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Internationalization, community, and pandemic pedagogies: a reflective case study of a highly international university during the COVID-19 pandemic

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ABSTRACT: Many higher education institutions (HEIs) relied on established instructional models, such as Community of Inquiry (CoI), to inform teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. This reflective case study at a highly international European university finds five areas wherein internationalization has shaped teaching and learning during the pandemic, and which are undertheorized in existing models: mobility and basic needs, instructional modalities, vulnerability, language, and university alliances. Accounting for these areas enables better analysis of pandemic experiences, and when combined with CoI and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, can foster more inclusive and effective learning experiences for students and faculty.

KEYWORDS: internationalization; pandemic pedagogy, vulnerability; Community of Inquiry (CoI); Univeral Design for Learning (UDL)

INTRODUCTION

Teaching and learning practitioners and scholars have responded to and interpreted the COVID-19 pandemic with reference to a decades-long, ongoing digital transformation of higher education institutions (HEIs). However, another dec-

ades-long transformation has been reshaping HEIs, even if its significance has been temporarily neglected: internationalization (Rumbley, Altbach, and Reisberg, 2012). Universities in many countries have become highly international in respect to their students, faculty, research, curricula, language of research and instruction, strategies, and processes. To put it succinctly, the institutions that have confronted the pandemic are significantly different than their predecessors due to internationalization. There is also emerging evidence that the pandemic has caused acute challenges for HEIs that are more internationally oriented, ranging from economic difficulties, curtailed mobility, the inability to carry out independent and joint research, and the suspension of study abroad activities (Samifanni, 2020; Jena, 2020).

Therefore, understanding the challenge of teaching and learning at HEIs during the pandemic must consider the long-term processes of internationalization and how they have changed the nature of university communities. This is difficult, as international community is undertheorized in the scholarship on teaching and learning (SOTL), especially in existing models of online and blended teaching that informed pandemic responses at many institutions, such as Community of Inquiry (CoI). Accordingly, this article argues that internationalization requires improved understandings of CoI and other models of digitally mediated teaching and learning, taking account of the specificities of community members and their (often overlooked) vulnerabilities.

This article addresses these challenges, first, through a conceptual examination of the limitations of the CoI model in contexts of internationalization. Then, through a collaborative autoethnographic (CAE) case study of three scholar-practitioners' experiences at a highly international European university, it analyzes mobility and basic needs uncertainty, the consequences of differential mobility for hybrid and other instructional modes, vulnerability, language, and network courses in university alliances. By treating the international as central, rather than as marginal in these experiences, the article aims to better account for the pandemic teaching and learning at HEIs that already had high degrees of internationalization before 2020; explore the possibilities of internationalization for HEIs in a medium-term future that continues to be clouded by the uncertainties of COVID-19; and provide insights on inclusive teaching in HEI environments through the application of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles.

INTERNATIONALIZATION AND THE LIMITATIONS OF THE COMMUNITY OF INQUIRY (COI) FRAMEWORK: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Assessing teaching and learning experiences during the pandemic and charting future adjustments is not possible without considering the internationalization of higher education in the past three decades. National, sector, university, and department level actors have pursued internationalization policies for various reasons, including perceptions of quality and prestige, the demands of stakeholders, and the potential economic benefits for HEIs and broader economies (Bound et al., 2021). In the process, they have transformed the purpose, functions, and delivery of higher education (Luxon and Peelo, 2009; Knight, 2003). Internationalization is a multi-faceted process,

with multiple effects on teaching and learning. The most easily quantifiable marker of internationalization is student mobility, e.g., the number of students participating in exchanges or the number of degrees earned by foreign nationals (Nuffic, 2020; Universities UK, 2021). However, administrators and governments frequently promote international researcher and staff mobility, project and research collaboration, and jointly offered degree programs. The changing composition of student and staff bodies has had both intentional and sometimes inadvertent effects on classroom experiences, from learning activities to co-constructed values, competencies, ethos, and processes (Qiang, 2003 in Luxon and Peelo, 2009). There is a growing body of scholarly research and best practices on everything from how to internationalize curricula (Leask, 2015) to how to support students and faculty in increasingly international learning environments (Garson, Bourassa, and Odgers, 2016; Lomer and Anthony-Okeke, 2019; Pleschová, 2020), and international student and faculty's engagement within university communities (Clarke and Hui Yang, 2021; Darmody, Groarke, and Mihut, 2022).

In the pre-pandemic literature, less was known about international student and faculty's online teaching and learning experiences (Lee and Bligh, 2019). Additionally, while research has highlighted the challenges and opportunities presented from the rapid shift from on-site to distance teaching and learning around the globe (Jena, 2020; Fallatah, 2021), fewer studies have examined the distinct challenges faced by international students and faculty during the pandemic. Chirikov and Soria's (2020) COVID-impact survey in the US reported that international students adapted to remote instruction better than domestic students; however, they also stated concerns about basic needs and navigating the healthcare and immigration systems. Likewise, Firang and Mensah (2022) found that international students in Canada experienced hardship due to their temporary visa status and exclusion from government relief programs, often leading to psychological and financial difficulties. A growing number of case studies examine the links between international students' academic and personal goals, government measures, coping mechanisms, well-being and feelings brought about by the COVID-19 crisis (Peters et al., 2020; Bista, Allen, and Chan, 2022).

Many universities, including the institution in this case study, relied on established online course models such as Community of Inquiry (CoI) to shape their approach to online and hybrid instruction during the pandemic. As a collaborative-constructivist process model, CoI examines how deep learning outcomes can be achieved in online courses (Garrison, Anderson, and Archer, 1999). The authors describe a CoI as three connected and interrelated elements: cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence. Through sustained communication, a CoI constructs personal and shared meaning (cognitive presence). The course's social-emotional environment (social presence) and design (teaching presence) facilitate critical thinking, as well as knowledge transfer. Although scholars ascribe different importance to the three fundamental presences of CoI and see their relationship differently (Kozan and Richardson, 2014), there is consensus that social presence suffered significantly during the COVID pandemic, resulting in an oft-perceived "sense of distance" (Tan, 2020; Cairns et al., 2021).

Despite its widespread use during the pandemic, the CoI model has unclear appli-

cability in highly international HEIs. Most pre-pandemic scholarship within the CoI framework was conducted in American and Canadian settings (Castellanos-Reyes, 2020). Some scholars have recently found applicability for international students and settings during the pandemic (Ngubane-Mokiwa and Khoza, 2021; Tan, 2020). However, at least one pre-pandemic study found no statistically significant benefit of CoI for grades or perceived learning when applied to a graduate-level, international student population—notably at variance with studies on domestic students (Wendt and Nisbet, 2017). Notwithstanding the acknowledged limitations of the study, Wendt and Nisbet question the "universal" online learning experience and highlight the need to examine other predictive factors of international student achievement.

As the CoI framework is a process model that focuses on the *process of learning*, it does not always account for the broader social environment in which learning takes place or for the characteristics of the participants themselves. For example, as long-established educational psychology illuminates, learners' personal goals, knowledge, affects and beliefs all affect the learning process (Huang, Law and Lee, 2019). Additionally, the Universal Design for Learning framework postulates that learners differ in how they are motivated to learn, how they access information, and how they navigate learning environments (CAST, 2018). This can also vary based on students' region of origin (Darmody, Groarke, and Mihut, 2022). While researchers continue to study learner variability within the context of CoI (Shea and Bidjerano, 2012), it is plausible to suggest that the model's omission of learner characteristics, social environment, and systemic barriers is likely detrimental to student groups with greater vulnerability.

Several studies have highlighted the vulnerabilities of international students in the pandemic (Chirikov and Soria, 2020; Firang and Mensah, 2022). Nonetheless, treating international students, *en bloc*, as a single, vulnerable group, alongside other vulnerable groups, has several limitations (Coffey et al., 2021). On a conceptual level, vulnerabilities can build up, either becoming "intersectional" and exacerbating disadvantages (Kuran et al., 2020, pp. 92-94), or even co-existing with group privileges (Roscigno, Williams, and Byron, 2012; Wilson and Roscigno, 2018). The pandemic has led to new manifestations of vulnerability, leading specialists across disciplines to reassess the concept (The Lancet Editorial Board, 2020). This is not to deny the significance of markers such as ethnicity/race, gender, and class, which are frequently pertinent across different contexts (Peroni and Timmer, 2013; Mansouri, 2020). However, following Bankoff, Frerks, and Hilhorst (2004), the authors approach the concept from a relational standpoint: who is vulnerable depends on environmental, social, and cultural circumstances as well as on specific group markers that, given the circumstances, endanger people possessing them (see Peroni and Timmer, 2013; Gordon-Bouvier, 2019). This approach enables the authors to go beyond the use of vulnerability as merely a descriptor or predictor of experiences. By using vulnerability as an exploratory concept, the authors can identify other vulnerable groups, analyze layers of vulnerability, and demonstrate the concept's relevance for the teaching and learning of the university community more broadly.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND BACKGROUND

This article analyzes the experiences of three scholar-practitioners at one of the world's most international universities, Central European University (CEU), from March 2020-March 2022 through collective autoethnographic (CAE) methods. The three subjects, the joint authors of this paper, occupy multi-positional roles within the university, as Center for Teaching & Learning (CTL) director and faculty member, academic technologist, and PhD student engaged in various teaching initiatives, respectively. In their roles, the first simultaneously taught and supported others in teaching; the second supported faculty and teaching assistants with educational technology; and the third simultaneously held the roles of student, teacher, and tutor. Furthermore, all three authors consider themselves international in the sense that they are living and working outside of their country of origin, providing an additional level of complexity, as well as connection to international university members with whom they identified and regularly interacted.

Collective autoethnography (CAE) is a qualitative research method that studies social reality through examination of one's own experiences and one's relations to others within a specific social context (Chang, Ngunjiri, and Hernandez, 2013; Schwandt, 2007). Specifically, CAE refers to a method in which "researchers work in community to collect their autobiographical materials and to analyze and interpret their data collectively to gain a meaningful understanding of sociocultural phenomena reflected in their autobiographical data" (Chang, Ngunjiri, and Hernandez, 2013). Throughout the pandemic, numerous CAE studies have documented the lived experiences of students, faculty, and staff affected by disruptions to teaching, learning, and research activities, using their unique experiences of navigating the pandemic to delve into the social impacts and its effects on higher education (Roy and Uekusa, 2020; Gates, Beazley, and Davis, 2020; Kim, Zhu, and Weng, 2022; Godber and Atkins, 2021; Kohnke and Jarvis, 2021; Peters et al., 2020; McFadden et al., 2020). In this way, Roy and Uekusa (2020) describe CAE as a "useful, ethical, and self-empowering research method".

As the two central components of CAE methods are self-reflection and collaboration (Roy and Uekusa, 2020), the authors began the months-long, systematic, and iterative process by responding individually to the following research questions in short, written autoethnographies:

— What were our own experiences of teaching and learning during the pandemic? What were the experiences of those around us?

— How does our positionality shape our experiences and perceptions of others' experiences?

— How does the international character of the university shape ours and others´ experiences?

— What were the effects of the pandemic on the teaching and learning of marginalized groups in our community?

— What are the possible futures of online and hybrid teaching at CEU?

Upon completion of the individual writing, the authors met 12 times over video-conferencing software between the period of February through April 2022, memoing their verbal exchanges and exchanging the resulting written artefacts for the purposes of conceptual and discursive analysis. During this process, the authors reviewed the texts to identify emerging themes. These themes—ultimately to become the five subtopics of the Findings section below—became the foci of a targeted literature review and which informed additional, iterative stages of reflection and exchange. This collective reflection and discussion of their own experiences and observations within the university community and of the literature became an integral part of their findings, and, consistent with other CAE studies during COVID-19 (Gates, Beazley, and Davis, 2020; Kim, Zhu, and Weng, 2022), are presented holistically, as such, in the Findings section.

CASE STUDY BACKGROUND

Central European University (CEU) is an undergraduate- and graduate-level university offering English-language bachelor's, master's and doctoral programs in the social sciences, the humanities, law, management and public policy (Central European University, 2022). The institution was founded in the early 1990s as an explicitly transnational university, with seats in Prague and Warsaw before quickly consolidating in Budapest. Following the controversial "Lex CEU" of 2017, the university has been forced to gradually relocate operations to Vienna, a process ongoing at the time of publication. In the university's first decade, most students hailed from post-state-socialist Central Europe, Eastern Europe and Eurasia, as part of a mission of promoting democracy and academic reforms (Central European University, 2022). In the last decade, the university has pursued a resolutely global recruitment strategy, enrolling 1484 students from 110 countries in 2021. The result is that while a small majority of students are European citizens (including many from post-Socialist countries), no country represents more than 15% of student enrollment (Central European University, 2022). Tellingly, there is no international student office, as nearly all students are "international". Similarly, no country contributes a majority of faculty, and international academic training and experience are common.

When the pandemic broke out, CEU's initial response, like that of many peer institutions, relied on both institutional precedent and established online models to make sense of the rapid changes in the educational landscape. It did so both technologically and pedagogically. For example, the recent redesign of the Budapest campus had already galvanized leadership buy-in and financial support for high-tech classrooms, while IT and facilities units gained hands-on expertise in the procurement and set-up of smart classrooms. As CEU had just taken possession of its new campus in Vienna and was still amid a multi-year renovation program to convert the former bank into a teaching space, these same facilities and IT leaders had possibilities for building smart classrooms from the beginning, rather than retrofitting legacy classrooms. Furthermore, the CTL leadership at the time had substantial research and teaching expertise

in online and blended learning, which informed the support for faculty's pandemic teaching. As at other institutions, CEU CTL training sessions by the authors and by former colleagues drew explicitly and implicitly on the CoI model. This framework provided an already validated conceptual model that was both expedient and generally beneficial for faculty and teaching assistants (TAs), many of whom were largely unfamiliar with online teaching when the crisis broke out.

FINDINGS

This section discusses the themes identified by the authors throughout the CAE study. First, the authors report on the challenges that arose due to immobility and basic needs uncertainty. Then, it details their experience fluctuating between hybrid and other course modalities throughout the pandemic. The next two sections discuss how the university identified and responded to vulnerabilities within the community, particularly for English language learners and students enrolled in university access programs. The last section explores the opportunities and challenges presented by increased programming within university alliances.

(IM)MOBILITY AND BASIC NEEDS UNCERTAINTY

During the pandemic, the authors, together with other international students and faculty at CEU and elsewhere (Hari, Nardon, and Zhang, 2021; Cairns et al., 2020), experienced significant and unanticipated mobility restrictions due to shifting border closures, health and safety concerns, and testing and vaccination regulations. Globally, many international students and staff hold temporary study or work visas, which, as Hari and colleagues note (2021), make their residence status more precarious. Many found themselves "locked in" or "locked out" (Prakaash, 2022) of Austria, Hungary, or third countries at various points during the pandemic, for example, due to delays in immigration paperwork processing. Others had not fully relocated before the pandemic and found themselves commuting across borders amidst constantly changing regulations. All these scenarios brought a new set of shared anxieties and barriers around access to support networks, information, and basic needs.

While definitions differ, the concept of basic needs is useful for the study of HEIs in the pandemic, as it focuses on the needs that specific individuals or groups deem as essential. These things are not limited to those which sustain biological life, such as food, water, and shelter. Rather, students' basic needs can include technology, transportation, mental and physical wellbeing, and childcare (The Hope Center, 2022). Just as importantly, the concept highlights the emphasis that groups place on satisfying these needs, implicitly or explicitly marginalizing other pursuits. Thus, UDL practitioners emphasize the difficulty students face in focusing on learning when anxious about basic needs (CAST, 2018). While CoI underlines how 'presence' can be created without physical presence, these pandemic-related anxieties often created metaphorical absence, even in the best designed of courses.

The pandemic provoked basic needs uncertainty for the authors and many in their

community. Concerns about the procurement of food and medical care during lockdown were widespread. State and private childcare services and schooling were frequently suspended or interrupted, leading many parents to simultaneously perform care and academic work, often in difficult physical spaces. Yet international individuals can face even greater costs in satisfying their basic needs, due to residence- or citizenship-related eligibility for benefits, less-established local networks, and unfamiliarity with new cities and languages. Students and staff faced a broadened set of questions related to basic needs, including how to access to food, how to safely quarantine in student dorms, and how to access healthcare in English or their preferred languages. Furthermore, individuals who were separated from their families and other support networks were prone to isolation and worry about the safety of their families abroad.

Like other European Union (EU) countries, mobility restrictions in Austria and Hungary did not affect all international students and staff equally (Nuffic, 2020). "Third Country Nationals" (i.e., citizens neither of the local state nor of the EU and its partners), and particularly citizens of the Global South, faced substantial delays in receiving the paperwork needed for study and employment, resulting in being locked in or locked out (John and Tomaselli, 2021). For many students, this necessitated online class attendance even if health conditions enabled on-site teaching for their peers. Time-zone differences and access to stable internet connection were critical barriers to attending or fully participating in synchronous sessions. Furthermore, when third-country nationals arrived in Austria, some found that their non-EU approved vaccines were not accepted as entry requirements for the purposes of study and participating in daily life.

With the rapidly changing situation, immobility and basic needs uncertainties profoundly challenged day-to-day teaching and learning. In response, CEU increased targeted assistance for vulnerable student groups to support their living on campus and academic performance. For example, the university introduced an emergency fund and distributed digital equipment, such as iPads and laptops, so that students could attend online courses from home. At the same time, it broadened its psychological support services to help students' emotional wellbeing. The authors, along with other members of the CTL, provided guidance on addressing potential cognitive overload and anxiety resulting from disruptions in daily life and from the shift from in-person, discussion-based classes to online and hybrid delivery (Dorner et al., 2020). Additionally, the university made several notable modifications to its academic policies, including possibilities for pass/fail grading and for deadline extensions where appropriate. While the flexibility of these policies was generally seen as helpful, teaching assistants, instructors, and students themselves had to juggle an increased number of rolling deadlines. Consequently, the authors and others across the university engaged in conversations about appropriate levels of flexibility, as well as how to respond to students' needs in changing circumstances during the long tail of the pandemic.

COURSE EXPERIENCES IN HYBRID (AND OTHER) MODALITIES

Because of the factors elucidated above, CEU's mode of instruction fluctuated between on-campus, online, and hybrid modalities at various stages of the pandemic. In March 2020, CEU pivoted online until the end of the academic year. When the health situation warranted, the faculty Senate approved a default mode of synchronous hybrid instruction, which connected on-site and online students for live class sessions via video-conferencing software. While many students attended in-person, those who were unable to attend due to mobility restrictions, quarantine, or health vulnerabilities could participate online synchronously.

The authors and their peers adopted several teaching strategies to support students' online and hybrid learning, including adapting course structures and increasing the degree of structure (Darby and Lang, 2019). Following a UDL approach, these structures aimed to reduce the barriers students face in the online environment and provide flexible pathways for learning (Rao, 2021). They reworked slide decks, provided additional scaffolding in assignments, implemented additional feedback, and as one author put it, introduced "small but observable tasks each week to keep students engaged and focused". Other teaching interventions included clear and consistent norms for participation in live class sessions, such as making use of the Zoom chat and breakout features, anonymous polling to identify problems, and both a priori and just-in-time troubleshooting.

Many of the changes to the course structure aimed to enhance social presence, as stressed in the CoI model. A sense of physical and social isolation was commonly reported in the pandemic, and international students and staff were often more isolated from emotional and economic support than their peers (Cairns et al., 2020). With physical distance from family and friends in home countries, fewer informal interactions, and considerable time spent in front of screens, many students felt the strong physical and affective impact of the pandemic. In response, one author drew on previous experiences and asked students to create video introductions of themselves. Another author designed concurrent group writing sessions in collaborative documents with a twofold purpose: to make peers' work more visible and to create informal opportunities for socializing. Along with CEU faculty who have published on similar themes (Strausz, 2021a), the authors reflected on the community-building effectiveness of less-controlled digital spaces where students could organize their own social interactions and connect on their own terms, including breakout rooms and group chats.

At later stages in the pandemic, hybrid courses created new challenges for social presence, as many online teaching strategies required adaptation for courses taught synchronously both on-site and online. One of the main points of concern was the facilitation of hybrid discussions. While breakout rooms provided a good mechanism for small group discussion in the online environment, technical constraints made it more challenging for onsite and online students to collaborate in small groups. Additionally, as more students were able to travel to Vienna, the online cohort shrank, leaving one or two students at risk of being isolated online, disrupting and potentially frac-

turing existing communities of inquiry. The CTL, alongside faculty and TAs, explored multiple options for improving the quality of hybrid discussions and for improving the experiences of those online due to health or immigration restrictions. For example, as appropriate, faculty adopted more conscious strategies for accepting technical constraints, such as forming separate online and on-site groups or booking high-tech consultation rooms for joint small groups.

IDENTIFYING AND RESPONDING TO VULNERABILITIES

This attention to social, economic, and cultural disparities, the promotion of equity, and work with traditionally marginalized groups at CEU will be required of all HEIs as they confront the ways in which the pandemic has exacerbated educational inequalities. Studies at other HEIs have documented substantial, early evidence that ethnic minority, displaced, and financially disadvantaged students, as well as students with disabilities, have had lower-quality remote learning experiences than their peers and higher rates of digital exclusion. This has led to increased educational disengagement and higher dropouts (Dorn et al., 2020; Rodríguez-Planas, 2022).

The emerging literature on vulnerable student populations in the pandemic stresses that, contrary to frequent stereotypes of privilege, international students are disproportionately at risk for marginalization and disadvantage during the pandemic. The reasons vary and include, in many countries, reduced access to government services and support programs (Bilecen, 2020; Firang, 2020). While international students and staff are often discussed homogenously, multiple factors, including nationality and visa status, greatly affect their legal opportunities, such as work and access to health services, especially for third country nationals in the EU (Nuffic, 2020). Common socially relevant vulnerability markers, such as ethnicity, race, class, gender and age, intersect with these legal categories in various constellations, frequently exacerbating disadvantages. Moreover, disadvantage is not static, but can change (and worsen) over time, as the pandemic demonstrated. Reflecting on the experiences of international students at CEU in light of the literature on UDL underscored to the authors the complexity of international student and staff vulnerabilities. This suggests that vulnerabilities can often remain overlooked until they manifest, that they are informed by their contexts, and that multiple approaches may be needed. These may require several adaptations as circumstances change and involve different constituents, such as university administrators, program directors, faculty, and student peers.

CEU has long engaged in multi-faceted means to improve access for disadvantaged groups. This has traditionally included broad measures, such as graduate student tuition waivers, stipends, free accommodation, and health insurance coverage to address financial inequalities, as well as targeted access programs for groups confronting multiple forms of disadvantage and discrimination, such as refugees and Roma. A notable example in which one author participates is the Roma Graduate Preparation Program (RGPP), where students faced even greater challenges because of the pandemic, prompting modifications to an established, successful model of education.

The RGPP relies on a personalized approach to student learning, in part because of

the high level of internal diversity within the RGPP community, including language and country of residence (generally outside of Hungary, where the program is based). Moving RGPP learning online disrupted teaching presence, in particular subject-specific mentoring, which is one of the core elements of the program and is highly collaborative. Students' social presence also decreased radically. These hardships intersected in another core element, English language training, which is integral to cognitive presence. Students lost their pre-COVID opportunities of socializing in English by chatting before and after classes, at the dormitory, or when travelling around Hungary as part of the immersive, experiential learning experiences the program affords. For those who had to study from home countries, other languages completely substituted English in everyday life.

Reacting to these challenges, the RGPP staff transformed several elements of the program's teaching and learning design that, in retrospect, might be characterized as reflecting both long-standing attention to the importance of local contexts, as well as application of several UDL principles. To make up for diminished social and teaching presence, facilitators provided students with additional means of engagement, representation, and expression (CAST, 2012). Students were encouraged to rest and chat with each other more; instructors and mentors opened dialogue around forms of assessments. Anonymous feedback was encouraged and collected via surveys and polls. Learning materials were diversified with additional visuals, such as photos, schemes, videos, and tables. Building on principles of peer-learning and teaching, courses included more lower-stakes collaborative assignments, such as working in online documents and breakout rooms. Some teachers created group chats accompanying their courses for students not only to ask questions but also to communicate on casual matters. Program alumni were invited to interact with current students, sharing encouragement, coping techniques, and learning strategies. The challenge of increasing social presence thus resulted in unanticipated opportunities for cohort-building and democratization of learning.

The importance of grassroots initiatives and peer learning in responding to the pandemic was also experienced in traditional degree programs. For example, PhD students and TAs found room to experiment with new forms of social connection, networking with colleagues through informal and semi-formal meetings and working groups. Coming together online not only supported research, writing, and teaching processes through the exchange of techniques and strategies, but eased anxieties through the informal nature of the chats and regular contact. The authors of the paper observed that the teaching staff and PhD students convened more often and undertook several initiatives to increase social presence online. That said, not all students were able to self-organize as quickly. For example, it was anecdotally observed that newer students may have had less well-established social networks and may have had higher cognitive load in responding to a new program of study during COVID-19. This suggests that not only are there unanticipated vulnerabilities of groups, but that the ability for students to contribute to social presence cannot be taken for granted or always left to its own dynamics. Rather, administrators and faculty, particularly those working with vulnerable groups, may have a role to play in promoting student agency,

creating structures for peer learning, and potentially sharing local best practices.

THE PANDEMIC IN OTHER TONGUES: ENGLISH AND TECHNOLOGY AS MEDIUMS OF INSTRUCTION

As the example of the RGPP illustrates, language is central to learning and to the challenges learners faced during the pandemic. In most HEI courses, at least in the humanities and social sciences, language mediates 'content', and students acquire and explore knowledge through language. However, we cannot speak of language abstractly, for the internationalization of academia has reinforced the place of English. Moreover, for international students and faculty, English may represent the language of work or study, while a third language may be the language of the country. For example, a minority of CEU students consider English, German, or Hungarian as their first language, meaning most students are "double, non-first-language speakers". There is a well-documented (if sometimes politicized) relationship between linguistic ease and sense of well-being (Nusche, Shewbridge, and Lamhauge Rasmussen, 2010). Thus, operating in a second language (L2), or in a third, represents another level of intersectional vulnerability in highly international university populations. While operating in a second language may have some benefits (McFarlane, Cipoletti Perez, and Weissglass, 2020), it can also produce anxiety and contribute to a sense of isolation, vulnerability, or lack of belonging. The authors noted that the pandemic exacerbated these challenges, for example, as news about the pandemic and access to health services are often provided in local languages. The challenges of language during the pandemic for teaching and learning are even more clearly documented.

During the pandemic, L2-speaking faculty at CEU and elsewhere adopted new communication strategies fitting the online environment. They looked for efficient words to motivate seemingly disengaged students and produced greater amounts of complex written text (Cicillini and Giacosa, 2020; Pun and Thomas, 2020; Yüksel, 2022). Furthermore, instructors had to swiftly improve not only their fluency in the language of instruction but also in the "language" of hardware, software, and their uses in teaching (Kohnke and Jarvis, 2021). Unsurprisingly, it contributed to stress and overwork, especially for those who do not consider themselves "digital natives" (Schwartzman 2020). This combination of technology and L2 use resulted in an experience of multiple layers of potential unease for "double non-first-language speakers". Switching to pandemic pedagogy also affected L2 students greatly, as these speakers heavily rely on non-verbal cues (e.g., facial cues) while communicating. In online settings, many had fewer opportunities to communicate, while limited use of cameras due to weak internet connections or instructions to turn off cameras further reduced the opportunities to pick up on cues (Hammerness et al., 2022).

The effects of online teaching on L2 learners do not simply reflect technical limitations or the limitations of an individual's vocabulary, but instead reflect the very structure of CoI and other online models. Generally, the online learning environment is a logocentric semiotic system, or "text-based" as Garrison, Anderson, Archer, and other early theorists of CoI (1999) termed it. For many students, moving online, espe-

cially in the asynchronous modes of which Garrison et al. first wrote, but also in hybrid synchronous pandemic teaching, meant less emphasis on speaking and a greater emphasis on writing and on reading. For example, to follow and comprehend their classes, in addition to on-screen visual and facial cues, students increasingly relied on presentation slides, the chat box, and other textual elements on their devices for communication during live sessions. Opportunities to ask instructors oral questions before or after class sessions were sometimes replaced by the composition of formal emails. Faculty also experienced a shift from speaking towards writing as they led group chats and forums, created guidelines, and posted more materials to the learning management software, such as polls, surveys, and quizzes. Logocentric e-learning systems can risk the depersonalization of social presence, and in any case, make it more symbolic (Kehrlwald, 2008).

There is some evidence that reading and writing are often less spontaneous and typically employ more analytical skills than listening and speaking, which increases anxiety and fatigue (Kehrlwald, 2008). However, since practicing complex skills is often desired, some instructors report excitement about this increased intellectual density available in online environments. The risk is that although they conceived their online learning spaces as "smooth," many students experienced them as "striated", moving quickly from one point to another, often resulting in confusion. For students, such experiences can feel fast-paced, like "cruising the information superhighway" instead of "surfing the net" (Bayne, 2004, p. 304). In pandemic contexts, these structural characteristics of some online learning models can contribute to the general "information overload" of international students (Chang et al., 2020).

As a result, the authors, along with CEU faculty, took multiple steps to help students learn in these non-first language settings, paying particular attention to cognitive overload. One such practice involved creating structures that allowed students to focus in digital worlds (Lang, 2020). Other practices, such as those employed by and shared with faculty, revolved around techniques of "slow teaching" (Strausz, 2021b). CTL training sessions on online and hybrid teaching incorporated UDL-informed practices for reducing stress and "smoothing" digital learning, including posting materials to a learning management system in advance so that students could follow in class more easily, simplifying the language of instruction, and making discussion questions direct and concise. Illustrative materials and collaborative mind-mapping were similarly useful. Future initiatives include guidance on the use of language in online teaching, including standardizing and simplifying technical language and—drawing on UDL—providing multiple modes of giving instructions or asking questions.

THE FUTURE IS GLOBAL? CONNECTED COURSES, UNIVERSITY NETWORKS, AND COMMUNITIES OF PLACE

The above-mentioned responses to the pandemic did not just rely on international scholarship; some were directly informed by conversations and initiatives within university alliances. Across Europe and beyond, the growing movement towards university alliances has provided members with various teaching support mechanisms,

including assistance with transitioning to emergency online teaching (Ferencz and Rumbley, 2022; European Commission, 2020b). Such support is likely to increase in the future, as the EU-funded "European University" initiative, which aims to strengthen strategic partnerships between higher education institutions, calls for deepening the existing 41 alliances and broadening to new members. The CEU is a founding member of CIVICA, one such EU-supported alliance of social science research universities, as well as a founding member of the Open Society University Network (OSUN), whose reach is global. Within OSUN, Bard's Institute for Writing and Thinking, CEU's CTL, and individuals across the network, including the authors of this paper, were able to share expertise, experience, and fellowship during training sessions, summer university courses, and other resources for transitioning to online teaching.

The pandemic also gave a substantial impetus to forms of virtual mobility and exchange. It curtailed opportunities for physical mobility and student exchange, arguably the most prominent internationalization strategy. For example, nearly half of participants in Europe's largest mobility program, Erasmus+, faced the cancellation or temporary suspension of their programs in the early months of the pandemic, while approximately a third undertook exchanges in alternative formats, such as virtual exchanges (European Commission, 2020a). For parents, caregivers, participants with disabilities, and those with limited mobility, virtual mobility and exchange provided greater opportunities for participation. Additionally, the authors noticed that the pandemic resulted in greater student, faculty, and administrator ease with digitally mediated forms of learning at the CEU and elsewhere (Gaebel et al., 2021). These factors, as well as administrative incentives, led to a sharp uptake in CEU faculty and PhDs teaching in multi-institutional, connected environments. This included permitting CIVICA students to enroll in CEU courses, digital initiatives focused on refugee education (e.g., OSUN Global History Lab), and collaborative networked courses, with students and faculty from multiple institutions within the OSUN network.

The embrace of virtual mobility and exchange is not without challenges, ranging from organizational hurdles to careful thinking about the nature of community (Kaufman, 2021). For example, scheduling connected courses required not just accounting for multiple time zones, but for varying semester lengths and for different regulations on required hours in the classroom. Assessments were similarly shaped by regulatory heterogeneity, as well as by institutional and disciplinary cultures. One such course adopted a blended structure for dialogue, creating structured opportunities for faculty to address their peers' previous lectures, blocks of time during lectures for students to discuss topics with others online or within classrooms, and finally, discussion sections. The result was a transnational community, with discussions and a sense of belonging across the institutions and in locally rooted communities within each institution. It is common to speak of a community of inquiry in digital learning, and this example of a network connected course suggests that there can be multiple communities of inquiry. Without the careful planning that occurred in this course, there is a risk of fractured communities. While network connected courses remain infrequent compared to other modes of teaching, the authors suggest that many, if not most, classrooms are characterized by a plurality of communities, even when exclusively comprised of

students from one institution.

LIMITATIONS

While this iterative, multi-positional approach to reflective, qualitative research has numerous insightful precedents, it is not without limitations, which the authors freely acknowledge and embrace. For example, the authors cannot account for all experiences of university community members or provide an official narrative on behalf of the institution. Rather, the authors contend that all autoethnography is necessarily positional, and therefore acknowledge and embrace their subjectivity and influence on the research study (Godber and Atkins, 2021). The roles of the authors give them familiarity to a range of perspectives which are derived from working alongside and conversing with senior leadership, heads of department and units, individual faculty, and PhD students. That said, the views of BA and MA students are less well represented, and the views of these constituents are filtered partly through the authors' common affiliation to the CTL. Finally, while the authors incorporate retrospective analyses of the first months of the pandemic, their reflections were written during February 2022–April 2022. This period was characterized in many European HEIs by another COVID-19 wave and increasingly widespread immunological exposure due to vaccination and infection. This created a pivotal moment, as HEI teaching and learning leaders continued to make use of established pandemic pedagogies, while actively assessing them and envisioning alternative futures.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Through their reflections, the authors have provided an account of the teaching and learning experiences of a highly international university during the pandemic. While the CoI model provided helpful guidance in the early stages of the crisis, particularly in highlighting the need for conscious design to promote social presence, this paper has illuminated the challenges of creating and sustaining community in technologically-mediated teaching and learning environments. Many of these challenges are specific to the pandemic; some are specific to the highly international nature of the case study and the layers of vulnerability within the community. However, as the authors have elucidated, centering the needs of international students and faculty may enhance the experiences of all, especially as many universities pursue paths of further internationalization.

As scholars continue to study CoI's relevance beyond North American contexts, it is useful to think about how it can be combined with complementary frameworks to address specific institutional teaching and learning contexts (see Gunawardena, Frechette, and Layne, 2019 on building models for culturally-inclusive instructional design). For international universities, blending CoI and UDL principles can yield more precise analysis of experiences and be more effective in identifying approaches than applying either framework on its own. Specifically, using a UDL lens can help identify vulnerable groups' specific needs and the barriers to social, cognitive, and

teaching presence within the digital environment. To this end, supplementing common markers of vulnerability, such as gender, race/ethnicity, and class, with a dynamic, relational approach to vulnerability is particularly useful in the context of highly international university populations, as it illuminates overlooked vulnerabilities and draws attention to their effects in specific contexts.

This combination of CoI and UDL approaches has several practical implications. While UDL-driven structure can play a critical role in supporting students and instructors in digitally mediated classrooms, various strategies reflected on throughout this paper show how providing "space" can also allow learner-driven strategies and community-building to emerge organically. Therefore, we stress the importance of approaches that promote peer-teaching and collaboration and empower students' own agency. They can be combined with monitoring of progress and disseminating best practices of coping with challenges, especially among vulnerable groups of students. This support should be extended for those who teach vulnerable groups because they are often the first to face and address emerging disadvantages and may experience a greater risk of burnout or need of extra resources.

One example regards language of instruction. The authors suggest exploring ways to make online learning less "text-based" and adopting a "slow" approach to help both L2 students and teachers. As UDL suggests, this could be possible by providing learning materials in multiple formats, including other mediums than text, such as images and multimedia. Furthermore, there is a need to make class activities less overloaded with information and more focused on key concepts, with opportunities for questions, peer-learning, and individual reflection. Increased support for educators, including integrated language and technology training, can provide guidance on the multiple tools needed to effectively foster cognitive, social, and teaching presence. This could include providing guidelines on online instruction, mentoring and teaching observations, and workshops on the use of language in teaching.

Finally, while university members may be eager to return to fully on-site instruction, it is imperative that universities not retreat into less inclusive environments. As pandemic experiences have shown, online and hybrid environments have the potential to increase access to groups who may be excluded or less likely to engage in on-site teaching and learning. Therefore, there is also a need to think through new hybrid configurations that build a greater sense of community across the on-site/online divide, do not unduly privilege in-person attendance, and are sustainable for faculty and students. Additionally, it may also prove fruitful to explore more widespread opportunities for virtual mobility and exchange, which may lay groundwork for creating more inclusive, versatile, and flexible international exchanges in the future (Samper et al., 2022). All these approaches should keep in mind institutional and program specificities in their design and embrace both new and pluralistic forms of community. In so doing, they may prove to be inclusive, resilient, and promote the learning of all members.

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