



Report from flash interviews (León, Spain 7-9 February, 2024)

Brief description

During the VALIANT final conference (León, February 7-9, 2024) 'flash interviews', were carried out with conference delegates who had not participated in the VALIANT consortium. These were brief and spontaneous interviews aimed to gather immediate reactions, opinions, or insights regarding the VALIANT project (output, materials, activities, etc.). Unlike traditional interviews, the flash interviews were impromptu and informal, which can help capture spontaneous and unfiltered responses and provide a snapshot of the delegates' thoughts or reactions in real-time.

The main points that emerged from the interviews are listed below. Transcripts of individual interview are provided as well. Names of delegates and their workplaces have been removed. All the participants agreed to be recorded prior to conducting the flash interview.

Synthesis of principal themes

- The VALIANT project provides empirical evidence that can support outreach efforts to develop additional networks of primary and secondary school instructors. They see it as a way to convince sceptical administrators and teachers without experience in virtual exchange of the value and importance of such initiatives.
- The VALIANT project has had an impact on fostering collaboration and expanding VE exchange opportunities across various departments (interdisciplinary exchanges).
- VALIANT has boosted public recognition that VEs are effective in enhancing teaching experiences and addressing 21st-century skills.
- VALIANT's emphasis on mentoring is important in order to foster innovative approaches and practices, in particular in primary education, so that VE can be more fully integrated exchange into educational systems at different levels (primary, secondary, higher education).
- The VALIANT project can provide insights into research results and help VE practitioners stay updated on developments within the VE community, particularly in teacher education and mentoring.
- The final conference was viewed as an opportunity to find out about the latest information and knowledge about VE to take back to own institutions.
- The final conference offered possibilities to initiate collaborations for research, publications, and methodological improvements.
- The final conference was also noted for the amount of information and knowledge sharing regarding VE pedagogy.
- Many of the participants found the final conference to be an excellent opportunity to find partners and to learn about new ways to design and implement VE.
- One respondent underscored the relevance of the soft skills to be gained through VE, especially in the onset of the AI (Artificial Intelligence) era.



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- On a similar note, a doctoral student mentioned that the final conference experience was beneficial for her doctoral studies, allowing her to establish international networks that support the transfer of knowledge without limitations.
- Representation at the final conference was varied: primary, secondary teachers; university teachers from multiple disciplines, teacher educators and doctoral students.

Other observations:

- Not all the participants in the final conference were able to distinguish between the VALIANT project, Unicollaboration and COIL.
- The notion of overcoming isolation through Virtual Innovation and Support Networks was not immediately relevant to the participants outside of the consortium.

Complete Interview transcriptions:

Interview 1

Participants: 2 teachers who had taken part in VALIANT modules

Highlights:

Both teachers highlight the main takeaway of the project as the opportunity to connect with teachers from different European countries. One teacher mentioned that her students did not initially take the VE seriously but became more committed as they worked with the other group and as a group. The students (and teachers) found it demanding but ultimately engaging. The teachers appreciated the sense of solidarity and collaboration, especially in the context of the challenges brought about by the pandemic. The project provided them with insights into different teaching methodologies and regions, fostering a spirit of cooperation and problem-solving across diverse educational contexts.

Tchr A: My name is XXXX and I work as a teacher of English language at a primary level and at what we can call a lower secondary level. I teach children from 6 to 15 years old.

Tchr B: My name is XXXX and I'm a secondary school teacher. I teach Spanish and literature too.

Int: Okay, thank you. What do you think about the Valiant Project? What is your impression? What do you know about it? And what is your impression of it?

Tchr A: Well, I think I know it quite well because I participated in the sessions in 2001 and 2002. I was quite involved at the time within because at the beginning I thought it was, maybe I didn't take it as seriously, but then when I started working in a group of people, with that work came obligations. And if I commit to something, then I do them, then I do the commitments. So in the end, it took quite some time and effort. So I cannot say that it was just something that I did on the side. But I must say that because this was more than a year ago, then in the meantime I started doing different things, and I maybe forgot about things now. But yes, at the time it was very, very – it occupied me.

Int: Good. What is your impression of the Valiant project?



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Tchr B: I learned about the project by means of an email that our teacher training network sent to us in Castelló. And I thought it was interesting. It was just the days we were coming back to the classroom after the lockdown, in the pandemic and I found it refreshing. I thought it was an interesting idea. So I took part in three different exchanges and I found very interesting to meet the teachers and future teachers from other places. I liked the way it was previously very, very organized and the topics also were very interesting. Sometimes the engagement and the time you need for doing things is not the time you have, but overall I found it very interesting and an interesting way of working.

Int: One real quick question. What do you think is the main outcome from this project?

Tchr A: I would say that, you know, just connecting, mingling with teachers from Europe was a very good thing, because especially after the pandemic, we were in that, you know, breakout room, and it was like we were sitting on having a cup of coffee, and we all have the same problems. We teach in very different areas, we teach in different languages, but in the end we felt like, yes, we are all in this together. We all have the same problems at the end of the day.

Tchr B: For me, it was very refreshing because I got to meet the teachers from different places with very different ways of working and it was like opening the world to me and I didn't know such thing existed because now we work in very separate areas, regions, etc. So I think the collaboration, the spirit of working together, of trying to find a solution to things is the main outcome for me.

Interview 2

Participant: 1 administrator (Business School)

Highlights:

The interviewee heard about the Valiant project through LinkedIn and became interested in its focus on connecting individuals actively involved in virtual learning rather than policymakers or academics. He sees it as a valuable platform for learning about how teachers implement virtual exchange projects like COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning). The interviewee emphasizes the importance of finding new partners for virtual exchange initiatives and integrating virtual exchange into the curriculum as a core component of international student development.

Adm: I'm in my university I'm the virtual guy so I'm the global project manager for my business school anything related to virtual exchange, COILs and VIPs so in that capacity I'm here to learn more and meet new people about this wonderful VE world that we're in. And what do you know about the Valiant project itself?

Int: And what do you know about the Valiant project itself?

Adm: Well, basically, it's very much LinkedIn-based that I know about it, because I followed some of the people, for example, Robert, and then I got in touch with that one, because I was always looking for a platform that brings together enthusiastic people actually doing the real work in virtual learning. So I'm not talking about policymaking or academia as such, but very much the student, well, the teacher is actually doing the COIL or any virtual learning. So then I got in touch with the VALIANT people and I thought this is a great place, a great platform and a great conference as well to attend to really find out more about how teachers actually run these virtual exchange projects.

Int: And what do you, from what you've seen, okay, what do you think would be the main takeaway for this project?



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- Adm: Well, the main takeaway would be to find new partners to do virtual exchange with. That's my very practical orientation. The other one is actually to see how we can embed virtual exchange in our curriculum, and also how do we actually equip our teachers and staff members alike to really embed these virtual exchange things into the curriculum rather than being a one-off fun thing. It should actually be, in my view, embedded into the curriculum. It's a vital part of international development of students.
- Int: Have you seen the materials from Valiant? Do you think they would be useful?
- Adm: Well, I will take a look at it. Well, I will take a look at it.
- Int: That's a diplomatic answer. (both laugh)

Interview 3

Participants: 1 teacher who has been involved in VE before (but not VALIANT) and another teacher/administrator in IR who did not have experience in VE

Highlights:

Teacher A has been engaged in virtual exchange initiatives for over 20 years, including collaboration with Unicollaboration. Despite encountering challenges due to regional issues (war in Israel), she recognizes the value of the Valiant project in fostering new partnerships and addressing shared challenges in teacher education. The main takeaway for Teacher A is the importance of personal connections and the reinforcement of their work through sharing experiences in conferences like Valiant.

Teacher B is a professor of media education and serves as a vice president for research transfer at internationalization at a University of Education. He is interested in the VALIANT project from a management perspective and feels it can help strengthen internationalization efforts VE initiatives within his university. Teacher B highlights the positive impact of the VALIANT project on fostering collaboration and expanding virtual exchange opportunities across various departments. For this interviewee, the main takeaway is the recognition that virtual exchanges are effective in enhancing teaching experiences and addressing 21st-century skills.

- Tchr A: I'm XXXX, I'm from Nazareth, I live in Nazareth and I teach in a teacher's college in the north of Israel, like a teacher training college. I'm also part of the Tech Center in Tel Aviv, which is a technology, education, together in academia. So we run about maybe 20 courses in more than also 20 colleges. Every year we have semester and we have yearly courses.
- Int: Fascinating. So what do you know about the Valium project? What is the information that you have?
- Tchr A: I know about the Unicollaboration. I started with it actually I was one of the first people who started in collaboration when Robert and Francesca reached out, I don't know, maybe more than 12 years ago or 10 years ago. Definitely.
- Int: Yeah.
- Tchr A: Yeah they just reached out like in the cold email that they spoke about. So I started the first collaboration with someone named XXX from Burgos. We started the first, but I was doing also uni-, not like virtual exchange but with also other countries because also of our work with the tech center. So this is, I've been doing this for 20 years. So this is not something which is new to

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me. And I knew about VALIANT because we're partnering, we're twinning with the university XXX where XXX and XXX are in Germany. And on May, they arranged a workshop run by Robert about virtual exchange and we were invited. So we went there and they had all these nice partners that they're doing, so that's why we met them, we tried to connect and actually we did, but the problem is because of the war, even though my project with the XXX has been going on for four years, this year unfortunately we didn't find a third partner, so it was only because of what's happening, the tension, so it was only my Arab students and her German students. So the students didn't want to be part of that. Or our partner, that's what they said in the morning with the challenges, actually couldn't deal with the challenge happening and she just said, no, I don't want to push my students.

Int: A difficult situation.

Tchr A: Yes, it is.

Int: Yes. So, with what you know about Valiant, what is your impression? What would be the main takeaway that you have from the project? How has it contributed in any way towards the future of teacher education?

Tchr A: I think that this is one of the reasons I'm here and that's what VALIANT is really trying to find new connections and new partnerships. And it's always good to hear the challenges that they have, because it really connects to our challenges. So the challenges really relate to what we do and how to solve them. So every time I hear what's happening here, it reinforces what I do. And it just keeps me going. It encourages me. And this is like something that in Zoom you wouldn't do, in person you have this person connection.

Int: Right, so the biggest outcome for you is the conference rather than the materials?

Tchr A: As I said, because I've been doing this for really a long time, so everything that is really not new to me. We have a lot of successes, a lot of failures, so we tried a lot of models. Again, in our courses, we have the six-module collaboration, and we have the whole-year collaboration. And some of them worked, some of them didn't work. So in terms of content, I think it's not new to me, but it's more of finding the right partners. Because I come from the English department, I would really like to do something with. And I think English is really the perfect example of partnering because the language is not an issue. I know that in other courses that we have, language is a big issue. But English, because our students are majoring in English and our partners are majoring in English, so this is really, and that's why you don't really find that a lot in a lot of conferences. Okay, and this is oriented, like every teacher trainer, oh, I have this other speakerm ...

Int: It's more about teacher training...

Tchr A: Yeah, exactly.

Int: So I'm just going to take advantage and come on over here and ask you, since apparently you're part new, so you may have the same responses, but if you could explain who you are and in what capacity you're here.

Tchr B: I'm a professor of media education at the University of Education in XXX, but I'm currently also acting as a vice president for research transfer at internationalization.

Int: Okay, so what did you know about the Valiant project before coming here?

Tchr B: I was from the outside involved in the project but I never really participated in person in the corresponding meetings. I didn't find the time, unfortunately.

Int: So when I said you're an outsider, you're not a complete outsider. That's true. Now that you've seen it, we've come to the end. From a semi-outside perspective, what do you think that, and what's your impression of the project?

Tchr B: For us at our university, I really have this perspective of being a part of the management, you can say, and being responsible for the internal translation was a major step. It provided us, I mean, we were already collaborating. And when I was talking about that, we had this context that we're trying to integrate such virtual elements of collaboration are stronger in our curricula and the



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context of strengthening our internationalization, which is in the focus we have, teacher education, a difficult aspect. So we had that and we were very, very happy that we got involved in the Valiant project because it allowed us to intensify corresponding activities and to get in contact with a community which has and also we were lucky that Robert shared his experience with us, providing introductory courses at XXX University, spreading this idea. And at the very end now, we're at the end of the VALIANT project, we are very, very happy that we are part of this community, that we got involved, and that we can think about new opportunities for collaborating in this context. And of course, extending this idea of virtual exchanges at our university into other subjects. For the moment, it seems to be rather restricted there in the language departments. But we're talking now also about other departments getting involved here. So let's see where we can get.

Int: That's great. Wonderful. What would you say is the main takeaway from this project? We've produced a lot of output.

Tchr B: Workflow exchange works. Keep it simple. You can do it and you really have benefits from it. And you see it in all the presentations, which provide you with, we're talking about 21st century skills. And virtual exchanges can provide one way, not to foster all of these skills, but to address the skills also in our daily teaching experiences here. And virtual exchanges can provide one way, not to foster all of these skills, but to address the skills also in our daily teaching experiences here.

Int: Excellent. Thank you both. It's been a wonderful interview.

Interview 4

Participant: Teacher with experience in VE but not in VALIANT

Highlights:

The interview highlights the teacher's positive experience with virtual exchange programs and their interest in furthering collaboration and expanding opportunities within their discipline and university community. He admits to knowing very little about the VALIANT project but after being introduced to it by a colleague from the Global Studies office at his university, he expresses a positive impression of the VALIANT project, highlighting its adaptability and the opportunity to learn from mistakes and successes in implementing virtual exchange programs.

Int: Hi. We're in the work package quality control.

Tchr: Okay.

Int: So we're asking people, first, we're asking you... Do you want to go somewhere where it's not as loud?
(they move and restart interview)

Int: Hi again. So, what is your role here? What are you? Teacher?

Tchr: I'm sorry?

Int: What is your role here? Are you a teacher, researcher?

Tchr: I am a college, I am a professor at XXX (USA), and I'm here to present on my virtual exchange program that I have with XXX University in Australia.

Int: And what did you know about the VALIANT project?

Tchr: Very little. I was introduced to my colleague from the Global Studies office at my university. I originally was planning on doing a face-to-face exchange with XXX, but then when COVID hit, we



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- switched over to... I already had an exercise I did in class locally, and we decided that we were going to introduce that tabletop exercise to the students in Australia through a virtual exchange.
- Int: And your impression of the project?
- Tchr: I think it's been fantastic. I just completed my third year, well third semester, so I do it every fall semester. Every semester we kind of change things up a little bit to adapt to and kind of create best practices of what we learned from our mistakes from previous semesters and what really, really worked well. Some of them are just tiny little changes just how we present different areas of probabilities of their student success. So it's all based on a tabletop exercise where the decisions made by the students and the students are in teams mixed, both students from Edith Cone and St. John's University, and they have to work together to complete their mission and the decisions they make will affect the probability of their success or failure.
- Int: The VALIANT project itself, do you have any idea about it?
- Tchr: Well, the one thing I noticed already is I'm the wolf in the hen house where I'm the only one with my background I think. And one of the things that piqued my interest was the SIGs and I think it needs to go beyond some of the fields that are represented here, and not just my particular field. But I could see SIGs being founded or created in some more of the niche roles, like mine having one focusing on security studies, criminal justice, law, and finding partners in other disciplines, or I'm sorry, in that discipline in other locations around the world. I have one of my colleagues who's just starting the process now of going through the university's training for virtual exchanges. I also have two recently hired faculty members who are from Taiwan. So the idea is to try and get, kind of facilitate them creating a virtual exchange. They're graduates of the National Police University in Taiwan, so maybe doing something with them. And I have other professors who have other international contacts. international contact. So trying to take back what I learned from this conference, bringing it back to my faculty and hopefully convince them to be thinking similarly.
- Int: Okay, well thank you. Thank you so much.
- Tchr: No problem.

Interview 5

Participant: University teacher (languages) with experience in VE

Highlights:

The respondent sees the VALIANT project as a valuable effort in promoting teacher training and virtual exchange initiatives in elementary and secondary education. He summarizes it as a large-scale research-based effort aimed at implementing teacher training to support VE. A key point for this teacher is that the VALIANT project provides empirical evidence that can support outreach efforts to develop additional networks of primary and secondary school instructors. He sees it as a way to convince sceptical administrators and teachers without experience in virtual exchange of the value and importance of such initiatives.

- Int: We're in charge of the work package quality controls and as a final thing we're trying to ask people who are not part of the project Mm-hmm questions about the project.
- Tchr: Okay. Sure.
- Int: So what is your capacity here?
- Tchr: Okay, so so like you said, I'm not really part of the the network or the core group. I'd say I'm like one or two degrees removed. But I'm here as XXX had characterized it in her plenary, sort of an



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independent rogue practitioner. So I've been doing virtual exchange projects for about a decade now. And I'm presenting at the conference on the degree to which involvement in virtual exchange can promote the development of multi-literacies based instruction. So yeah, that's what I'll talk about tomorrow.

Int: So what do you know, what do you, what do you know about the project? About the VALIANT project. What is your impression of it?

Tchr: So my understanding of the project is that it is a large-scale research-based effort to implement teacher training in the context of virtual exchange with the primary focus on elementary and secondary level education. So basically that teachers who don't have prior experience to virtual exchange received training, implemented their projects, gave feedback, and then the Valiant Project is basically the instrument by which the projects were evaluated. Is that more or less?

Int: Wonderful summary of information. What do you think would be the main takeaway from this? From what you're hearing, what do you think would be the main takeaway?

Tchr: I think what's nice is that it basically gives the organization the sort of empirical evidence to start like reaching out even further to develop additional networks of primary and secondary school instructors. They can show them kind of what the project did, maybe convince skeptical administrators and possibly you know teachers who don't have experience with it that this is an effort worth doing. And so I think it's a way to kind of build additional outreach.

Int: Thank you very much.

Tchr: Yeah, absolutely.

Interview 6

Participant: University teacher (languages) with experience in VE

Highlights:

This respondent underscores her commitment to expanding her institution's involvement in virtual exchange and enhancing international collaboration and methodology within the academic community. She expressed the importance of being at the conference to develop research collaborations with VALIANT colleagues and to learn about virtual exchange initiatives in Europe, as their focus has primarily been on the US. It also provides the opportunity to find out about the latest information and knowledge about VE to then take back to her institution and possibilities to initiate collaborations for research, publications, and methodological improvements, benefiting both faculty and administration.

Tchr: Hi, my name is XXX, I'm from XXX. I'm a professor of French language and culture, and at the same time I serve as an assistant, I'm sorry, as a senior director for global engagement, and my work is a lot with, has to do a lot with internationalization and part of it is internationalization at home which means is virtual exchange I'm interested in that because of my own background from Greece, then studies in France, then moved to the US so cultures are a very important part of my life and professional life as well.

Int: Ok, and did you know about VALIANT before coming or what do you know about the project?

Tchr: I've been working with Virtual Exchange for a few years now, before I heard about Valiant and it's very important for me to be here because I want to develop collaborations for research with colleagues from Valiant. And I want to know what the European Union is doing because we focus as being in the US we know a lot about what is happening in the US with virtual exchange, But we really want to know what is happening with other parts of the world. So Europe is part of that.



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- Int: What would be the main takeaway for you?
- Tchr: What is the latest, what other universities are doing, and get information, bring back to my institution, talk to my faculty colleagues. We are starting collaboration within the university for research, for publications, and also for improving our methodology. And we bring that to, I bring that to faculty and also to my administration. So both aspects are very important And we bring that to, I bring that to faculty and also to my administration. So both aspects are very important for me and for my institution.
- Int: So thank you so much.
- Tchr: Okay

Interview 7

Participant: Teacher at university in USA

Highlights:

This participant explained that she has been actively engaged in global education since the 1990s but moved into VE in 2020. She learned about the VALIANT project through the Latin America COIL conference, where colleagues recommended it as a valuable resource for teacher education. She stressed the importance of teacher engagement in VE initiatives.

- Tchr: Hello, I am XXX and I am a professor of education at XXX at a smaller campus near XXX. And I have been involved with global education for many years, maybe since the 1990s. I started taking students on physical trips to Reggio Emilia, to Greece, to Cuba, but I realized that so few students could afford those kinds of luxuries to go on a global trip that I was looking for another opportunity. So I had a colleague who told me about virtual exchange. And in the United States, it has not caught on as quickly as it has here, but a colleague connected me with other people who are doing virtual exchange. So I got connected with XXXX from Brazil. We have almost like an online dating service. She created a service where anybody who's interested in doing virtual exchange puts their name on a list and then we swipe right if we see someone who's interested. It's called the Edge Project and it's based off of the COIL project. COIL is very big in the New York area and in other areas of the country and it's catching on everywhere. The pandemic really highlighted and accentuated this kind of virtual exchange. So I have only since 2020 been doing virtual exchange, I stopped taking students on physical trips and focused all of my energy on virtual exchange. So I've also done a virtual exchange with one of my classes with students from Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, because I really felt like they have to have a global perspective. Some of my students have never left their hometown. Some of my students, I am in a small town next to XXX, one third have never even gone into the city of XXX. So they really need to have a global perspective for these future teachers who are going to be preparing children for a world we don't even know what they're going to do and what they need to know about other cultures. Also because our country does not promote second language learning and we really need to. I also prepare teachers who are going to work with children in their classroom whose first language is not English. So they really need to understand what is it like to learn another language. So they talk to XXX's students who learn another language. How was it? What did you do?

- Int: What about the VALIANT project? What do you know about it?

- Tchr: The VALIANT Project, basically by going to the Latin America COIL, and at Latin America COIL, some colleagues were talking about it, it really is important to go to these conferences, whether it's virtual or in person, and make these connections with people. That's where you learn. So I learned about VALIANT.



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- Int: So you learned about Valiant via COIL conference?
- Tchr: Yeah, through the Latin America Coil and I am specifically in teacher education so they said this is perfect for you and luckily I found someone who could speak English at the Latin America Coil because I couldn't understand all of it in Spanish so luckily I found an English speaking person who explained all this to me and really got me on track. And we were so excited to come here because XXX and I had never met in person. We had been working together for years. And we always, we tell this story. And our students now are doing their virtual exchange. We are here the weeks that our students are doing their virtual exchange. So we are communicating back and sending pictures back and forth to them. Okay, we're here, we just went to this session, okay, we did this, and so I think the students are so excited because they know that we're excited. Our passion extends to them. So that's it.
- Int: So your takeaway from this conference would be the importance of also the teacher getting engaged as well?
- Tchr: Teachers getting engaged, yeah. My only hope, well not my only hope, but one of my greatest hopes is that my students continue their dialogue with the students after the four or six weeks that they're in the virtual exchange and they don't just do it like an assignment and it's over. So we connect them on various technologies like WhatsApp and Google Meets and other ways and we tell them like set up a chat in WhatsApp so that you can continue to dialogue. And so now we've been doing this for years, we said that we're going to go back to the two years before and talk to the students and say, did you stay in touch?
- Int: Yeah, great, great. Thank you, thank you so much XXX.
- Tchr: Thank you.

Interview 8

Participant: Doctoral Student

Highlights:

For this respondent, VALIANT has represented an opportunity, via the final conference to connect with people from different parts of Europe. She feels it is very useful for creating networks and alliances among virtual exchange practitioners to foster collaboration and to support each other. She also noted that the conference experience was beneficial for her doctoral studies, which focuses on creating international networks and transferring knowledge. She feels that the networking opportunities provided by the conference allowed for the transfer of knowledge without limitations.

- Int: So, yes, can you tell your name and where you come from?
- PhD st: Okay, my name is XXX. I am from Ecuador, but I am living and studying in Cádiz, and I work in the US in a virtual exchange project. I got to know about VALIANT because of the Unicollaboration. We are a school connect organization based in New York. We are partnering with Unicollaboration, and that's how to get to know the VALIANT project and this conference. The biggest takeaway from this conference is the s the opportunity to get to know different people around Europe. And that's a big takeaway. We also are promoting to create networks. I think we, as virtual exchange practitioners, we have to collaborate with each other. And we need to find alliance and support from each other. As a virtual exchange or COIL, Collaborative Online International Learning, the collaboration is an essential part to grow. So I think this kind of



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- project has a lot of impact. But we still need to work and create alliances and synergies to develop further.
- Int: And you're saying this experience of coming out has been very beneficial for your online doctoral studies at the moment?
- PhD st: Yeah, it does, because my doctorate focuses on creating international networks and to transfer knowledge and I think this kind of conference and this opportunity to networking, you can transfer your knowledge there is no limit to transfer the knowledge to anybody, so that's the biggest takeaway from this experience.
- Int: Okay, so thank you so much.
- PhD st: Sure.

Interview 9

Participant: University teacher; has experience as project coordinator of a VE initiative

Highlights:

For this respondent the key takeaway from VALIANT lies in the final conference. He feels he would need 'two luggage bags' to carry away all the knowledge he has gained. In particular, he mentions aspects such as pedagogical details, the importance of partnerships in virtual exchanges, the vision of virtual exchange initiatives, and the impact of such exchanges in overcoming difficult situations like war (e.g., learning soft skills for the AI era). He also appreciates the concept of internationalization at a distance and the networking opportunities provided by the conference.

- Int: So, could you tell us a bit about yourself?
- Tchr: Hello, my name is XXX. I'm an associate professor in the XXX in Crete. My background is laser physics and I'm a big fan of education as well. So I love to teach my students using any modern pedagogy that can be adapted to our ecosystem and to myself as well.
- Int: Okay. And how did you come, how did you know about VALIANT?
- Tchr: VALIANT, I learned about VALIANT through my engagement with virtual exchange. Recently, I got as a project coordinator in Erasmus funded a virtual exchange project named Impact that engaged universities from Morocco, Israel, and Europe in order to develop online and virtual exchanges that aim the development, the cultivation of soft skills, soft skills related to AI era. That as it comes, I will say that soft skills will play a crucial role. And this is a bibliography, what does it say. But also recently, because of the conflicts, also soft skills that they will help the people to overcome tough situations like war situations.
- Int: Interesting, yes. And what would be the takeaways about this conference?
- Tchr: I wish to have two luggages regarding the knowledge and the information that I got. I got information regarding this particular pedagogy, the details how to apply it, the number of the partners that you should involve in each of the virtual exchanges, the vision of the virtual exchange, the impact of the virtual exchange for overcoming difficult situations, to disseminate your area for more internationalization. I like very much the terminology internationalization at distance. I thought internationalization in home regarding mutual exchanges, the network that I built. So I will never regret that I participated and I'm looking forward for the next one.
- Int: Wow. Thank you so much.
- Tchr: Thank you.

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Interview 10

Participant: Doctoral student; engaged in VE currently

Highlights:

For this respondent, VALIANT's emphasis on mentoring is important. He stressed the need to continue fostering this sense of community in order to institutionalize VE, which remains a significant challenge. According to him, despite the innovative approaches and mentoring practices observed, there's still work to be done at various levels, in particular in primary education, to fully integrate virtual exchange into educational systems.

Int: So, what's your name?

PhD st: My name is XXX.

Int: And you come from?

PhD st: I am from Germany at the University of XXX. Before that I was at the University of XXX.

Int: And you are a teacher at the school as well?

PhD st: Actually, I am a research assistant and doctorate student for teaching English as a foreign language. I studied to become a teacher for a secondary education, but now I'm at university as a teacher trainer.

Int: Okay, and how did you know about VALIANT?

PhD st: So VALIANT, since I have been engaged in virtual exchange, doing my own virtual exchanges and researching that for my thesis, my dissertation, I'm just, you know, I feel like I just hear about it. I have been reading up on what Robert OoDowd has been doing all the time and he presented on it, I think, two years ago at a conference and that's, I think, how I first heard of it, but basically through the community. I feel like this community is so tightly knit and that way I just knew that a few people were involved in this and that's how I heard.

Int: Right. And what are the takeaways for you?

PhD st: I think we need, I mean overall I think again I want to stress the sense of community that we have seen here at this conference and that I keep seeing at everything that be it unique collaboration or whoever is engaged in virtual exchange does and shows. That's really important, something we have to keep going because I think institutionalizing virtual exchange continues to be a challenge, a main challenge that we see. I think there's many great approaches that we have seen, and some people have been able to really make it mandatory as part of their education. And I think we have seen so many good ways of mentoring and being there and reflecting, things that we've seen again and again in the discussions, but still on a larger scale and at multiple levels. Primary education for example I think is such a potential place for that. is such a potential place for that.

Int: Thank you XXX.

Report from flash interviews (León, Spain 7-9 February, 2024)

Interview 11

Participant: University professor, Coordinator of VE

Highlights:

The interviewee emphasizes the importance of integrating virtual exchange and COIL concepts into teacher education programs, starting from primary and secondary education levels. In this sense, the VALIANT project can provide insights into research results and help VE practitioners stay updated on developments within the VE community, particularly in teacher education.

Int: Now, what's your name?

Tchr: I'm XXX, I'm from the XXX University, Germany. I work as a Coil Virtual Exchange Coordinator at the Center for Quality Development in teaching and studies and in the department teaching in media.

Int: Nice. How did you find out about VALIANT?

Tchr: To be honest, I forgot already. I suppose through social media, from colleagues ... I follow the VALIANT project since maybe two years already, or two and a half years, and I think I also subscribe for any news, I don't know, and there I get the information there is a conference and yeah, this is it. What was the question?

Int: And what would be the takeaways from the project?

Tchr: The takeaways, so maybe I should start with the purpose or the reason I'm here because our university is the only university in the state of XXX in Germany that is responsible or has teacher education programs, teacher training programs and we are responsible for the whole state. And there are already a few teachers who are interested in COIL or engaged in COIL or virtual exchange or let's think broader, internationalization at home, there are different formats and I think teacher education is an important part in this virtual exchange coil field because we have to start to our students or already in the school, already in the primary and secondary education. And my takeaways are lots of research results, so I feel a bit more up-to-date what's going on in the community, especially teacher education. But also one main takeaway was the presentation of XXX. It is, for me, from a COIL coordinator's perspective, was really valuable to get inspiration by a new model, by a new model, the so-called heroes journey, and this helps me a lot to get new ideas. How I can help my institution to integrate this format in a broader way and develop structures and support teachers. There are many takeaways, yeah.

Int: Thank you so much.

Tchr: Thank you.