Language education for Critical Global Citizenship through Virtual Exchange (VE)

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Talking points

- The context:

    - How to prepare young people for life and work in a globally interconnected world
    - In societies that are becoming increasingly diverse, how best to prepare students as citizens who can engage with complex issues in a way that reflects equity and justice (Steyn, 2023, p.86)

- Virtual Exchange (VE) challenges: inclusion and exclusion

- VE through the equality, diversity and inclusion lens

- Critical VE (CVE): a framework

- The role of Critical Digital Literacy and Critical Diversity Literacy

- Examples

- Implications for research and practice

Virtual Exchange …

Virtual Exchange …

· "pedagogically-structured online collaborative learning between groups of students in different cultural contexts and/or geographical locations" (O'Dowd, 2018)

· combines the deep impact of intercultural dialogue with the broad reach of digital technology (EVOLVE Project Team, 2019)

· a strong catalyst in advancing the internationalisation of HE curricula, known as Internationalisation at Home (IaH) (Beelen and Jones, 2015)

· can prepare for, deepen or extend or even emulate physical exchanges

· prepares students for the globalised digital workplace (Crawford, 2021)

· promotes transversal skills (problem solving, teamwork, etc.) which feature high on the agenda of businesses and organisations confronted with VUCA

But …

- VE practices are still electives available to some students only (EVOLVE Project Team, 2020)
- VE-based IaH is not inherently equitable and inclusive (O'Dowd & Beelen, 2021)
- can reproduce colonial power dynamics
- can perpetuate existing exclusion/inequalities, even create new, digital inequalities (Satar & Hauck, 2022)
- prone to Western hegemonies (Helm, 2020)
- the terms under which the exchanges take place, can be influenced by
    - the teaching partners' academic positions
    - their linguistic competence, the linguistic competence of their students
    - access to and experience in the use of technology
    - institutional constraints (lack of support, acknowledgement, rewards)
    - gender, race, age
    - geo-political issues

(Helm, 2020)

And ...

- underestimation of political and social dimension of technology use

- lack of awareness of the power dynamics created by educational practices

- prioritisation of certain knowledges

- reinforcement of social and epistemic injustices

(Selwyn & Faber, 2013)

→   ***we need yet to find out more about how processes of inclusion and exclusion play out in virtual settings*** (O'Dowd & Beelen, 2021)

VE through the equality, diversity and inclusion lens (Kastler & Lewis, 2021)

- equitable partnerships with partners from all demographics including minority-serving institutions and institutions in countries where the main language of instruction is not English

- prioritising the creation of inclusive resources, equitable training and support for exchange implementers

- prioritising activities that explore social challenges and social justice topics as a part of the exchange dialogue

- exchanges designed to serve all participating communities, rather than the community of the leading partner

> finding common issues to tackle

> customising exchange projects to local realities

- careful consideration of technology choices to ensure equitable access during VE implementation

Critical VE: a framework

- use of low-bandwidth technologies

- exchanges which specifically target student populations traditionally underrepresented in study abroad and/or IaH programmes (from low socio-economic backgrounds)

- alignment of VE project outcomes with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

- inclusion of local outreach activities, i.e. student contact with local businesses, NGOs, and non-profit organisations as part of VE projects
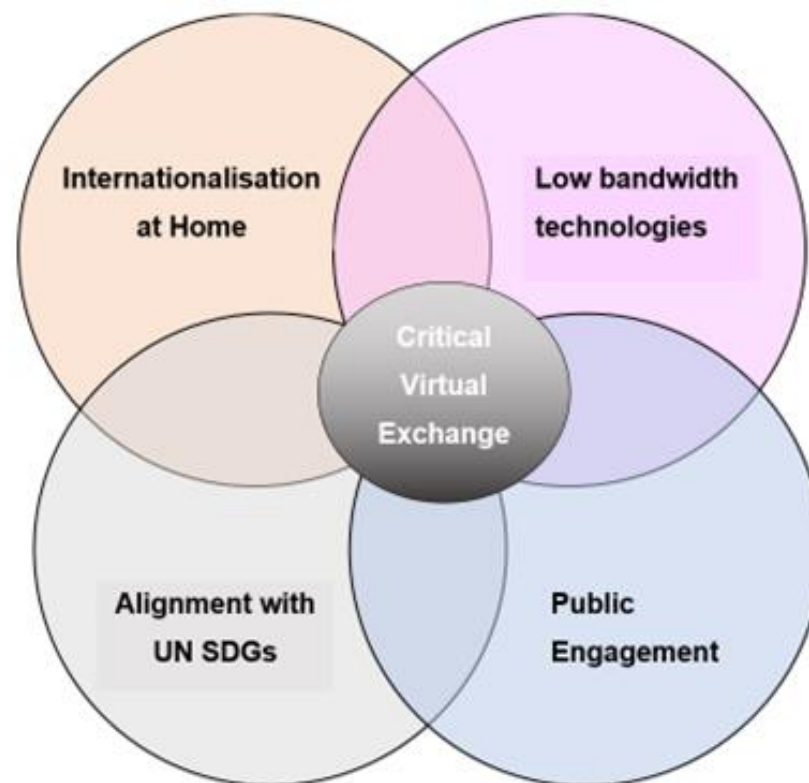
Critical VE: a framework

Critical Virtual Exchange – A Framework (Hauck, 2023)
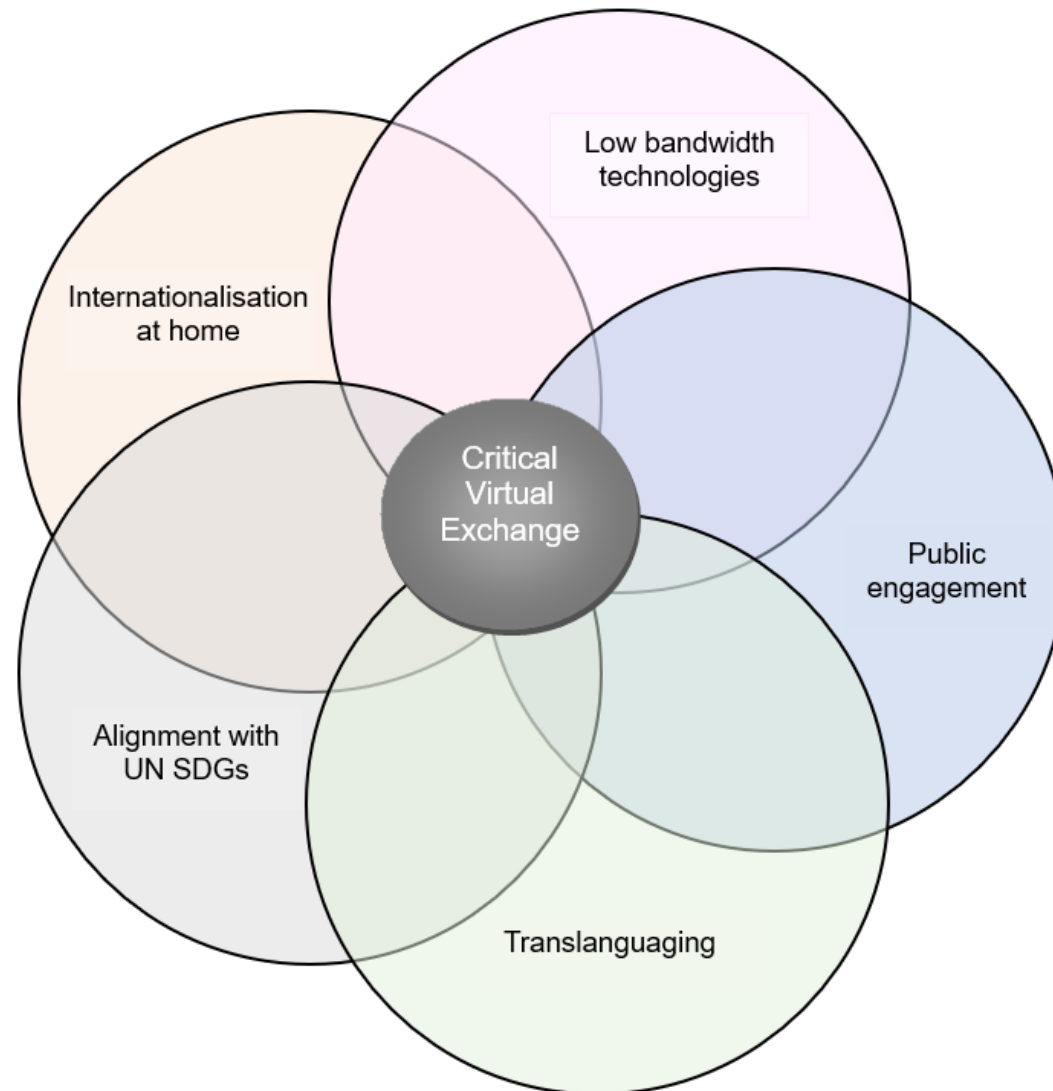
- an instantiation of Critical Global Citizenship Education (Andreotti, 2014)

  → has notions of power, voice, and difference at its core

  → requires critical engagement, reflexivity, and re-learning

- a vehicle for action, public engagement, and socio-political change

- addresses social justice and inclusion at institutional and individual level

Critical VE informed by Critical CALL

[E]ngagement with issues of power and inequality and an understanding of how our classrooms and conversations are related to broader social, cultural and political challenges (Helm, 2015)

The world is inequitably multilingual and technologized (Gleason & Suvorov, 2019)

Critical VE informed by Critical Digital Literacy

- examines how the operation of power within digital contexts shapes knowledge, identities, social relations, and formations in ways that privilege some and marginalize others' (Darvin, 2017)

- equips learners with the tools to examine the linguistic and non-linguistic features of digital media, to identify their embedded biases and assumptions, in order to access the truth (Darvin, 2017)

- leverages digital technologies for social justice-oriented action and change (Darvin, 2020)

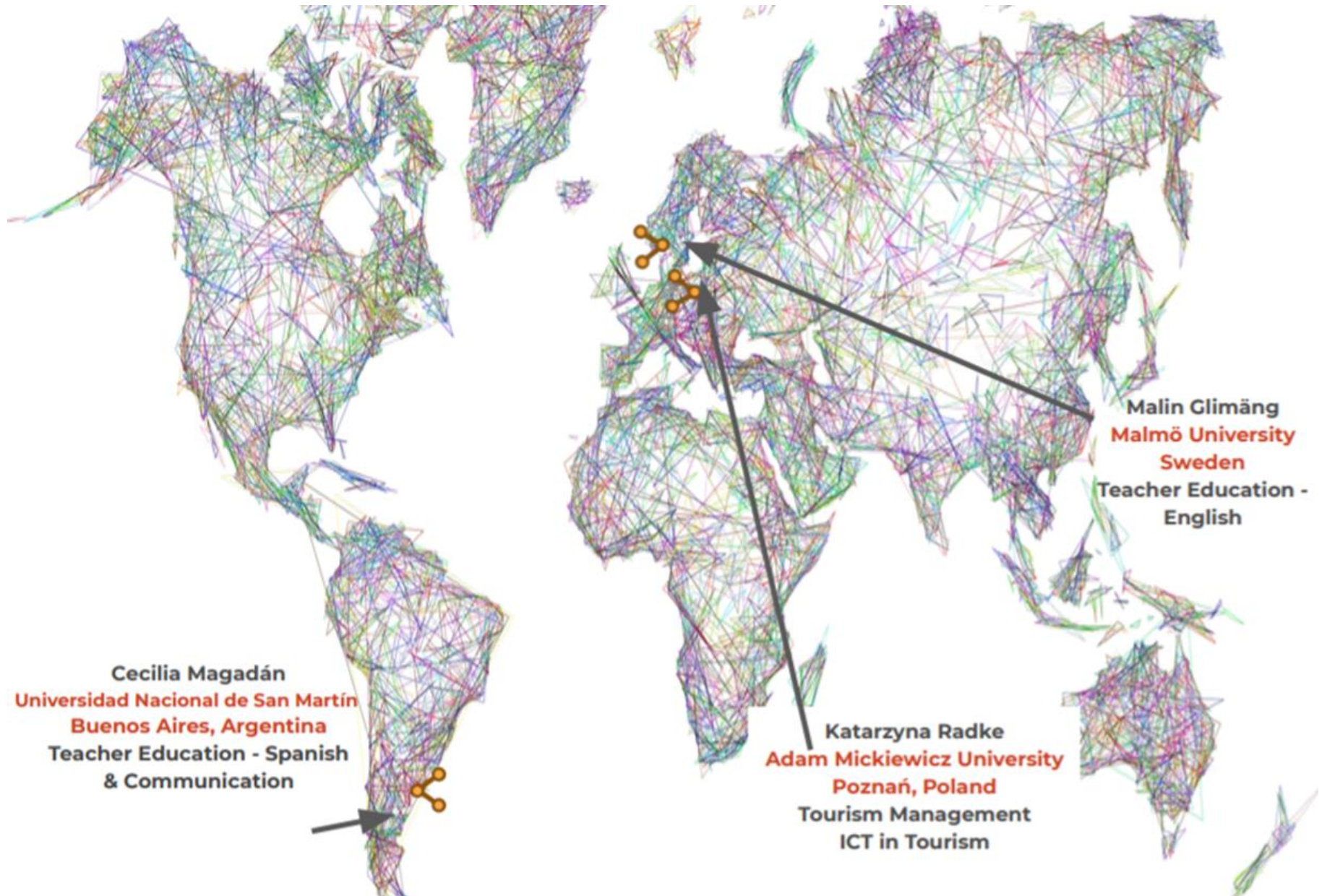# Critical VE informed by Critical Diversity Literacy (Steyn et al., 2023)

- enables a person to 'read' prevailing social relations as one would [read] a text, recognizing the ways in which possibilities are being opened up or closed down depending on where we are positioned in a specific social context

- encourages an anti-essentialist, power-conscious awareness of difference beyond notions of citizenship (Steyn & Vanyoro, 2023)

- the CDL framework (Steyn, 2015) considers:

  intersectionality, social identities and positioning, historical awareness, diversity vocabulary, the coded nature of hegemonic power and personal engagement

> promotes an approach to multicultural citizenship that focuses on social justice

> pushes us to recognise the lived experience of citizenship 'from below'

Agency

- critical consciousness and agency (Freire, 1970)

  - **ability to read the world critically**

  - **ability to act in the world to change it**

  → critical agency (Giroux, 1983; McLaren, 1995)

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First iteration

This project encourages you to develop your critical, creative and digital skills by collaboratively **studying the city as text**.

The focus is on critical multiliteracy and the promotion of intercultural communicative competence through first-hand experience of virtual exchange in cross-cultural groups.

The task sequence involves popular, critical and personal studies of place. You will explore the potentials of multimodal meaning-making by **comparing and discussing official visitor websites depicting your respective cities**.

First you **focus on the particular stories and values that these websites promote**.

Then you select and share some **examples of how your cities figure in the news and in aesthetic texts such as literature, poetry or music**.

The aim is to **identify some controversial issue specifically linked to your city**. This could concern topics such as **segregation, poverty, crime, different kinds of prejudice, pollution**, etc.

The project is linked to the United Nations' sustainable development Goal 11: "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable."
https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/envision2030-goal11.html

Second iteration

SDG 11: *"Make cities [...] inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable"*

VE Question: How is goal 11 addressed in your city? Where are opportunities/challenges?

VE task: Co-creating public **sustainability campaigns** in VE teams

Investigating the world → Recognizing perspectives → Negotiating ideas → Taking action (OECD, 2018)

This kind of project can really open up other ways of thinking. You see the bigger picture and that you are actually a global citizen.

MULTIMODAL PRODUCTIONS/CAMPAIGNS

Reading the City

PROJECT POTENTIALS & AIMS

→ Gaining reflexive intercultural insights about urban lifestyles, sustainability, and global issues (processed through e-diaries)

→ Learning to relearn through dialogue

→ interrogating global dimensions of privilege and power (Andreotti, 2006, Soft vs Critical GCE)

→ opening up for 'disorienting dilemmas' and transformative learning (Mezirow et al, 2009)

→ 'disrupting' learning and practice for critical intercultural awareness (Dervin et al, 2020)

Reading the City

Task sequence over 6 weeks

1. Introductions

2. **EXPLORING** Agenda 2030 and SDG11, analyzing campaigns

3. **PLANNING** an educational campaigns about sustainable development

4. **DESIGNING AND CO-CREATING** a campaign relevant in all three cities

5. **DISPLAYING** the work and providing peer feedback

6. **EVALUATING** the project

Example 2 : Youth Entrepreneurship for Society project (Sevilla-Pavón & Nicolau, 2020)

- A model for new local employer/HE collaborations to support employability skills through CVE
- Business Communication and Management students from CUT (Cyprus) and UV (Spain) worked together
- Aim: to foster social entrepreneurship in ESP settings and students' 21stcentury skills (linguistic, intercultural, digital, teamwork)

- Via the HE engagement offices in both HEIs the students worked with local associations/NGOs
  - discussed and proposed solutions to their local communities' social issues
  - presented their own initiatives (digital campaigns and elevator pitches) in an online social entrepreneurship fair

Example 3: Preparing to work with Ukrainian students

- VE brought together teachers from across Europe who are working with or preparing to work with Ukrainian students in their classes who have been displaced by the war.

- Participants learnt from invited expert speakers about the specific needs of Ukrainian students and how to support their learning.

- Topics:

    - teaching advice from experienced teachers of Ukrainian students

    - information about trauma-informed teaching

    - social and cultural background and needs of Ukrainian learners

    - perspectives from Ukrainian scholars and teachers

- Collaboration and community building with colleagues across Europe for ongoing support and resource-sharing after VE completion

- Outcome: a set of resources for supporting teachers of Ukrainian refugees

VALIANT: Preparing to work with Ukrainian students

Photo by **Daniele Franchi** on **Unsplash**

Supporting Teachers of Ukrainian Refugees

Resources for responsive teaching

Created December 2022

Aim: to research the evolving field of Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) in Higher Education (HE) through a Global South-North project, focusing on female voices.

Implications for research and practice: CVE …

- is an inclusive, sustainable, and scalable education strategy

- can instigate transformative change at individual, institutional and – potentially - policy level

- can create new legacies based on an understanding of research as "living knowledge" (Facer & Enright, 2016): praxis knowledge that connects lived experiences on the ground - by students, educators, administrators and decision-makers involved in CVE - with the body of global critical knowledge in international and intercultural education

- enriches VE research, but also effects real change globally through student CVE projects

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