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Collaborative online international learning as a postdigital connected, embodied, relational & (socio)material Third Space: female voices

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we share interim insights that emerged from *Female Voices in the Third Space: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in South–North Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL),* a project co-funded by the British Academy/Leverhulme Trust. Drawing on data generated through interviews conducted with female participants across universities in four different continents, we reviewed the relevance and appropriateness of named values and capitals we previously presented in a model of South–North COIL. Using a three-phase hybrid concept analysis methodology (theory, fieldwork and analysis), we discuss how student female voices have articulated attributes of their engagement in COIL to further explicate the relevance of the values and capitals identified and emerging. Our analysis pushes beyond normative and universal conceptualisations of learning spaces in HE in relation to the potential of COIL as a postdigital Third Space as (1) connected (providing inclusive and adaptive environments in which learning can take place), (2) embodied (shaped by the physical and virtual (inter)actions of individuals and groups), (3) relational (as realised through meaningful (inter)relationships that foster mattering, belonging, wellbeing, and community, amidst different cultures and contexts), and (4) (socio)material (as mutually shaped by technology and contexts which are mediated by educators and learners).

Introduction

In this paper, we report on the initial outcomes of our project *Female Voices in the Third Space: Researching Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in South–North Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL)* (*Female Voices* hereafter), co-funded by a British Academy/Leverhulme Research Small Grant (2023–2025). *Female Voices* reviews a

model of South–North COIL previously co-designed by the applicants (Wimpenny et al., 2022, p. 289 – Figure 1) inspired by a conceptualisation of the internationalisation of the curriculum (IoC) by Leask and Bridge (2013, p. 84). Using data generated through interviews with female stakeholders based in Higher Education (HE) institutions in four different continents, we were interested in how women articulate attributes of their engagement in COIL and how these resonate with the concepts of our model in Figure 1, especially in relation to the identified values and capitals.

While there are various definitions of COIL (Wimpenny & Orsini-Jones, 2020), our preferred one is Leask's: 'online learning in an international setting, with interactive involvement of students and faculty from different international and intercultural backgrounds in and outside the classroom' (2020, p. 188). We see COIL as a challenging yet fertile liminal and decolonial Third Space (Bhabha & Rutherford, 2006), that can foster intercultural dialogue and transformational learning experiences. We associate it to Wang and Canarajah's conceptualisation of 'the postdigital condition', 'as a condition where the virtual and physical mediate each other to form layered and hybridized spaces that transcend the online/offline distinction' (2024, p. 1). We approach the COIL Third Space as a fluid postdigital space, where participants are not anchored to 'places', but interact in a dynamic 'new space', which can trigger unexpected epistemological and ontological shifts.

The conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 1 identifies an interconnected set of values, with a particular set of capitals, which give rise to how ways of knowing, being, relating and expressing not only might be questioned, contested and transformed in Third Space
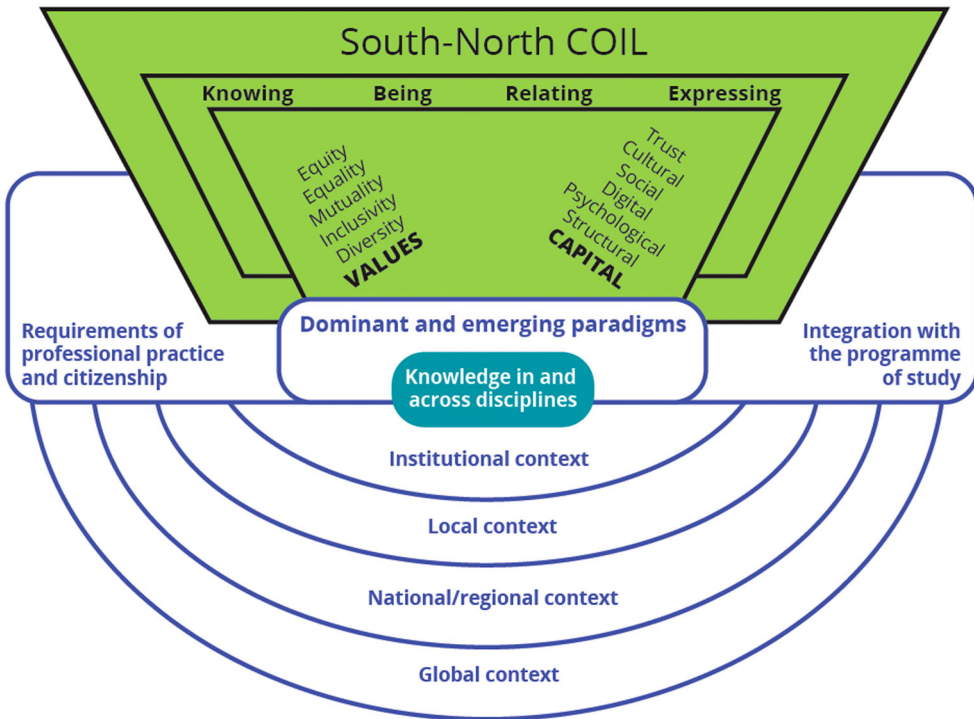

Figure 1. A conceptual framework of Third Space COIL exchange (Wimpenny et al., 2022, p. 289).

COIL, but also appreciated and celebrated. 'Value' is understood in terms of the worth and relevance of HE practices to student and staff development, associated with the promotion of education as a social good, emphasising the importance of inclusivity in the teaching, learning, and research missions of institutions (Brusoni et al., 2014). 'Capital' is used not only as an indication of class and wealth as in the original theorisation by Bourdieu (2006), but as a resource or potential to draw from. In this paper we focus on how women develop cultural capital through the efforts they are willing to invest in social relations in the COIL exchanges they have participated in and reflected upon.

We identified that such values and capitals for South–North COIL exchange need to be recognised and navigated to address access and inclusion needs of students, with particular reference to how to internationalise the HE curriculum. In our framework to date, we posited that developing staff and students' understandings of these connections, and not least their ability to be critical and reflexively engaged citizens, alongside the influence of disciplinary perspectives and diverse contexts, enables the postdigital Third Space COIL dialogue. It is upon these initial theorisations that this study builds. In particular we seek to decenter the conceptualisation of the IoC (Wimpenny et al., 2022) and open up 'otherwise' ways of knowing, being and relating through a decolonial and postdigital lens that builds on knowledge produced by women.

Our focus on elevating women's voices is to affirm women's perspectives in holding power and sway in ideals about education scholarship and praxis (Wimpenny et al., 2024). Our inquiry seeks to embrace (intersectional and often marginalised) identities of women in COIL education, whose voices might otherwise be mis-understood, mis-interpreted, and or unheard/silenced. Marginalised as in not typically heard, integrated/responded to, valued, because they are not asked for, because other voices overpower and dominate the discourse, because of prevailing patriarchy, sense of struggle and vulnerability otherwise (Helm, 2018; Wimpenny et al., 2024).

Building on the ideas by Deadorff (2022) of communicating successfully across difference within COIL, and Tadal and Marino's (2022) study exploring how COIL can lessen the marginalisation of underrepresented student populations, we seek to focus on how women students are engaging in COIL in co-creating knowledge/ways of knowing.

There are numerous case studies on COIL (e.g., Howard et al., 2023; Rubin & Guth, 2022), and publications focusing on the approaches and pedagogy involved (e.g., O'Dowd, 2022) but, to our knowledge, there is a very limited number that specifically give voice to women's experiences. For instance, Orsini-Jones (2023, p. 52) documented some evidence that female participants find the COIL Third Space safe and conducive to otherwise ways of learning, engaging and relating. Here we do not, however, assume that inclusion and equality are the default experiences for women in COIL. We aim to explore how women articulate attributes of their engagement in this space: the values that they bring, the capitals that they draw from, and if Third Space COIL pedagogy leads to authentic ways of knowing, being, relating and expressing.

In view of the arguments above, we thus formulate our first research question, RQ1: *in what ways do the attributes that women articulate regarding their engagement in COIL align to the concepts of the model, especially in relation to the named values and capitals?*

The discussion brought to bear in this paper pushes beyond normative and 'universal' conceptualisations of learning spaces in HE. We considered the voices of female students to revisit our thinking, to reimagine learning space/s in relation to the potential of COIL

as a postdigital Third Space that can be: (1) connected – providing inclusive and adaptive environments in which learning can take place; (2) embodied – shaped by the physical and virtual (inter)actions of individuals and groups; (3) relational – as realised through meaningful (inter)relationships that foster mattering, belonging, wellbeing, and community, amidst different cultures and contexts, and (4) (socio)material – as mutually shaped by technology, contexts and mediated by human interaction. The framing of space in this special edition provided us with an additional conceptual and imaginative layer to consider depth and meaning of the Third Space model, and thus to formulate the second research question namely, RQ2: *How do female voices resonate with COIL as a postdigital inclusive Third Space that is connected, embodied, relational and (socio)material in view of the values they bring and the capitals they draw from?*

Literature review

In his foreword to Rubin's and Guth's *The Guide to COIL Virtual Exchange* (2022), the internationalisation pioneer and scholar De Wit states that COIL Virtual Exchange has become a key change agent in the internationalisation of HE. He adds that, despite not having yet been adopted widely, COIL Virtual Exchange is: 'a key driver for internationalization (…) as an inspiration for inclusion (…), for internationalization of the curriculum, and for internationalizing higher education for society' (2022, p. 3). Here we position our COIL praxis within the theorisation of critical and decolonial internationalisation provided by Stein (2019), an otherwise internationalisation, uncoupled from the neoliberal priorities normally promoted for COIL engagement by Global North HE institutions, such as developing employability skills (Stein, 2019; Wimpenny & Orsini-Jones, 2020).

COIL is conceptualised as a fluid, liminal and transformational Third Space in our *Female Voices* study (in alignment with Figure 1, Wimpenny et al., 2022, p. 289). Third Space COIL affords participants opportunities to examine deep-seated beliefs by exposing them to different perspectives (see Helm, 2018 – discussing Virtual Exchange – which will be used as a synonym for COIL here, even if the two terms are not always understood as equivalent, see Rubin & Guth, 2022 on this) and ways of being, knowing and expressing (Wimpenny et al., 2022). Such conceptualisation of Third Space also affords the possibility to delink from modernity and 'universal'/Western Eurocentric perspectives to emphasise a pluriversal ecology of knowledges (e.g., Guimarães & Finardi, 2021) that promotes internationalisation processes sensitive to and inclusive of the Global South, in a postdigital space where physical and online contexts are understood as mediating each other to form hybrid spaces (Wang & Canarajah, 2024).

The underpinnings of the values and capitals analysed in this study relate to those used in our conceptual framework of Third Space COIL exchange illustrated in Figure 1 (Wimpenny et al., 2022, p. 289) and are based on Bourdieu's notion of symbolic capitals (e.g., Bourdieu, 1989), Paulo Freire's notion of autonomy (e.g., Freire, 1996) and postcolonial theorising about Third Space as a postdigital space (e.g., Wang & Canarajah, 2024).

The modernity viewpoint is questioned by postcolonial/decolonial efforts, challenging hierarchical binaries such as north/south, physical/online, mind/body, language/multimodality, knowledge/indigenous thinking, cognition/emotion, West/the rest, and human/non-human (Stein, 2019; Tran et al., 2023; Wang & Canarajah, 2024). We

align with decolonial efforts that interrogate boundaries between people, languages, contexts and technologies exploring the spatial hybridity of COIL Third Space to open up new (socio)material possibilities. In doing do, we see this work as aligned with the field of 'critical internationalisation studies' (Hauck, 2023; Mittelmeier & Yang, 2022; Stein, 2019).

Thus, we approach the COIL postdigital Third Space as a nuanced, multi-layered, fluid, virtual/physical/hybrid, porous, agentive space that affords diverse semiotic repertoires, including multimodal resources and spatial objects as meaning-making and as an invitation to reconsider our understanding of postdigital learning spaces.

Methodology

Our study design adopted a hybrid approach to Qualitative Concept Analysis – Hybrid Concept Analysis – HCA (Hermanns & Mastel-Smith, 2012) as a means to evaluate the conceptual framework of Third Space COIL exchange (Wimpenny et al., 2022) against the data generated, in conjunction with the connected/embodied/relational/(socio)material themes explored in this special issue. HCA includes three phases: theory, fieldwork and analysis.

As from Figure 1, in the theory phase we identified a number of values and capitals for South–North COIL exchange which we argued should be recognised to address access and inclusion needs of students. We see COIL as promoting openness to knowledge pluralisation and recognition of diversity. The fieldwork (HCA phase 2) discussed here refers to data collected in the first stage of the *Female Voices* project that involved female students (October 2023-March 2024). To address our research questions, we focused on how concepts/constructs might resonate with wider students' experiences and perceptions of their South–North COIL exchanges, alongside the intersectional influences of gender, ethnicity, disciplinarity, and study contexts. Further, participant framings of COIL Third Space as connected, embodied, relational and (socio)material where considered. Our study aims were:

- To explore how the women identify what makes the values and capitals significant for them, if at all (*the operationalisation of the concept*)
- To investigate what situations, including antecedents and consequences in all their nuances, serve to add meaning and relevance to the concepts (*the tangibleness of the concept)* and in relation to the re-imagined COIL Third Space(s) as lenses
- To link the analysis to any further literature that may support any conceptual ambiguity *(the refinement/extension or additions required to substantiate the concept)*
- To determine implications for further research.

Ethical clearance (Project 164541, approved on 25/10/2023) was granted from the ethics-governance unit at the lead UK university, and gatekeepers' permissions were sought at all other participating institutions. An online enrolment survey was used to recruit female participants, with the survey piloted by the *Female Voices* team members. Participants in this paper were students who had taken part in Global South–North COIL projects. The survey included project information and collected data on participant age, ethnicity, discipline, COIL exchange experience(s) and contact

details for the interviews to be scheduled, considering participant availability and preference.

Twenty-six students enrolled and agreed to be interviewed in the first stage of the project (October 2023 – March 2024). They ranged between 18–55 years of age. Information on their nationality, mother tongue (L1), country location at the time of participating in COIL, university course and number of COIL projects attended, is provided in the Appendix. The majority had experienced COIL as part of an applied linguistics/English language teaching (ELT) course (14/26, 54%), but other degree courses or programmes were represented too (see Appendix). The relevant data emerging from this participant distribution will be discussed in the findings section below.

All interviewees were allocated a code, to enable anonymity. The interview questions were collaboratively designed by the research team in both English and Portuguese, as many Brazilian participants expressed a preference for using their first language (a topic we will expand on later in this article).[1] The interviewees were allocated to each researcher in the team according to their geographical and/or degree course and/ or COIL project lead location at the time of the interview, with the support of the two research assistants (RAs) (one based in the UK and one in South Africa). Interviews were carried out in English for students based in the UK and South Africa and in Portuguese for all Brazilian participants but one, using Zoom (for the majority of interviews, 18/26, 70%) or Teams. Participant consent to be recorded was requested and captions were enabled to facilitate as open and clear an interview conversation as possible. An opening icebreaker in the sharing of an artefact which resonated with participants' COIL experience(s) began the interview. Question areas progressed to include students' views on the design and facilitation of their COIL exchange(s), how their COIL experiences offered opportunity to develop attributes, qualities and capabilities, and their considerations of COIL being an inclusive learning space in which agency was respected/ enabled.

In the data analysis phase (phase 3 HCA), we drew from Braun et al.'s reflexive thematic analysis (2022), acknowledging there is no one set of research values that all qualitative researchers agree on, but rather researcher subjectivity is viewed as a resource, with meaning and knowledge as contextually situated, partial and provisional. Moreover, the recognition of diversity, the influence of context and critical engagement with subjective experiences was emphasised (Mertens, 2019). During this, we considered how respondents had made reference to both our initial conceptual framework of Third Space COIL (Figure 1), but also what might be added. Two interview transcripts were randomly selected to pilot our thematic coding reflecting the values and capitals in our framework – values (V): V1 Equity, V2 Equality, V3 Mutuality, V4 Inclusivity, V5 Diversity; capitals (C): C1 Trust, C2 Cultural, C3 Social, C4 Digital, C5 Psychological, C6 Structural. Following the pilot coding of the two interviews by each of the four team members, it was agreed that additional codes that were emerging should be included, i.e., (E): E1 Empowering; E2 Innovation/Innovative; E3 Transformational; E4 Challenging/challenges. Two extra capitals also emerged: C7 Linguistic and C8 Agency/Autonomy.

Further, our analysis considered how respondents had made reference to the four lenses of (1) connected – providing inclusive and adaptive environments in which

learning can take place, (2) embodied – shaped by the physical and virtual (inter)actions of individuals and groups, (3) relational – as realised through meaningful (inter)relationships that foster mattering, belonging, wellbeing, and community, amidst different cultures and contexts, and (4) (socio)material as mutually shaped by technology and contexts which are, in practice, always mediated by educators and learners.

This analysis phase of the HCA research process included re-engagement with theoretical perspectives already considered in phase one (theory), and integration of those newly prompted/realised that emerged from phase 2 (fieldwork). Finally, we considered directions for future inquiry.

Findings

In this section we bring together the values that were mentioned by participants in the study considering the original values of our conceptual model alongside the re-imagined COIL Third Space(s) (connected, relational, embodied, (socio)material) as lenses. We progress similarly to discuss the capitals and spatial possibilities suggested by participants and how they resonate with those identified in the original model. Further, the additional themes which also emerged, which did not relate to either values or capitals, but rather related to the ecology of COIL are then presented.

Values and emerging spatial possibilities

The values we had included in our conceptualisation of COIL Third Space were V1 Equity, V2 Equality; V3 Mutuality, V4 Inclusivity and V5 Diversity. These values were indeed mentioned by participants in the study. Please refer to the Appendix for details on each participant. For instance, UK1 stated that (which illustrates V2 and V4):

> Actually, I felt valued. Because […] in some of the countries men generally talk and women generally listen to them but in the virtual exchanges that I participated in I didn't experience such a thing. Everyone took turns and I got a chance to share my opinions, talk about the things that I believe regarding the education, language education. (UK1)

SA1 also mentioned the importance of having the opportunity to share opinions: 'I never got the idea that there was inequality or that one voice was heard more than the other' (SA1) (linked to V2/V4).

There was one aspect relating to all 5 values (V1–V5) that emerged from most interviewees who were studying how to teach English as a second or additional language: they felt that their variety of English was respected in the COIL environment and they did not feel judged for it by others. This is a finding specific to these ELT participants, as they were all very conscious of their English proficiency as current or future teachers of the English language. In fact, most mentioned feeling 'safe' despite their initial apprehension about speaking in a variety of Englishes that did not conform with the (perceived as prestigious) UK or USA variants. For example:

> I was thinking that even though I can speak English, but you know in the presence of native speakers, I was like, oh, I feel inferior […]. But […] then I heard so many testimonials regarding, this, you know, shyness and inferiority complex from different students from

different countries. I then came to know, I'm not the only one […]. We are all maybe in the same boat. So it's okay not be okay. So […] that was really kind of safe space for me. (UK3)

V1, V2 and V4 are also well illustrated by the testimonial by BR1, who brought her passport as her icebreaker object and stated that because of social inequalities, travelling abroad was still for the privileged few. COIL had enabled her to engage with students from outside Brazil. Also, as a mother who was breastfeeding at the time of taking part in COIL, she had felt safe and able to care for her baby while also knowledge-sharing on ELT. What many Brazilian students (BR2, BR3, BR4 and BR5) mentioned resonated with the capital of trust (C1) and the values of inclusivity (V4) and diversity (V5). V3, mutuality, was also mentioned by many interviewees, for example, one of the two Chinese participants shared that (which also stresses V5):

> COIL […] transforms the traditional classroom into a global space.[…] it serves as a central hub, where diverse learners interact, share perspectives and collectively contribute to a shared pool of knowledge. […] it serves as dynamic global village of learners fostering a sense of community and interconnectedness across borders. (UK5)

We see how the above values had resonance with the spatial characteristics included in our framing; for example, with regards to the 'connected' lens of how COIL, as part of Internationalisation at Home (IaH, Beelen & Jones, 2015) promotes a networked space in which inclusive global learning can take place 'from home'.

Capitals and emerging spatial possibilities

In terms of how capitals were addressed by the female students, SA2 mentioned: 'For you to be vulnerable, to open yourself up, you need to be comfortable and you need to trust the people that you're dealing with'. This not only refers to the trust capital mentioned in the model (C1), but also to being safe enough to show vulnerability. UK12, on taking up space and stepping up into a group leadership role, where other peers had not, mentioned her vulnerability but also her psychological capital: 'I got worried about how I was coming across – was I being too pushy? I was invested in the task and wanted to perform well and to share my professional knowledge' (UK12). For this final year student, and with the COIL task being collaboratively assessed, her confidence in the digital space surprised her in a positive way with regards to her self-efficacy (e.g., having confidence to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed) – our added C8: Agency/Autonomy – and in having optimism, Psychological C5 in our framework.

Challenges emerged too: BR3, who lives with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), made a relevant comment related to psychological capital (C5) in recognition of how students with additional learning needs may have to redirect pathways to achieving goals, and require resilience to persevere. She also added that academic staff managing COIL projects should make use of features such as captions in synchronous online sessions and scaffold the COIL experience with other resources (e.g., prior distribution of relevant texts and materials before the live sessions) to prevent information overload, as neurodivergent students can find the COIL experience overwhelming otherwise. Such insights deepened our learning regarding structural capital (C7) and psychological capital (C5), and the necessity of academic staff facilitating COIL to have heightened awareness of the intersectional needs of learners including how considerations of the 'space' directly

impacts students' ability to take part in the virtual (inter)actions as individuals and as group members. Structural capital (C6) was further nuanced/extended to detail the importance of the timing of COIL, synchronous/asynchronous engagements, the embeddedness of COIL within a programme of study, and the importance of how the COIL collaborative tasks were negotiated or presented. Many participants mentioned the pivotal role that e-mediators had played in scaffolding the group activities in Zoom breakout rooms in the COIL projects involving language education. E-mediators (often students trained for the role) contributed to the creation of a safe space, where the following capitals were embedded and/or developed: Trust (C1), (inter)Cultural (C2), Digital (C4), Psychological (C6), Linguistic (C7) and Agency (C8). However, it also emerged that e-mediators skilled in online interactional, intercultural and digital competences were needed to facilitate effectively, and that this could be a challenge (E3). Also, UK6 shared that having more time for group tasks would have been beneficial.

When considering spatial characteristics, emphasis on relational aspects emerged, as realised through the opportunity for meaningful (inter)relationships that foster mattering, belonging, wellbeing, and community. As previously mentioned, the emerging extra aspects/themes were coded E1 (Empowering), E2 (Transformational), E3 (Innovative) and E4 (Challenging).

The intersection of linguistic, gender and trust capitals was mentioned by participant BR2. She reported that it was interesting to see how comfortable participants felt in the breakout rooms space when there were only women. Muslim participants felt they could remove their hijabs and speak freely. A nice space metaphor was provided by UK5 (Chinese) who said of COIL: 'I thought this like, you know a digital bridge that connects the learners from diverse backgrounds, which breaks the limits of boundaries' (UK5).

(Socio)material aspects of the COIL space are often linked to the affordances of the technology utilised, for example use of the chat function, breakout rooms and the opportunity to have the camera on/off. BR4 mentioned that the Third Space created in the COIL was shaped by the technology mutually agreed (Teams in her case), though not mutually shared (not all participants had the same access to Teams), and that afforded different (socio)material possibilities for all involved. A nice space metaphor was provided by UK5 (Chinese) who said of COIL: 'I thought this like, you know a digital bridge that connects the learners from diverse backgrounds, which breaks the limits of boundaries' (UK5).

Additional spatial possibilities

In addition to values and capitals from our original model and those added (C7 Linguistic capital and C8 Agency/Autonomy), our inquiry has further highlighted possibilities which students recognised, valued and co-constructed as part of their engagement in the Third Space linked to pluralised ways of being, knowing, expressing, and relating in COIL. For instance, a number of participants mentioned issues of discovery and transformational learning. SA2 shared her journey of self-discovery: 'So during both of the COILs that I participated in, I really learned a lot about myself. So personal development and discovery for me was something that I've benefited from' (SA2). Participant UK12 shared that COIL had given her the confidence to see herself as a future leader in her field: 'But like, it kind of made me think ohh maybe I could actually pursue roles in

project management, so roles in leadership […] which I didn't realise I could before. But I've definitely felt like leadership has emerged' (UK12).

The Empowering/Transformational (E1/E2) potential of COIL also emerged from many of the participants' interviews, e.g., 'The whole problem solving is taken to a whole other dimension because you learn more from being with a wider audience, and that contributes to problem solving on like a global scale' (SA3), as also mentioned by BR5, who stated that she had concerns about speaking her variety of English during the exchange with the UK, but then realised the UK ELT students were international. This gave her confidence to communicate in English and transformed her way of seeing herself.

These additional extensions to our original framings also resonate with spatial embodied learning space that allows for self-discovery and agency, shaped by the physical and virtual (inter)actions of the 'COILing' individuals and groups; embodied experiences through the physical and virtual interactions are part of the ecologies in which students function. For example, during the interviews with students, we asked them to bring objects related to their views on COIL as an icebreaker. BR3 brought the world globe (mentioning she travels only around that globe and/or with COIL). SA2 used arts-based inquiry to craft a poem based on a collage of her COIL experiences in her PhD thesis. UK10 (Nigerian national) brought pictures of China and stated they illustrated her new learning about English teaching in a different country context from her own, that she would have never encountered in textbooks, highlighting the 'otherwise' experiential learning opportunities in the intersection of the embodied, connected, relational and (socio)material themes in COIL.

Discussion

With reference to our RQ1, the female voices collected appeared to substantiate our former claim that the five values named in Figure 1 (V1–V5) are developed through COIL, and that the postdigital COIL Third Space affords a sense of safety. This sense of safety might relate to its specific features: *connected* (its accessibility and spatial features) *embodied* (ironically the two-dimensional online synchronous disembodiment can prove to be a leveller in comparison with face-to-face learning settings); relational (the fostering of pluralistic postdigital intercultural exchanges); and (socio)material (reversal/alteration of interactional dynamics between educators and learners facilitated by the digital affordances available, again, levelling up differences).

Building on Tadal and Marino's (2022) study, we contend COIL works to ease the marginalisation of female voices, focusing rather on how women students and academics are engaging in COIL in the co-creation of knowledge/ways of knowing. Participants spoke about their relief and joy in being heard and valued, rather than mis-understood, mis-interpreted, and or unheard/silenced. As such, our findings also align with the Capitals proposed in Figure 1, in so far as we collected strong evidence validating the fact that COIL can foster and build Capitals 1–6. However, we realised that we needed to add new Capitals in view of the participants' testimonials, namely C7 Linguistic and C8 Agency/Autonomy. With particular reference to the participants who were students on ELT courses, we had underestimated the intimidating power of 'standard' English (which was used as the Lingua Franca in all the exchanges discussed here) for the majority of

them. However, this realisation also provided an opportunity for the ELT staff and students in one of the COIL projects discussed here to engage in a reflection on the 'English canon' from a decolonial perspective (as documented in Hildeblando Júnior, 2023). The reflection focused on 'what is English?' and 'whose is English?' and proved to be transformational for all ELT participants involved. It also triggered a sense of agency (added capital C8) in the students that made them re-think their current teaching practice and beliefs. One limitation of this study could however be that the majority of participants were students in English language education and this might have contributed to the prominence of the mention of C7, added linguistic capital.

With reference to our RQ2, Georgiou and Ioannou (2021) highlight the importance of technology-enhanced embodied experience in learning. In the post-human, postdigital environment of the twenty-first century, the connection between humans and their device has been well-documented (e.g., Wolhuter & Jacobs, 2021). The students spoke of their physical and virtual (inter)actions, at times metaphorically sharing how COIL offers a virtual passport for appreciating their peers' contexts, which otherwise would be out of reach. The values and capitals of our original framing have been extended with more nuanced appreciation of how COIL Third Space brings together people, languages, contexts and technologies within a spatial hybridity to open up new possibilities. From our decolonial stance and discomfort with modernist/Western/positivist orientations, our findings promote COIL Third Space as 'otherwise' space were female voices can thrive.

Also, our reimagining of the COIL postdigital Third Space is informed by the testimonials of female students who were international and from the Global South in the majority. Our critical internationalisation approach goes against the 'deficit' model still often associated with international students (Tran et al., 2023), it celebrates the female participants' knowledge-sharing around our exploration of the COIL 'otherwise' space. The fact that participants stated that they felt empowered, valued and heard in the COIL safe Third Space illustrates that COIL should not just be integrated into the curriculum for the sole purpose of addressing neoliberal values, as, regrettably, the main internationalisation policy narrative in HE is still to promote COIL for employability purposes (Andreotti et al., 2018). Our findings demonstrate that COIL can support equality, inclusion and diversity and should therefore be seen as an ideal pedagogical approach (and space) to foster the humanisation of international education (Tran et al., 2023).

Conclusion

Our concept analysis promoting Female Voices serves to strengthen and amplify our conceptual model (Figure 1) with an increased perspective of the values and capitals already identified and more. In addition to the original capitals that students and staff draw from identified in our model, new capitals were mentioned, namely linguistic capital as well as agency and autonomy. However, considering the experiences through the lenses of space (connected, embodied, relational and (socio)material) provided us with insights beyond our initial conceptualisation of Third Space, and specifically that this space is empowering, innovative and transformative whilst being challenging. Although this is only emerging and reflecting the interim stage of our
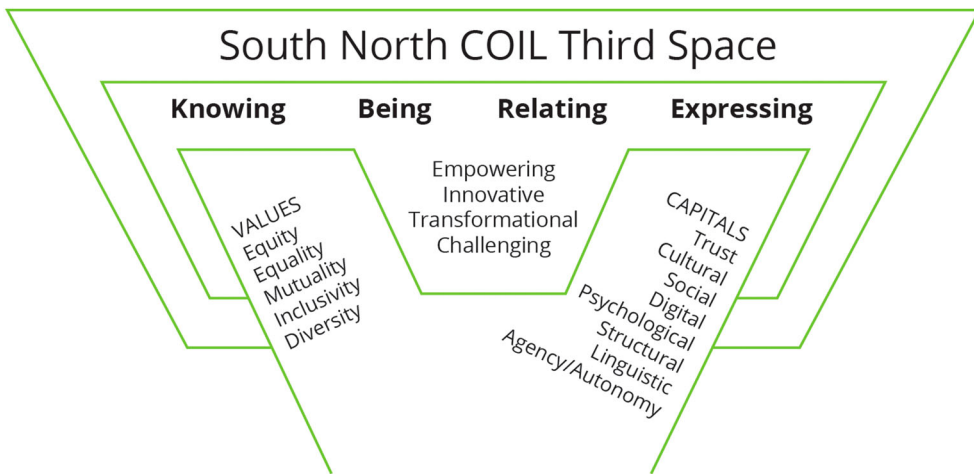
Figure 2. Emerging adapted South North COIL conceptualisation model for the IoC.

research, what we do propose is an evolving adaption of the upper section of the model in Figure 1, as illustrated in Figure 2: 'Emerging adapted South North COIL conceptualisation model for the IoC'.

The study participants identified with their COIL exchange as a dynamic fluid space, where female students were able to interact with their peers in ways that triggered unexpected epistemological and ontological shifts.

Our findings have enabled us to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of COIL as a Postdigital Third Space for women to flourish within (Wimpenny et al., 2024). Our female student participants shared how they experienced COIL as a challenging (time, facilitation, linguistic considerations) yet fertile liminal Third Space in which they were able to engage in intercultural dialogue and transformational and 'real world' experiential learning experiences.

The next steps will be to analyse the data emerging from the staff interviews against the findings that emerged from the students' interviews and review Figure 2 accordingly.

Note

1. The interviews carried out in Portuguese were transcribed and then paraphrased into English by the interviewer, who is one of the authors of this paper. The relevant participants were then asked to check the way we had reported what they had said for accuracy.

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Appendix

COIL participants interviewed

Student code	Mother tongue (first language)	Nationality	University country location at the time of participating in COIL	University course	Number of COIL projects participant took part in
BR1	Brazilian Portuguese	Brazilian	Switzerland	University-wide optional module at BA level open to all courses	3
BR2	Brazilian Portuguese	Brazilian	Brazil	MA Education	5
BR3	Brazilian Portuguese	Brazilian	Brazil	University-wide optional module at BA level open to all courses	5
BR4	Brazilian Portuguese	Brazilian	Brazil	PhD Education	5
BR5	Brazilian Portuguese	Brazilian	Brazil	PhD Education	5
BR6	Brazilian Portuguese	Brazilian	Brazil	English Language BA Hons Degree course	4
SA1	English	South African	South Africa	BA Hons Architecture	1
SA2	Afrikaans	South African	South Africa	PhD Curriculum Studies	2
SA3	Afrikaans	South African	South Africa	MA Higher Education Studies	1
SA4	Xhosa	South African	South Africa	BA Hons Architecture	1
SA5	Sesotho	South African	South Africa	LLB Law BA Hons	2
SA6	Setswana	South African	South Africa	Post Graduate Diploma in Higher Education	2
TK1	Turkmen	Turkmen	Turkey	BA Hons ELT	1
TK2	Turkish	Turkish	Turkey	BA Hons ELT	1
UK1	Turkish	Cypriot	UK	MA ELTAL	5
UK2	Bangla	Bangladeshi	UK	MA ELTAL	1
UK3	Hindi and English	Indian	UK	MA ELTAL	2
UK4	Italian and Spanish	Italian and Spanish	UK	PhD Applied Linguistics	2
UK5	Chinese	Chinese	UK	MA ELTAL	2
UK6	Chinese	Chinese	UK	MA ELTAL	1
UK7	Vietnamese	Vietnamese	UK	MA ELTAL	2
UK8	Hindi and Punjabi	Indian	UK	MA ELTAL	2
UK9	Vietnamese	Vietnamese	UK	MA ELTAL	2
UK10	Idoma	Nigerian	UK	MA ELTAL	1
UK11	Bahasa and Melayu/ Malay	Malaysian	UK	MA ELTAL	1
UK12	Italian	Italian	UK	BA Hons Business and Marketing	1