence are worried about global issues and participate in building a more sustainable, peaceful, and equalitarian society.

2.1.1. Educational Implications. “Education for global competence is based on the ideas of different models of global education, such as intercultural education, global citizenship education, and democratic citizenship education.” (PISA, 2018, p. 9) This aims to make students cooperate on social issues and interpersonal relationships and build their empathy towards society. The PISA project designs a proposal for schools about global competence “with a multifaceted cognitive, social-emotional, and civic learning goal”. (PISA, 2018, p. 9) Moreover, in the article “Creating global: opportunities, challenges and experiences of internationalizing the Geography curriculum in Higher Education” written by David Simm and Alan Marvell (2017), it is said that universities have the opportunity to globalize students and help them with internationalisation of curricula. Nowadays, it is beneficial to have an international curriculum because it shows a person with easy adaptability to global issues.

“Killick (2015) views higher education as a process of empowerment, and that developing an awareness of the self and one’s relationship with the world is integral to internationalizing the curriculum, leading to a maturing as a “global citizen” and devising a “worldly” pedagogy” (Fanghanel & Cousin, 2012 in Simm & Marvell, 2017, p. 467).

2.2. Internationalisation at Universities

“*Internationalisation* is the process of integrating an international dimension into the research, teaching, and services function of higher education.” (Bengt Nilsson, 2003, p. 31) Internationalisation at universities is essential for students to be able to open their

minds and be sympathetic. By doing any exchange activity, students can be in touch with people coming from different backgrounds and learn from each other. In addition, students should have an internationalised curriculum that teaches universal competences to prepare them to be global workers and perform in an international environment. However, “Cultural diversity on campus and intercultural learning are linked through internationalisation of the curriculum only if there is a strong emphasis on carefully structured and designed interactive and collaborative learning processes. (Van der Wende, 2000 in Leask, 2009, p. 208) For internationalisation at universities to be efficient, the activities should be interactive and with a clear objective that it is to improve students’ skills. Students should be motivated and eager to participate.

It is not easy to build a competent population in the conventional classroom so it is important to include new programmes that help with growing up as more multicultural individuals. In the next points, I am going to talk about the Erasmus programme and the COIL activities that contribute to the concept of internationalisation at universities.

2.2.1. The Erasmus Programme. “Erasmus+ is the EU's programme to support education, training, youth, and sport in Europe.” (European Commission, n.d.) It improves the academic, personal, and global growth of the participants while broadening their labour market and promoting social inclusion. Students participating in this mobility programme, spend half or one academic year in another country adapting themselves to a new culture, teaching methods, and language. Mizikaci and Arslan (2019) state that “The Program started in 1987 and since then has enabled more than 2 million students from across Europe to pursue enriching learning experiences in other countries.” (p. 703) This programme increases students’ global competence by offering them the opportunity of mixing themselves with people from

other nationalities and in a foreign university with a different study plan that provides a new perspective on the subjects. By doing that, these students grow up more competent because they learn how to live together with people that share other customs and beliefs to the extent that they feel that they do not belong completely to their country of birth anymore. These students start feeling that they are citizens of the world. According to Engel (2010) “Reports² on the Erasmus experience by students often tell about an outstanding experience having a long-lasting impact on their lives and making them discover a new European identity.” (p. 2) Finally, regarding the Erasmus programme, we can say that it is proved in Engel’s (2010) study that most students acquire a proficiency level of languages, for instance English, a higher level of knowledge about other countries and traditions, and a wider social circle that can be advantageous when entering the labour market. (p. 2) Moreover, based on my experience as an Erasmus student, socializing with strangers from other parts of the world during the stay abroad, helps students to build their confidence and manners and could be beneficial when applying for a job and facing an interview both in international contexts and in one’s home country.

2.2.2. The Case of COIL Activities. When talking about internationalisation at universities, the COIL exchange programme (Collaborative Online International Learning) is also a programme that includes getting in touch with people from other countries but from home. Therefore, we say that COIL is an attempt to bring “internationalisation at home”.

“Beelen & Leask (2011, p. 5) stress that “Internationalization at Home is not an aim or a didactic concept in itself, but rather a set of instruments and activities

‘at home’ that aim to develop international and intercultural competences in all students.” (in Beelen & Jones, 2015, p. 64)

We can also refer to this exchange as “virtual mobility” because students get in touch with people from universities outside their countries and interact with them online. This programme aims at developing pupils’ global competences by implementing collaborative activities within a subject from their university degrees that they need to deal with. These exercises force them to collaborate as a group so they learn how to listen to others’ opinions and find solutions together. Students learn how people outside their cultural backgrounds work, communicate and behave. It is relevant because their communication skills increase together with their ability to manage non-quotidian situations that make them think and act “outside the box” gaining experience for future interactions. Moreover, they understand how to work in a team and how to use some digital tools that are important nowadays. “Analysis suggests that COIL experiences positively influence intercultural awareness, stimulate students to be globally engaged and promote personal and professional development.” (Vahed & Rodriguez, 2020)

Thanks to COIL students can make new friends from other parts of the world and perhaps meet and create enriching and intercultural friendships.

3. Methodology: Adapting the PISA Questionnaire of Global Competence

The project has been approved by the Ethics Commission of the URV with the code “CEIPSA-2022-TFG0061”.

This questionnaire based on the PISA study of global competence aims to analyse in students from an English Degree in Catalonia whether participating in an Erasmus

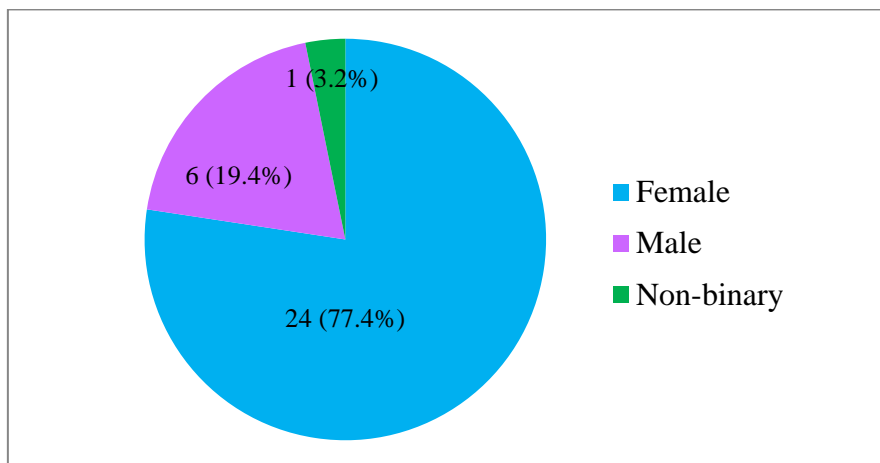
programme or a COIL activity increases students' global competence. I divided the students into three groups: (1) a group of students who have been into an Erasmus and students who have done both Erasmus and COIL activity; (2), a group formed by students who have participated only in a COIL activity; (3), and the last one is formed by students who have done neither of these projects. I have received 31 answers, in the first group, there are eight students, in the second one eighteen, and in the last one five. This last group is in extinction because currently, all students have joined a COIL activity in their first or third year of university.

Erasmus/ Erasmus + COIL	COIL only	No exchange
8 students	18 students	5 students

In the following section, you could observe the biographical data about the participants of this questionnaire.

Figure 1

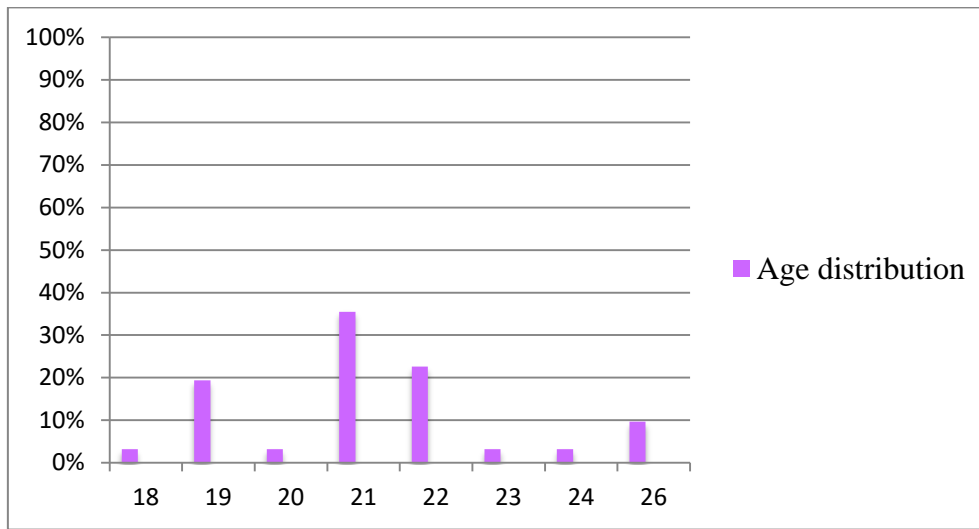
Gender identification for all participants



The graphic shows that more women (77.4%) than men (19.4%) have answered this questionnaire. Only one student (3.2%) has identified itself as non-binary.

Figure 2

Age distribution



Students are from 18 to 26 years old, most of them are between 21 and 22, the 58.04%.

Table 1

Birth place

Barcelona	2
Reus	6
Romania	2
Tarragona	11
Terres de l'Ebre (Roquetes, Tortosa, Móra d'Ebre, La Ràpita)	5
Valls	5

Most students participating in the study are from Catalonia (Spain). Two of them are from Romania.

Table 2

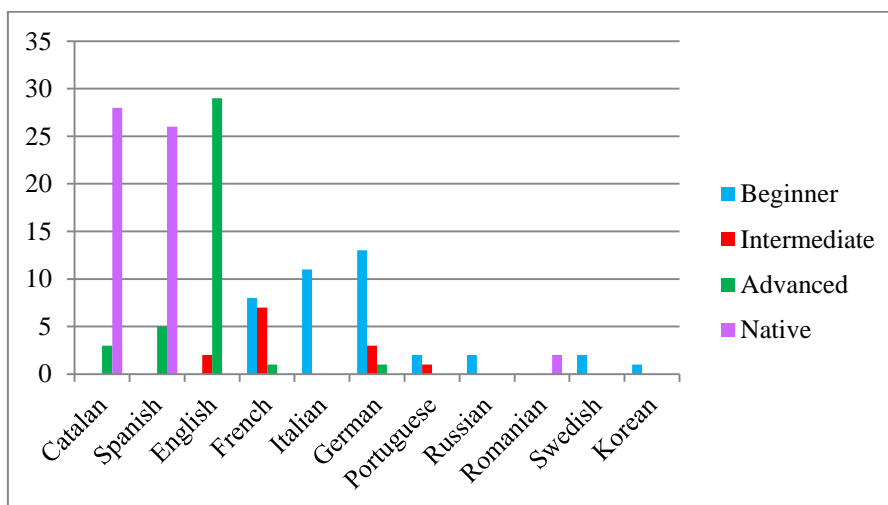
Nationality

Andorran	1
Romanian	2
Spanish	28

There are 28 students with the Spanish nationality, one with the Andorran nationality, and two with the Romanian one.

Figure 3

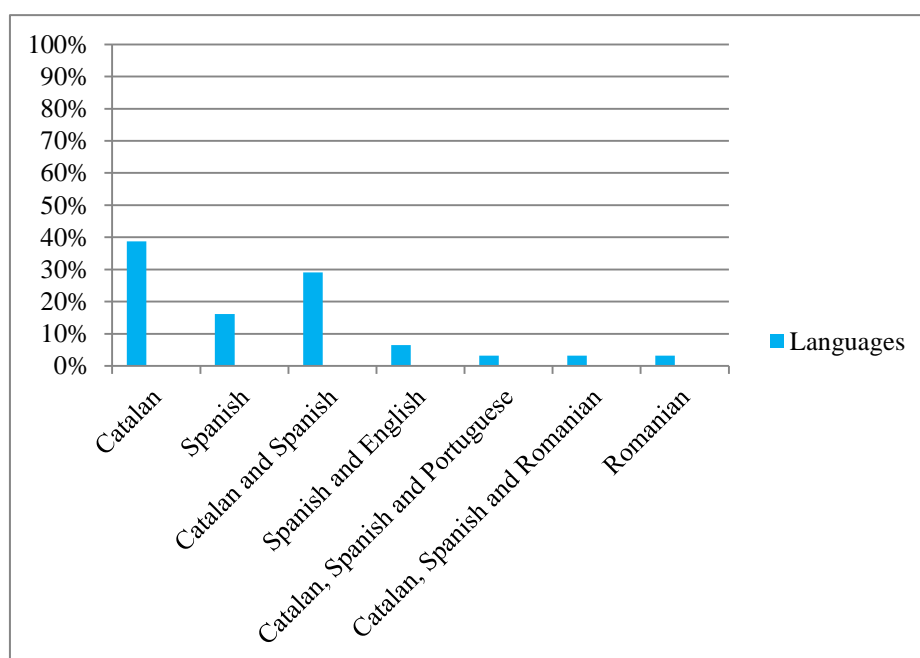
Languages spoken by the participants and reported level of proficiency



Most of the students answering this questionnaire are bilingual with Catalan and Spanish, with an advanced level of English and learning other languages such as French, Italian, German, Portuguese, and Russian. Moreover, there are two native speakers of Romanian, two people learning Swedish and one Korean. I can affirm that students participating in this study speak at least three languages fluently.

Figure 4

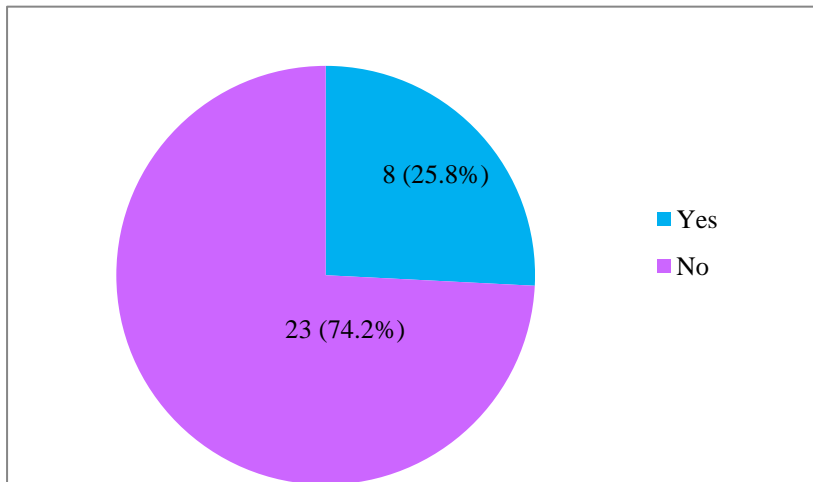
Languages spoken at home



The majority of the students (38.71%) speak Catalan, Spanish (16.13%) or both languages (29.03%) at home, representing the 83.87%. Romanian native speakers also speak this language and a minority speak Portuguese and English.

Figure 5

Erasmus mobility experience



The 25.8% of the students (8) have been into an Erasmus programme, while the 74.2 % (23) have not.

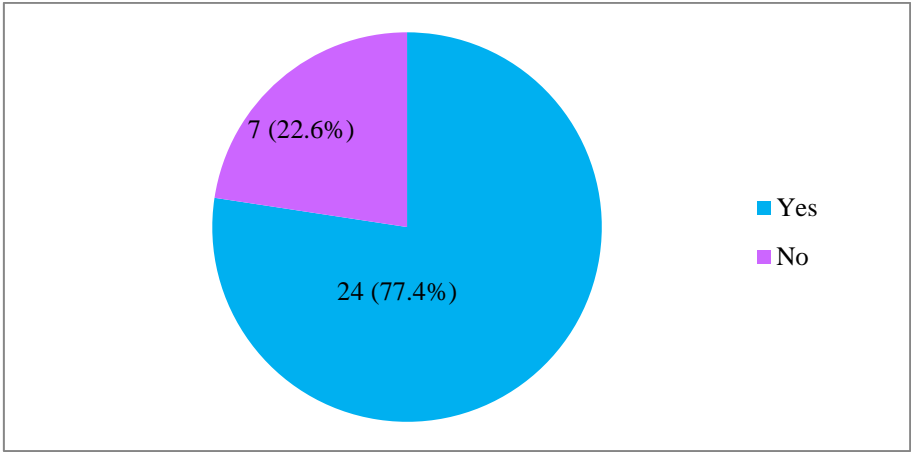
Table 3

Destinations of Erasmus

Finland	2
Germany	2
Poland and Germany	1
Sweden	2
USA	1

Figure 6

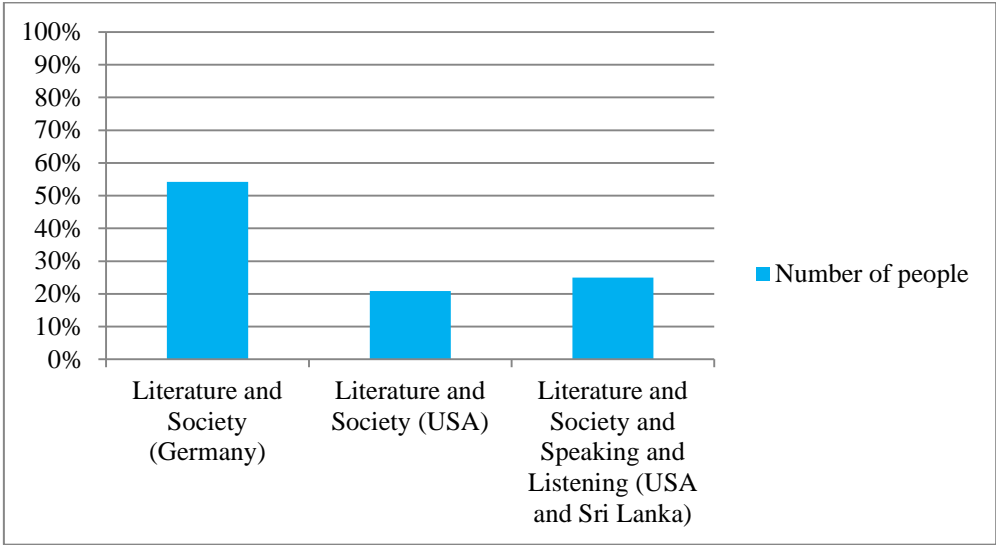
Participation in COIL activities



The 77.4% (24) have joined a COIL activity while the 22.6% (7) have not.

Figure 7

Subjects and countries of the COIL virtual exchange



13 students (54.17%) have participated in COIL on the subject of Literature and Society with students from Germany. Five students (20.83%) did it also in Literature and Society with students from the USA, and six (25%) did it in Literature and Society and Speaking and Listening with students from the USA and Sri Lanka.

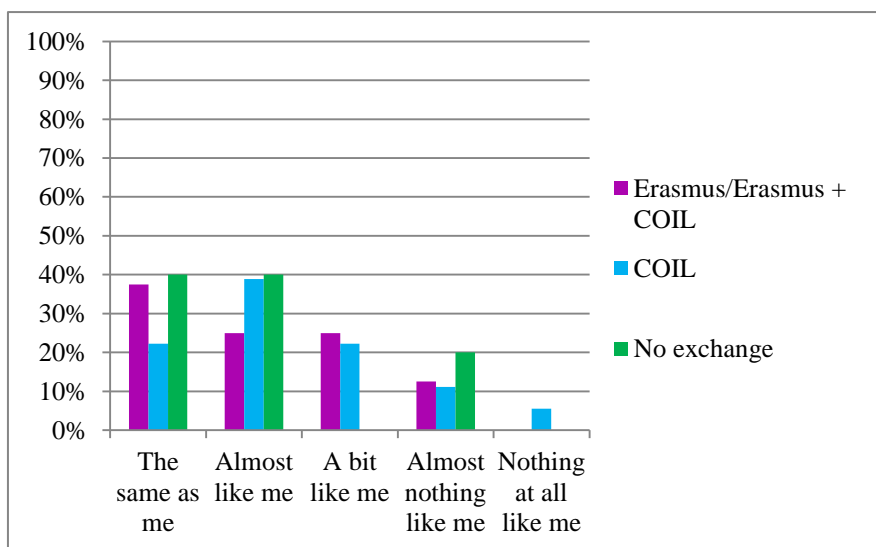
3.1. Analysis of the Quantitative Data

Regarding the quantitative data of my questionnaire, I have divided the questions into three groups. In the first group, the statements refer to intercultural aspects of global competence (3.1.1.), the second group is made by social-moral statements (3.1.2.), and the last group has statements related to activities about social issues (3.1.3.). The participants needed to say the degree of identification with the statements presented in a scale of one to five which one means the same as me and five means nothing at all like me.

3.1.1. Intercultural Aspects of Global Competence. In this section of the questionnaire, the students were requested to say to what extent the following statements described them on a scale of one (the same as me) to five (nothing at all like me). Each figure represents one statement.

Figure 8

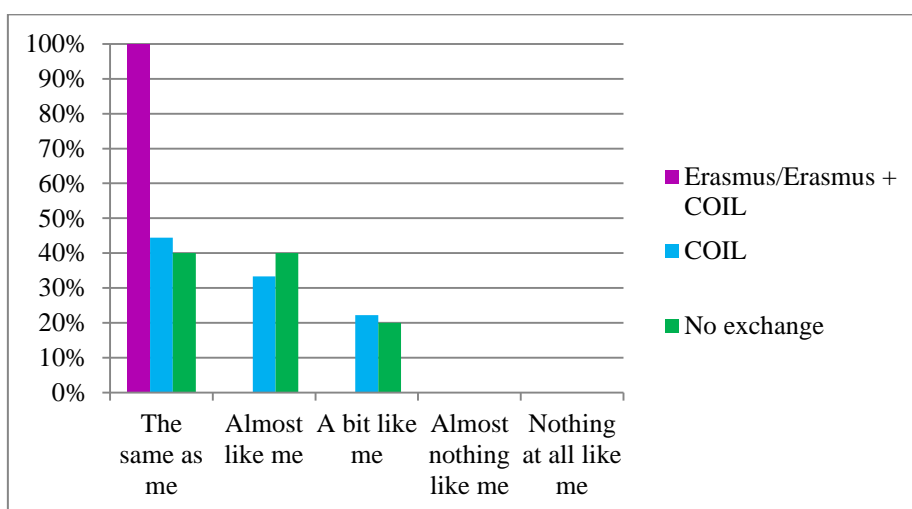
I can adapt to different situations even when I am stressed or under pressure.



In this first graphic, we can see that the 80% of students who have never joined any mobility programme say “the same as me/almost like me”, while students who have been into an Erasmus/ Erasmus + COIL say that with the 62.5 % and students who only have joined a COIL activity with the 61%. This example shows that students, who have been into an exchange programme, are more prudent and aware of their limitations. They probably have had the experience of having to adapt to different situations under pressure or stress and with their answers, they manifest that it is not easy at all. However, students who have never had exchange experience think that it can be easy. We could speculate that these students are less conscious of the difficulties that one might encounter in a new and different environment.

Figure 9

I am able to overcome the difficulties in interacting with people from other cultures.

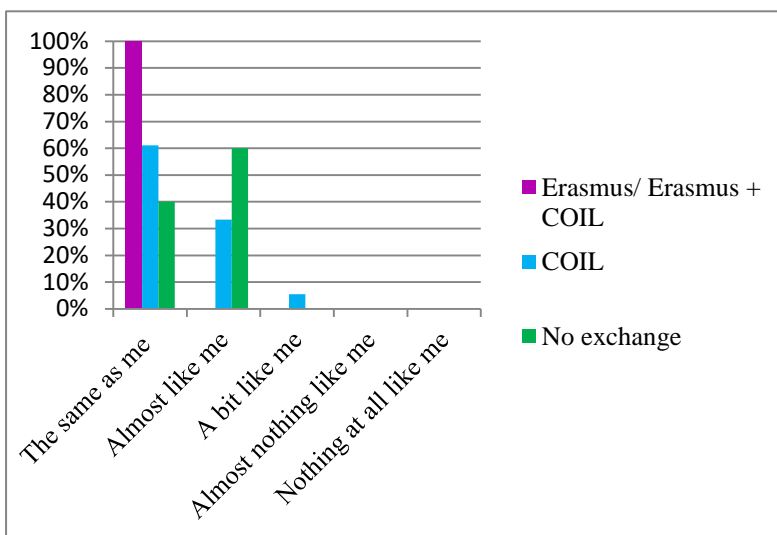


All the students who have participated in an international mobility programme feel that they can overcome the difficulties in interacting with people from other cultures. Concerning the students with COIL experience, 44% answered “the same as me” and 40% of those who have no exchange experience identified with the same measure. No

groups have answered “almost nothing like me/nothing at all like me”. It is essential to bear in mind that all participants in this study are in a degree in English studies and their level of proficiency in English, the most widely spread language in the world, might make them feel like they can communicate with people from any cultural background.

Figure 10

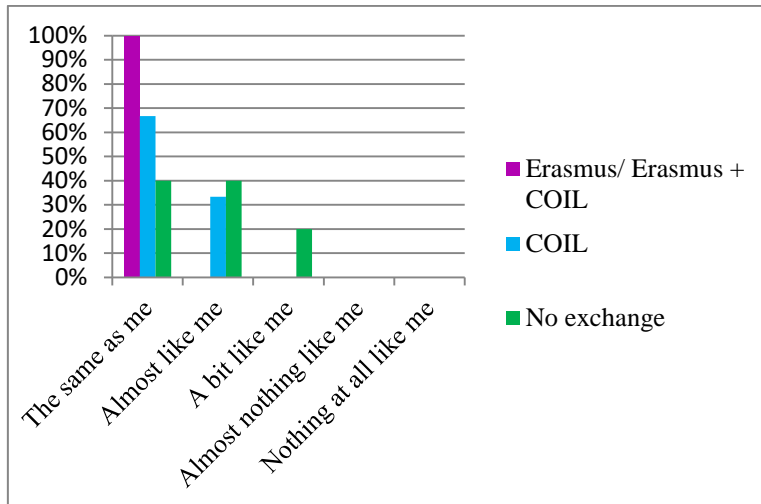
I want to learn how people live in different countries.



In this graphic, again 100% of students from the Erasmus/Erasmus + COIL group have said “the same as me”. In the COIL group, 60% said the same, and so did the 40% of the last group. We can see that the last group formed by people who have done no exchange, has said “almost like me” with the 60%.

Figure 11

I value the opinions of people from other cultures.

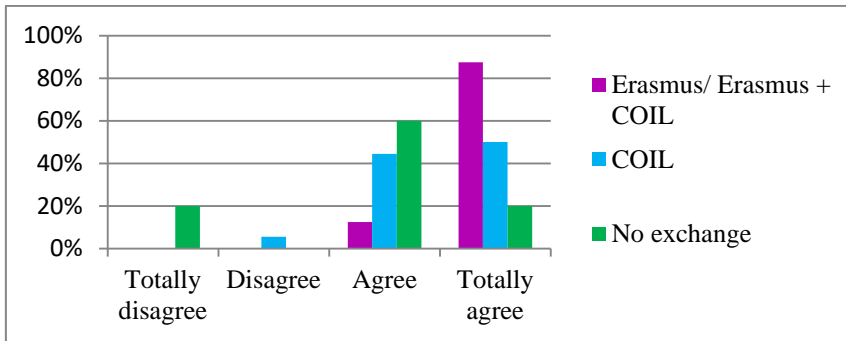


The 100% of the first group and the 67% of the second group have answered “the same as me” probably because they had interacted with people from other cultures and they respect them. The third group answered 40% and 40% “the same as me” and “almost like me”, while the 20% said “a bit like me” probably because they had never experienced it, or they are not willing to do it. It seems like students who have been involved in intercultural encounters, are willing to listen and value the opinions of people from different cultures.

3.1.2. Social-moral Statements. In this section, students were requested to choose their degree of agreement with the following statements about social-moral issues on a scale of one to four in which one means totally disagree and four means totally agree. Each of the following figures represents the results for one of the statements.

Figure 12

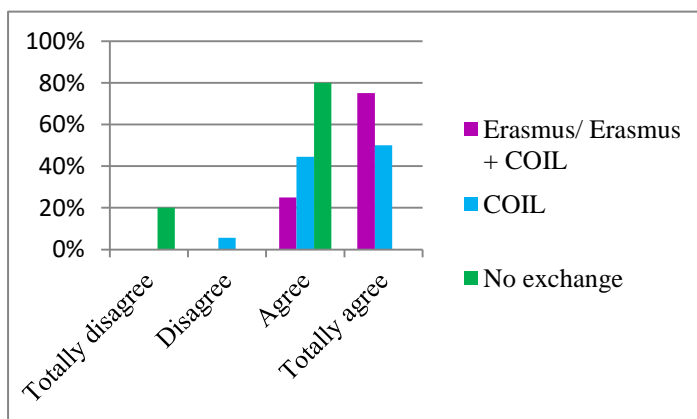
I consider myself a citizen of the world.



The Erasmus/Erasmus + COIL group totally agreed with the 87.50% and the 12.50% also agreed with it. Regarding the COIL group, 50% totally agreed, 44.44% agreed, and 5.56% disagreed with it. Finally, in the last group we can see that just the 20% totally agreed, while the 60% agreed and the 20% totally disagreed. It shows that the international mobility group always agrees with the statement (whether totally or simply agree). Similarly, the students who participated in a COIL activity (except for one student) also developed a sense of being a citizen of the world. For this reason, we could argue that participating in an exchange programme (whether virtual or not) makes students develop a sense of global identity.

Figure 13

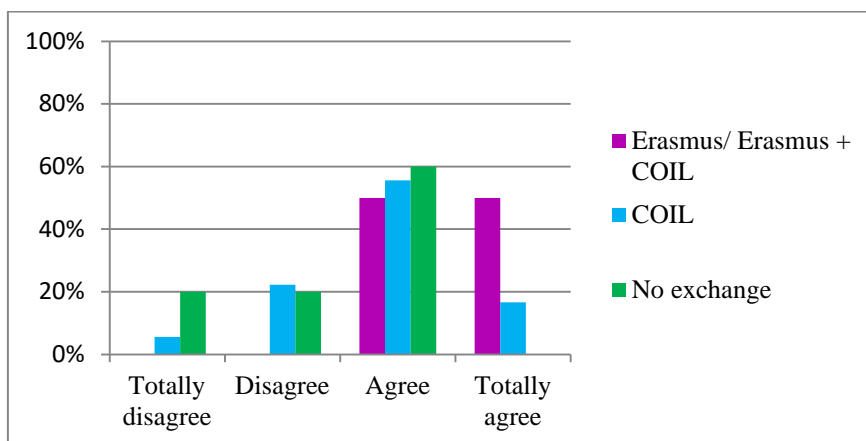
Migrants living in a country for several years should have the opportunity to vote in elections.



Once again, in this graphic, the first group of students has totally agreed or agreed with the statements. The majority of students from the COIL group have also totally agreed or agreed with it (with one exception). However, in the last group, while 80% have agreed with it, we do not have anyone who has totally agreed with it, and we have a 20% who have totally disagreed with the statement. This result is perhaps because of their lack of experience with people from other countries and/or because they have never been into the situation where they are the migrants in another country.

Figure 14

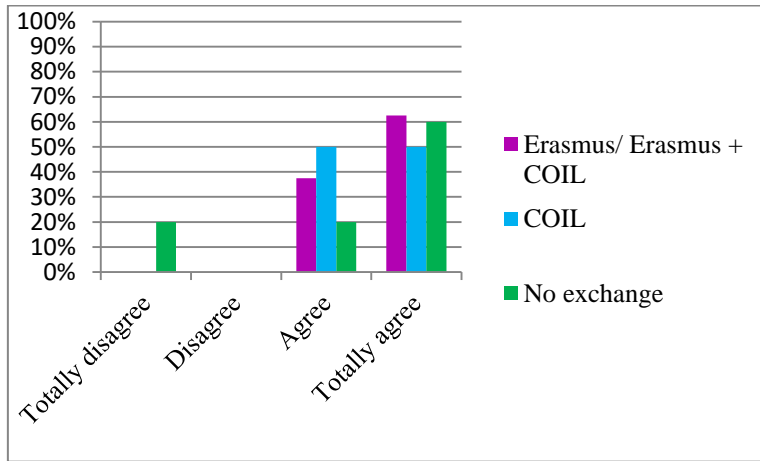
I think I can help solve some of the world's problems.



In this graphic, 50% of the first group totally agreed with the statement and the other 50% agreed with it. In the second group, just 16.67% totally agreed, most of the students (55.56%) agreed, 22.22% disagreed, and 5.56% totally disagreed. In the last group, 60% agreed, 20% disagreed, and the other 20% totally disagreed. Here we can also see that students who have participated in an exchange programme are the ones who mostly agree with it. Those who have not participated in any of these programmes seem to be more sceptical about their ability to change the world.

Figure 15

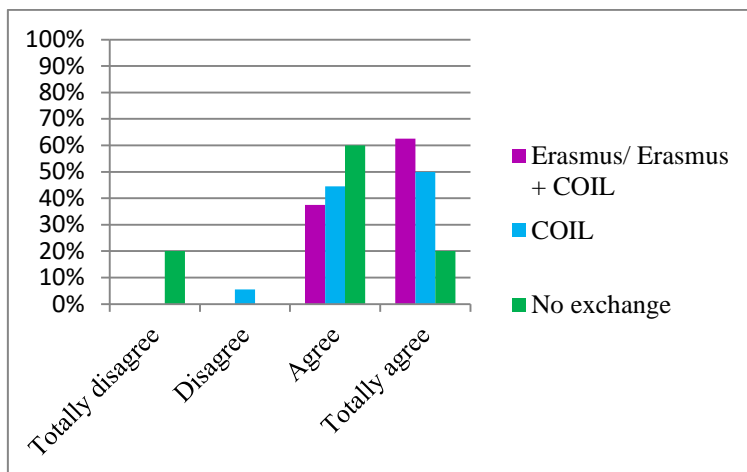
Caring for the environment is important to me.



The first and the second group agree or totally agree with this statement and the majority of the third group also does. However, there is a 20% of the last group who totally disagrees with it. It can be linked to the previous statement of “I think I can help solve some of the world’s problems” where this last group is more sceptical about it. They feel that they cannot help the environment so some of them do not care about it and do not contribute to activities to cooperate with it.

Figure 16

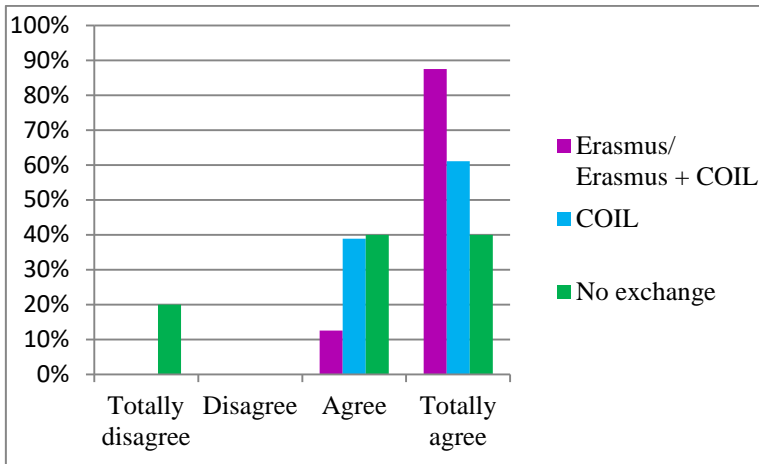
Migrants should have the opportunity to follow their customs and lifestyle.



In this statement, the first group agrees or totally agrees with it. In general, the COIL group also gives positive feedback even though there is a 5.56% who disagrees with it. Finally, in the last group, even though the majority of students agree or totally agree with it, there is again a 20% who totally disagree. This shows that students who have been into exchange programmes have had contact with people from other cultural backgrounds and they have heard their stories so they are more willing in respecting their customs and lifestyle. However, students who did not have direct contact with people from other cultures tend to be less respectful towards their traditions probably because of the lack of knowledge about their stories. Students who have been abroad perhaps have been in the situation where they wanted to follow their lifestyle so they sympathise with the migrants coming to their countries and wanting to follow their customs.

Figure 17

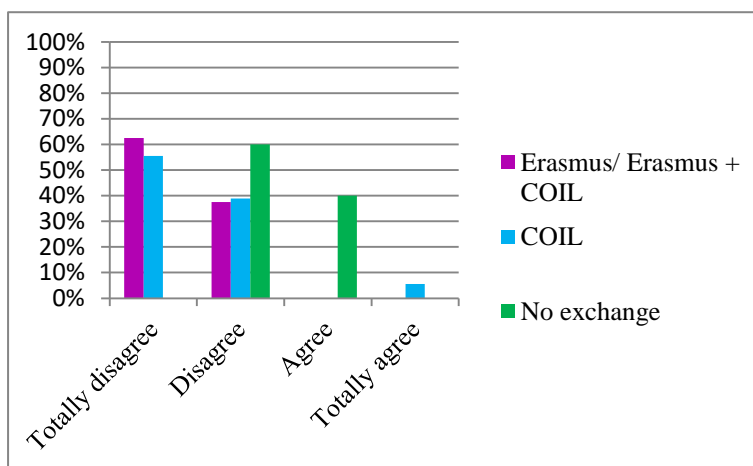
If I am talking to someone who does not speak my native language and there is a communication problem, I always find a way to overcome it (with gestures, explaining myself again, writing, etc.)



In this graphic, also probably because they have experienced it and succeeded, both groups, Erasmus/Erasmus + COIL and COIL have agreed or totally agreed with the statement. In the third group, most of the students have also agreed or totally agreed. It is important to bear in mind that all the participants are enrolled in a degree in English. This fact most likely makes the participants believe that they can interact with people who do not speak their native language despite not having intercultural experience in exchange programmes. However, there is still that 20% who totally disagreed and manifest a more pessimistic view.

Figure 18

Unemployed migrants should return to their home country.

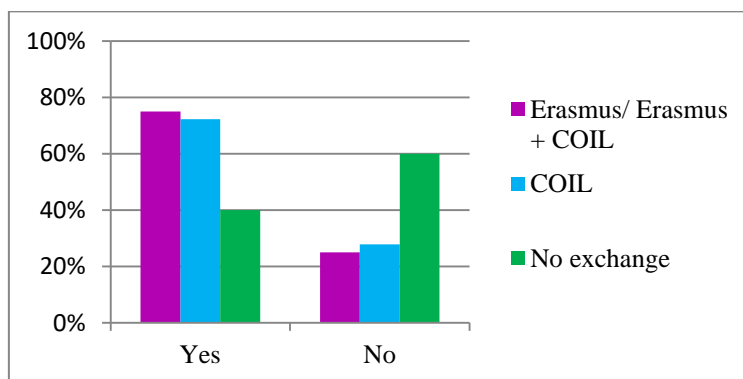


100% of students from the first group totally disagreed or disagreed with this statement. Students from the COIL group totally disagreed or disagreed except the 5.56% who totally agreed. Finally, in the group formed by students who have done neither of both activities, no one totally disagreed, the 60% disagreed, and 40% agreed with it. It could be argued that students from the third group tend to show a more discriminatory attitude towards migrants.

3.1.3. Engagement in Activities Regarding Social Issues. In this section of the questionnaire, the students were requested to say whether they followed some activities regarding social issues by answering yes or no. Each figure represents one statement.

Figure 19

I choose certain products for ethical or environmental reasons, even if they are more expensive.

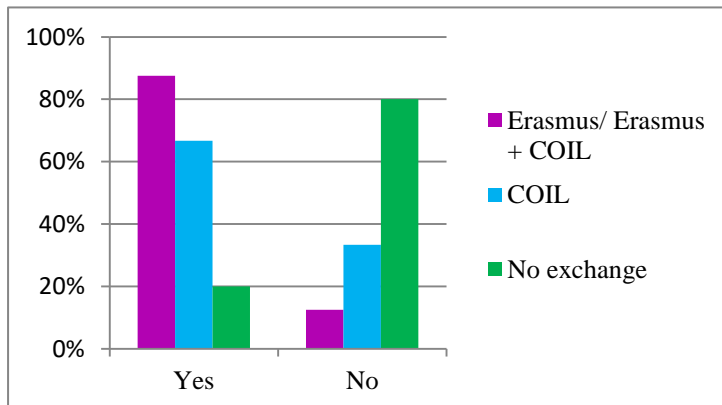


75% of the first group have answered “yes” against the 25% who have said “no”. In the second group, 72.22% said “yes” and 27.78% “no”, very similar to the first one. The third group has more answers in the “no” with the 60% against the 40% of “yes”. We

can interpret that a stay abroad or a COIL activity can make students develop more sensitivity towards the care of the environment.

Figure 20

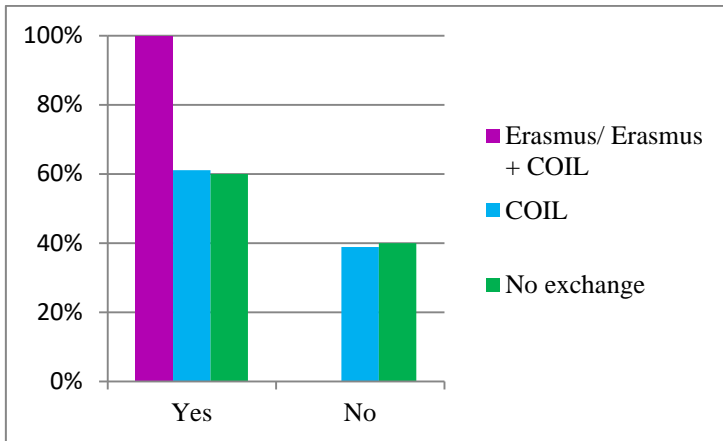
I participate in activities that promote equality between men and women.



In this graphic, we can see again the first and second groups with a higher percentage in “yes” than “no” while 80% of students from the third group have answered “no”. We can clearly observe that going abroad or participating in COIL makes students more conscious of the differences between men and women because of their contact with people from other cultural backgrounds. Students who have never been in any exchange programme perhaps think that it is not so necessary to promote equality maybe because they think there is not any kind of discrimination.

Figure 21

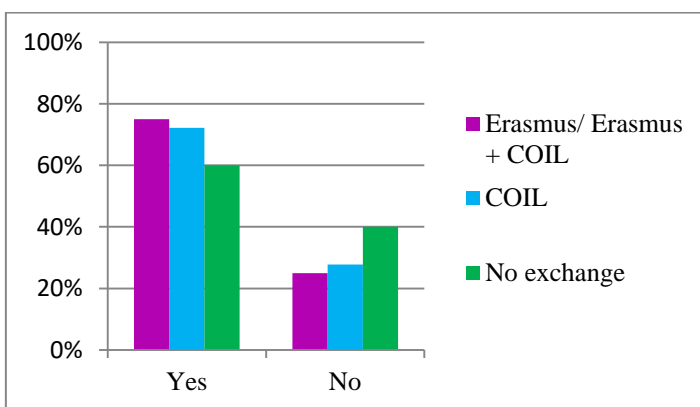
I reduce the energy we use at home to protect the environment.



100% of students who have been into an Erasmus/Erasmus + COIL and the 60% of COIL students have answered “yes”. These results agree with the previous statement “caring for the environment is important to me” where both groups had also mostly agreed with it. Moreover, the third group said “yes” with the 60% and “no” with the 40%. It also agrees with the answers in that previous statement where there was a percentage that totally disagreed with it.

Figure 22

I keep myself regularly informed about world social events.



Finally, in this graphic, the majority in all three groups have said “yes”. However, among those who answered “no”, the group of students with no experience in exchange

programmes is the one with the highest percentage (40%) against 27.78% of COIL students and 25% of Erasmus/Erasmus + COIL students. This means that participating in an international mobility programme and or a COIL activity awakens the students' interest in consulting information from international media. Nonetheless, in this question, we do not know whether the students consult the information from a limited range of web pages and media in English, or whether they also resort to local websites and media channels from different countries. In other words, it would be interesting to see whether the students with international experience, have an interest in accessing media and information in languages other than English and countries other than the ones where English is an official or dominant language.

3.2. Analysis of the Open-ended Questions

I asked two open-ended questions so students could explain to me a little bit about their experiences with people from other cultures and their experiences during the exchange programmes. By doing that, I could see whether their experiences were favourable and effective when acquiring global competence. Each section represents the answers to one of the following questions. In section 3.2.1., we can see how often students are in touch with people from a different cultural background, how they met, and whether they value their relationship. In section 3.2.2., we can observe the answers to the question about how the Erasmus programme or the COIL activity changed their view of other cultures and people.

3.2.1. Are You Often in Touch with People who Have a Different Cultural Background than You? How did You Meet? Do You Value Your Relationship? All people who have answered that have been into an Erasmus are still in touch with people they have met during their Erasmus experience. They have met people from other

countries and they value their friendship. They keep in touch regularly through social media. They agree that it is an experience where everyone goes there willing to meet people, and they grow up together accepting their similarities and differences. Here there is an example of an answer I received:

“People I met during the Erasmus are currently part of my close circle of friends. I would say that Erasmus has been the experience that has allowed me to meet more people from all over the world. They are so different from me that I would never think that with any of them we would become so friendly and connect at this level, but in the end, people who go to an Erasmus are people who like to get to know different cultures, ways of seeing and understanding life, who want to meet people from all over the world and have fun, and who above all have an open mind.”

On the other hand, 24 participants (out of 31) have answered that they have joined a COIL activity. Among these 24 participants, 23 of them are not in touch with people they met during the COIL activity. Just one of them does. However, when it comes to people from different cultural backgrounds they have met at university, at work or in their neighbourhood, or during a summer period exchange, 14 out of 23 declare to keep in touch with them regularly. They value their friendship and they learn from each other’s cultures. This might indicate that face-to-face communication with people from other cultures has more potential in making relationships last over time. A virtual exchange might be an opportunity to develop intercultural competence at a specific moment in time but the relationships created during those activities do not seem to last over time.

3.2.2. To What Extent Has the Erasmus Programme or COIL Activity Changed Your View of other Cultures and People? Regarding the Erasmus experiences, all people who have been into an Erasmus have answered giving positive feedback. They have said that Erasmus made them eliminate prejudices, become more mature, wait to meet people before judging them, and recognize racist words or actions they did not notice before. One example of an answer is the following one:

“I will give you an example, before I left for Erasmus, I did not know much about South Korea or Asia in general, and during Erasmus I met my roommate and currently a friend of mine from South Korea. I learned so much from her, her culture, and her way of understanding life, and in the end, we realized that we are not so different even though we live in such different places. In addition, I also noticed thanks to friends I met during the Erasmus, comments that we may not realize but can hurt. Apart from that, I have met people from many other countries and all of them have taught me and explained their cultures and traditions. You go to an Erasmus as one person and return as another one more mature and open-minded.”

Regarding COIL experiences, not everyone answered this question, but in general, they answered that it is a good way to help break stereotypes and have a little bit of contact with people from different parts of the world and with different cultures. As I mentioned before, just one person that also has been into an Erasmus answered that they are still in touch with people from the COIL and this is their answer:

“The COIL also seemed to me a very enriching and different experience. ‘My team’ was made up of four Germans and two Catalans; however one of the

Germans was of Muslim origin and one Catalan as well. I remember one day when they explained typical Muslim traditions and festivities during an activity, and at one point I thought, ‘What a shame not to know this before they told me, how interesting it is!’ My group could not have been more multicultural, and together we also created a very close bond. I think activities like this are really cool and it would be nice to do more activities like that, my experience could not have been better. We became friends with one of the German girls, we still talk and we will see each other soon!”

We can see that participating in a COIL activity has a positive impact on students but almost all of them lose contact with the people they have met once they finish the activity. However, the Erasmus students have a long lasting relationship with people they have met during their stays probably because of the amount of time spent with them face-to-face and the intensity of the experiences lived abroad. An effective solution for the COIL activity perhaps would be to keep offering these activities during the whole degree with the same COIL buddies so the students can create deeper bonds with their exchange partners.

4. Discussion

Based on the results of my study, the students who have been into an Erasmus (which also includes students who have participated in a COIL activity) and those who have only participated in a COIL activity tend to have the same type of opinions and answer in the same way. Students who have been into Erasmus or joined both Erasmus and COIL are the ones that show the highest degree of global competence. All of them have given a positive answer regarding overcoming difficulties when interacting with people

from other cultures and being interested in knowing more about other cultures. Also, they all have agreed on the statement “I consider myself a citizen of the world” while some students who have just joined a COIL activity or had done neither of both programmes have disagreed with it.

Then, concerning the moral statements I wrote in the questionnaire, about migrants and the environment, some students who have completed a COIL activity (group 2) or have not been into any kind of exchange programme (group 3) manifest discriminatory attitudes. Some of them seem to not care for the environment, or disagree with the fact that migrants should be allowed to follow their customs and lifestyle or vote in elections. On the other hand, none of the students who have been into an Erasmus/Erasmus and COIL have objected to these statements, and their responses show an open-minded and tolerant attitude towards the same moral issues.

In the last section of the quantitative data, where students were asked about their engagement in social activities, there is more variation in the students’ answers. However, we can observe a tendency among students who have been into an Erasmus and/or participated in a COIL activity to use products that are ethical even if they are more expensive, to participate in activities that promote equality among men and women, to reduce the energy used at home to protect the environment, and they seem to keep themselves regularly informed about world social events. In the same section about engagement in social activities, students who have never participated in a mobility programme or COIL activity mostly reported not engaging with these actions.

Finally, regarding the open-ended questions, students who participated in an Erasmus programme and/or COIL activity (groups 1 and 2) gave positive responses about their

experiences during their intercultural exchanges. All the students talking about Erasmus affirmed that are still in touch with their international friends while in COIL experiences just one person declared that they are still talking to their buddies and planning on meeting some of them. This set of answers brought me to the conclusion that what works best to develop the global competence is going into an Erasmus because students live together with people from other cultural backgrounds for a long period of time and share their points of view and opinions so they open their minds which makes them less judgemental and able to listen and value other cultures' opinions. However, for students who cannot afford to go into an Erasmus or simply do not feel like spending a period outside their home country, the COIL virtual exchange is an alternative to broaden their relationships and interact with people from different cultural backgrounds. They also have the opportunity to meet new people and work as a team so they exchange opinions and find common ground with people from other cultures. As I said before, nevertheless, the COIL activity should be performed during the whole academic course or during the whole degree several times to help students acquire higher global competence and to help them form closer and lasting relationships with their exchange partners. This would ensure that the development of global competence is not limited to the COIL activity *per se* but expands itself in time and space. If students develop more meaningful relations with their COIL partners, they might continue interacting outside of the COIL activity and for a longer period of time.

5. Conclusion

In my project, I analysed university students who have been into an Erasmus, university students who have joined a COIL exchange activity, and university students who have

done neither of both programmes. Also, I explained the theoretical framework of these programmes mentioned before and the definition of global competence with its educational implications. Next, I sent university students the PISA questionnaire (2018) I adapted and I analysed their answers depending on whether they were closed questions or open-ended.

In conclusion, my study about global competence among university students from an English Degree at a university in Catalonia shows that participating in an Erasmus programme does seem to increase the global competence of students. According to the definitions of global competence provided in the theoretical framework (PISA, 2018), they perceive themselves as having the ability to interact with people from other countries and cultures respecting them. They are also aware of social and environmental issues, and they are against racism, any kind of discrimination, and violence. We can see that in the students' answers to questions in sections 3.1.1., 3.1.2., and 3.1.3.

Referring to students who have only joined a COIL activity, some of them also showed a high degree of global competence but the opinions are more diverse than the ones in the first group. However, from the results that I obtained, I dare to say that it is a good option to start internationalising students because they have contact with people living in other countries. They share their stories and traditions so they can learn about other cultures and become more self-conscious about tolerance and respect. Ideally, these activities should be sustained during the students' study programme to perpetuate the students' relationships and engagements in the intercultural exchange over time.

Finally, the group formed by students who have never done an exchange activity is the one showing a lower degree of global competence. We can see that in some of their

responses: even though some of them show respect towards the environment and tolerance towards migrants, we have found a higher number of negative answers than in the other groups showing a lower knowledge about social problems, a slightly higher level of racism and discrimination, and they perceive themselves being less able to adapt to new situations. It is crucial to bear in mind that the number of students in this group is very low, most of the students in the degree have already participated in COIL or mobility programmes. For this reason, the results of this study need to be treated with care. Despite we see a tendency; we would need a higher number of participants in the third group to be able to generalise.

Students at an English degree should be internationalized and sensitized about international issues. They should have high global competence because in the future they will probably work with people from other cultural backgrounds and participate in international activities. This means that the degree in English Studies should keep offering opportunities for intercultural exchange like these. In fact, the results of this project show that the study programme in which the participants of this study are enrolled already promotes the development of global competence among its students. Those who manifest to have a lower degree of sensitivity towards other cultures are a minority.

During my study, I had limitations because I focused on students from one English degree at one Catalan university. Maybe the answers would have been different if I had asked other students from other degrees or universities. English students start on the basis that they already know English, are in contact with teachers from other nationalities and learn history and literature from different countries so they should be more globalised than perhaps pupils that are in a less internationalised context.

Moreover, this study could also change if it was done in universities in other countries where they are more or less in contact with international students. I received 31 answers and, as I said, I realized that nowadays almost everyone has participated in a COIL activity or has been into an Erasmus so it was difficult for me to find people who have never done any exchange. In the future, these people will probably disappear because everyone will have done at least one of these mobility activities since they are increasing in universities with a good purpose.

To sum up, having a high level of global competence should be crucial for everyone to live in a more egalitarian, tolerant, and harmonious society. Globally competent people can understand different views of the world, respect, and value other cultures, and communicate successfully with people who live different realities. These individuals fight for a more sustainable and respectful world, so developing global competence among students in universities through intercultural exchange programmes (such as Erasmus or COIL) is a way in which universities can contribute building a better society.

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