

VOLUME 4 | Games for Good 2025 Conference Proceedings

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VOLUME 4: GAMES FOR GOOD 2025
CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

SUSAN E. RIVERS, PhD

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INTRODUCTION

SUSAN E. RIVERS, PHD

The *Journal of Games, Self, & Society* features scholarship on the power of game design and play to support, accompany, and ignite connections, explorations, and transformations in understanding the self, others, and society. This special issue includes papers from the inaugural Games for Good conference held at Clark University in November 2026. When Paul Cotnoir, Dean of the Becker School of Design and Technology at Clark, called to tell me about his vision for the conference, I was overjoyed that he wanted to create a new opportunity to explore and celebrate the value of games. We quickly agreed that publishing the proceedings from the conference in this journal would be a contribution to the field. When he then asked me to be the keynote speaker, I nearly fell off my chair!

I am well aware that I'm an enthusiastic supporter (sometimes an overly enthusiastic one) of using games and game design for good, but who was I to give the keynote address at the inaugural Games for Good conference? I stepped into the field of games and game design a mere decade ago. Surely, there were others far more esteemed than I to take on this role. I observed myself responding to Paul's invitation, "Wow! Yes, of course. I'd love to. What an honor!" While I truly meant those words, I also felt real fear accompany them.

In the months leading up to the conference, I worried about what I would say and how I would say it. Could I convince the audience that I had something useful to share? It took me a while to come to the realization that Paul must have asked me for a reason. What if I just spoke from my heart about how I came to understand what's good about games? I collected and wove together the meaningful stories and learnings from my many decades as a social psychologist and my single decade as a game designer. I shared them on a cold, rainy morning, in a beautiful room filled with humans who love games and believe in the power of them to create good in the world. Here's a little bit of what I shared.

A SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGIST'S LENS: PERSON + SITUATION = OUTCOME

I'm a social psychologist. This lens impacts how I understand the world and the humans in it. As a social psychologist, I understand that the way a person thinks, feels, and acts is a function of (1) who they are as a person, including all their lived experiences, and (2) their environment or situation. Kurt Lewin (1939) represented this as $B=f(p,e)$; behavior is a function of the interaction between a person and their environment. Like him, I consider factors of both the person and the person's environment in my attempts to both understand and shape behavior, or more broadly, the human condition.

Understanding the environment is complicated; it's multi-layered. To understand its layers, I draw on Bronfenbrenner's (1977) Ecological Systems Model which recognizes that a young person is surrounded by nested systems: their immediate environment of home and school (microsystems); the interconnections between home and school (mesosystems); settings that indirectly impact a person, like a parent's workplace and availability of community resources (exosystem); broader cultural and societal norms, values, and laws (macrosystems); and time, the current moment and the history that preceded this moment, including intergenerational histories (chronosystems). Technology, including AI, social media, nuclear energy, and more, intersect and interact with all those systems (technosystems).

To change a person's outcomes—how they think, feel, and behave

—we need to consider both the person and their situation, including all the layers of systems the person finds themselves in.

THE MAGNIFICENCE OF ADOLESCENCE

I haven't shared yet what I'm most passionate about. Adolescents. I find them to be magnificent. I am the mother of three, so it may not be surprising to learn that I find my own adolescents magnificent. What I've learned about the period of adolescence, which can start as early as age 10 and continue until age 25, is that this developmental period is remarkable and consequential.

Adolescence is a period of development second only to infancy in its scope of change. It is the last significant period of brain growth and restructuring, a time of great plasticity where the brain prunes unused connections and strengthens those used often.

During this developmental period, adolescents are doing important work of figuring out who they are, what they care about, and what they want to accomplish. They are also forming social relationships and developing their skills and competencies. Their development is highly susceptible to their environment, what and whom they are exposed to and interact with.

As their brains develop, we see the functioning of what my colleagues and I affectionately call the *Teen Operating System*, which includes:

- **Habit Formation:** What adolescents are exposed to—including how they interact with the world, the behaviors they do, the thoughts they have—shapes their habits for thinking, feeling, and behaving during adolescence and throughout their lifetime.
- **Creative Exploration:** Adolescents tend to view the world through a lens of possibility rather than, as adults do, "how things are."
- **Social Orientation:** Teens are wired for empathy, are motivated by status and respect, and prioritize peer relationships.

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- **Novelty Seeking:** Teens are willing to take risks and break rules to try new things; they are testing limits and pushing boundaries.
- **Strong Emotions:** Teens hold a deep sense of right and wrong and experience huge feelings.

Adolescents' heightened susceptibility to the environment creates a critical window for transformative moments that challenge how they think about the world and their place in it. As such, adolescence is a developmental period of both great transformation and great vulnerability.

Currently, the "situation" for many teens is one of crisis. Over 50% of students feel disengaged from school, and 75% of high schoolers report feeling bored or stressed. Too often, our educational systems rely on outdated models that fail to meet the needs of the whole teen. What we've found is that games and game design offer a unique opportunity to support teen thriving by creating new, supportive contexts for exploration and connection.

Games as Tools for Empathy and Connection

Designing games together is a powerful pathway for empathy and connection. In turn, those designed games offer a new powerful pathway for empathy and connection. I want to share here some of the games we've co-designed with teens.

OUR THREADS

Several years ago, I traveled to Atlanta, Georgia, to collaborate with students from Fugees Academy, a school designed especially for those coming from refugee and immigrant families. The initiative was sparked by Luma Mufleh, the founder and CEO of Fugees Family, who was looking for tools and resources to help other schools welcome newcomers using the model she designed for Fugees. Luma asked me for my thoughts on how she could share elements of her model at scale. I

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knew the solution would be in the form of a game. And I knew the designers of that game had to be the students themselves.

The design process involved 30 high school students from as many different countries, who gathered at a three-day sleepaway camp to learn game design and surface their own needs. During this time, we used iThrive's Game Design Studio* model to guide them through a teen-centered design thinking process. They explored and shared their personal experiences to create a game that would help others create connections, through these design phases:

- **Empathize:** Students shared the challenges they faced when first arriving in the United States, such as teachers not knowing how to pronounce their names or peers not knowing where they were from. They identified a lack of opportunity for playful inquiry in their daily school lives.
- **Define:** The group distilled these experiences into a core goal: they wanted a way to invite questions that would reveal their shared humanity and create a sense of connection and belonging.
- **Ideate & Prototype:** Students brainstormed and wrote hundreds of questions they wanted to ask others and that they wanted others to ask them. They explored how to make the act of asking questions playful, eventually landing on a card game format.
- **Test:** Through iterative playtesting of different versions, the designers determined they needed a mix of both "light" questions (like favorite foods or countries visited) and deeper questions (about happiness, sadness, or difficult moments).

The final result was a game called *Our Threads*. The cards in *Our Threads* feature questions designed to help players notice and "weave" together threads of shared humanity into meaningful relationships.

* The Game Design Studio Toolkit is available to download at <https://ithrivegames.org/ithrive-studio/>.

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Beyond the physical game, the project provided the students with a powerful learning experience where their voices shaped the creation of something significant, demonstrating how intentional design can shift social outcomes and foster connection.

THE PORCELAIN CHILD

The creation of *The Porcelain Child* began in a workshop room in Dallas, Texas, where a group of 25 teenagers gathered to share their experiences with how adults showed up for them (and didn't). During a discussion about being dismissed by teachers or parents, one teen remarked, "It's like being made of porcelain... Every time it happens, you crack a little." This powerful metaphor became the foundation for a game designed to help adults understand how their words can create lasting hurt, and how to take steps toward healing.

We partnered with the nonprofits Big Thought and Fit and Faithful Living to use Game Design Studio to produce a teen-created game aimed at creating healthy relationships between adults and teens. The teen designers, who named themselves the Big Creators, led every stage of the process from initial brainstorming to the final prototype. The Game Design Studio model provided a structured way for them to analyze real-world challenges and express their lived experiences through game mechanics.

A critical element of the design story was the intergenerational partnership between the teens and adult facilitators. The adults intentionally created an "open space" where they stepped back so the youth could lead while remaining ready to offer guidance and advocacy when needed. This collaborative environment allowed the Big Creators to build trust, develop communication skills, and realize the power of creating with others to be heard.

In the game, adult players respond to scenarios that teens find themselves in (skipping class, getting a parking ticket, being left out) and witness the impact of their response on the teens—does the response create a break in the porcelain child or help keep the child intact?

In March 2025, the Big Creators debuted *The Porcelain Child* at SXSW EDU in Austin, Texas, facilitating playtesting sessions for educa-

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tors, school leaders, and funders. The feedback from adults was profound; they noted that the game felt personal and served as a "powerful conversation starter" for difficult topics that are often hard to uncover without play.

The Big Creators shared the transformations they experienced in themselves and in the adult players through the design process:

- "It sparks change by showing adults the impact of their words and actions. It encourages healthier ways to communicate without breaking kids down."
- "This experience taught me about my voice and how I shouldn't be afraid of using it to change situations I believe are unfair."
- "*The Porcelain Child* will help change the way adults interact with teenagers by showing how teens interpret what adults say and the effects words can have."
- "Creating this game showed me that young people have strong ideas and need to be listened to. When we share our voices, we can inspire real change."
- "Working with a team of people my age taught me that all of us want to be heard, and we are showing that through our game."
- "From what I've seen with adults and young people, there tends to be a wall and this game can remove that wall or create an environment with no judgment and with reflection."

GAMES, SELF, AND SOCIETY

What I've learned about games, as a social psychologist and appreciator of adolescent magnificence, is that they offer a transformative pathway for adolescents to explore and understand themselves and the world around them. Designing games offers an opportunity to do something good, to make the world a better place for themselves and for others. We don't need to tell teens this. They know it. All we need to do is invite them into a safe space where we revere them just as they are, share some

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tools and practices, lean in to support and encourage them when needed, and witness them design the world they want to be in.

This special issue of the *Journal of Games, Self, and Society* includes an impressive and engaging set of papers exploring, analyzing, and pushing our understanding of the power of games for good. You'll encounter in the pages that follow designers, researchers, and game lovers who believe in the value of games for understanding the self and the environment, who are creatively and critically pushing the boundaries on what games can do to reflect on, unpack, and advance humanity.

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RESISTANCE GAMES COURSE

A NOVEL APPROACH TO INTERNATIONALIZATION THROUGH CONTENT AND LANGUAGE INTEGRATED LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the efficacy of a novel Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach—the Resistance Games Course—as a strategy for internationalization in higher education, specifically for students facing limited mobility due to the war in Ukraine. Developed as a collaborative pilot project between Cherkasy State Business College (Ukraine) and Clark University (United States), the course aimed to enhance Ukrainian computer engineering and IT students' intercultural awareness, language proficiency, and global citizenship skills.

The eight-module course, covering topics like tactical media, critical design, and woke gaming, was implemented in Fall 2024. Data was collected via a post-project survey using Google Forms, focusing on skill development, cross-cultural understanding, and overall engagement.

Findings overwhelmingly indicate the course's positive impact. Qualitative data highlighted the importance of overcoming communication barriers and the awareness that shared goals transcend language differences, even while participants showed resilience in overcoming technical challenges related to the ongoing conflict (e.g., power outages).

This pilot study demonstrates that integrating specialized content (game design) with English language learning through CLIL offers a powerful and effective pathway for internationalization. The Resistance Games Course serves as a promising model for institutions seeking to foster essential intercultural competence, communication skills, and collaborative learning to prepare students for a globalized world, particularly in contexts where physical mobility is restricted.

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In today's interconnected world, fostering global citizenship is no longer a luxury, but a necessity. How can we equip students with the skills and understanding they need to navigate an increasingly complex and intercultural landscape? This question inspired the implementation of the Resistance Games Course, developed by the Becker School of Design and Technology at Clark University in the United States, into the curriculum of Cherkasy State Business College in Ukraine. For a Ukrainian institution, it is an innovative course designed to promote internationalization through Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL; Coyle et al., 2010). CLIL, a pedagogical approach where students learn content through a foreign language, offers a powerful framework for language acquisition and intercultural understanding. The Resistance Games Course takes this approach a step further by immersing students in engaging interactions that require them to apply their language skills and cultural knowledge to solve problems and make decisions.

This publication explores the potential of the Resistance Games Course as a tool for internationalization through CLIL. We examine its impact on such learning outcomes as intercultural awareness, language proficiency, and global citizenship skills. By global citizenship skills, we mean the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that equip individuals to navigate an interconnected world effectively and responsibly. Such skills enable people to understand global issues, appreciate diverse perspectives, and contribute to a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world.

The collaboration between Cherkasy State Business College and

Clark University has strong roots built through open lectures, conversational workshops, faculty professional development events, and more. Dedicated individuals at both institutions have worked tirelessly to build bridges and foster a culture of collaboration since 2021, culminating in signing a Collaboration Memorandum.

Recognizing that Ukrainian students' pathways to international experiences are limited by travel restrictions due to the ongoing war, we launched a pilot project for the students majoring in computer engineering and information technologies in the fall semester of 2024.

INTERNATIONALIZATION INITIATIVE

The project aligns with the five pillars of Cherkasy State Business College's (2021) internationalization strategy (see Image 1).

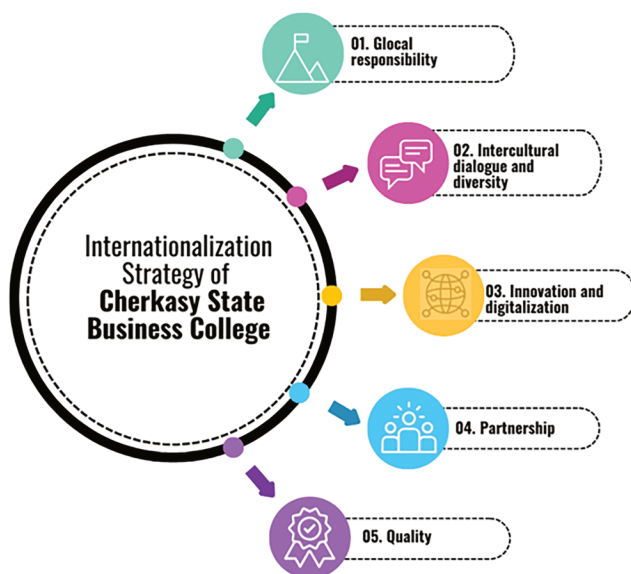


Image 1: The five pillars of the internationalization strategy.

The project presented fosters **glocal responsibility** by developing students' language skills and understanding of global issues, preparing

them to be responsible global citizens rooted in their Ukrainian identity. It promotes **intercultural dialogue and diversity** by immersing students in English language content that explores diverse cultures and perspectives, fostering mutual understanding and respect. It embodies **innovation and digitalization** by using modern digital technologies and the CLIL methodology itself to enhance language and content learning. It strengthens **partnerships** by fostering international student collaboration with Clark University. It contributes to **quality** by providing a holistic educational experience that integrates language and content learning, equipping students with in-demand skills and aligning with international standards.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The pilot project involved the development and implementation of eight modules that covered such topics as games and society, the avant-garde in games, tactical media, countergaming, critical design, locative media, queer(ing) games and woke gaming.

Course Overview and Preparation Process

The following course description was provided to students:

How do games persuade? Could they start a revolution? When is a mod not *just* a mod? These are some of the questions considered in this course about the influence of critical, speculative, and radical art and design in interactive media practices. Discussions of the works of historic and contemporary independent, experimental, and political artists and game developers are accompanied by readings that contextualize these works in terms of tactical and/or radical media, critical design practice, the role of games and play in society, and the fundamental persuasive potential of interactive media.

Students also were oriented to the learning objectives, which were to:

- be familiar with the theories, vocabulary, and methods of socially engaged art and design practice.
- be familiar with principal examples of socially engaged art and design, with a specific focus on games and interactive media.
- be familiar with critical design methods broadly, and their application in interactive media specifically.
- be able to apply critical design methods to their own creative practice.
- be able to contextualize contemporary and historic interactive media practices within the twin frameworks of critical design practice and socially engaged art and design practice.

Preparation for the course was comprehensive, including several key stages. Collaborative sessions were held between the representatives of both institutions to align on course objectives and content. Learning materials were developed and uploaded to the Moodle learning platform to provide students with consistent access. Critically, we established Discord as the primary communication channel to encourage student feedback and provide ongoing support throughout the course. As the course did not have a textbook, all readings were made available in a common folder.

To maximize both flexibility and student engagement, the CLIL project adopted a blended learning approach, combining synchronous and asynchronous activities. Synchronous classes, held on Zoom, provided opportunities for real-time interaction, discussion, and clarification of complex concepts. These sessions fostered a sense of community and allowed for immediate feedback. Asynchronous learning allowed students to engage with the material at their own pace, reflect on key concepts, and contribute thoughtfully to ongoing conversations. This combination catered to diverse learning styles and schedules, promoting deeper understanding and greater participation. It allowed for the development of a range of essential skills, e.g. oral communication and critical thinking skills during synchronous Zoom sessions and

written communication, and self-directed learning skills in the asynchronous mode.

The instructor used breakout rooms in Zoom in which American and Ukrainian students were intentionally grouped together for online discussions, fostering collaborative learning across cultures. This provided opportunities for students to learn from each other's experiences, challenge their own assumptions, and develop a global perspective. Splitting online discussions into smaller groups and whole-class forums allowed for both focused discussion and broader sharing of ideas.

In the course of the pilot project, a new initiative arose: introducing Ukrainian games to American students and examining them within a critical design framework. Games are cultural artifacts. Introducing Ukrainian games provided American students with a direct and engaging way to learn about Ukrainian culture, values, and perspectives. Analyzing these games through a critical design lens encouraged students to think deeply about the cultural messages embedded within the games and how they might be interpreted by different audiences. A critical design framework encourages students to move beyond simply playing games and to analyze their underlying assumptions, social implications, and potential biases. This fosters critical thinking skills and encourages students to consider the broader context in which games are created and consumed. It turned out to be a good idea to provide a platform for dialogue.

The next step was for the Ukrainian students to provide feedback on a first draft of the American students' game design projects. The Clark University course instructor expressed strong satisfaction with the students' work, stating, "I just wanted to say how impressed I am with the thoughtfulness and insightfulness of these reviews. They have each clearly taken the time to seriously engage with the work of their peers! And their writing is lovely!" The peer review process demonstrates that Ukrainian students have met such key learning objectives as critical analysis, effective communication, and constructive feedback.

For a truly immersive cultural exchange, an entire class session was dedicated to showcasing the world of Ukrainian computer games. The focus was on S.T.A.L.K.E.R. and Cossacks, which were familiar to the

Ukrainian students. The Ukrainian students' presentations revealed insights into the country's cultural values and historical experiences beyond common stereotypes (see Image 2 for an example).

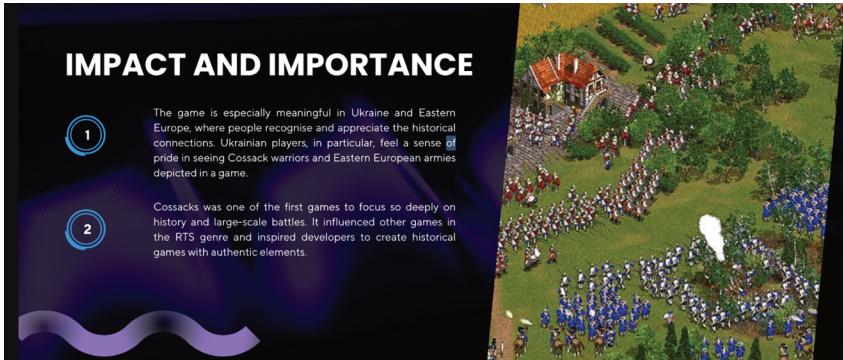


Image 2. Slide from the students' showcase of Ukrainian computer games.

The final project was a creative team challenge utilizing the methods covered in the class. Some American students expressed interest in collaborating with Ukrainian students on their projects. Here we describe the three projects the student teams completed.

Project 1.

The first team's initial plan was to make an Animation Music Video-style video that highlighted a social concern. Ultimately, the team created a piece of media that shows how actions online can affect situations in the real world. By having the player make all the choices, the responsibility for their actions falls on them, similar to scenarios in real life.

Project 2.

The second team's initial plan was to make a simulation that showed the difficulty of achieving a middle-class lifestyle under late-stage capitalism. The team made a video that highlighted the issue.

Project 3.

The third team's initial plan was to make a game that explored the experience of being on the autism spectrum. The team succeeded in making a demo version of the game. The purpose of the game was to shine a light on an experience of being on the spectrum for neurotypical players as well as to address and comment on the treatment of kids on the spectrum in schools. A slide from the project presentation points out the techniques used (see Image 3).

Resistance Game Techniques

- No-Fun: Large amount of negative outcome for the player. Give the players an idea of the pain some kids on the spectrum face when they fail socially. This concept is still in the game, but to a lesser extent.
- Procedural Rhetoric: The game loop forces players to make decisions that will usually backfire in their faces. Plot focuses on the player character's differences from others. Creating the same feeling of a negative feedback loop that many kids under the spectrum feel.
- Critical Design: Commentary on the school system. Specifically, the way it isolates people on the spectrum. Tackles serious situations but also uses humor and satire on the side to relieve players of tension or help players lower their guard for an especially devastating moments. We want players to question if the current system for kids on the spectrum is inadequate.
- Serious Game(Tactical Media): Tackles a problem that many people on the spectrum all around the world most likely have encountered growing up in a public or private school.

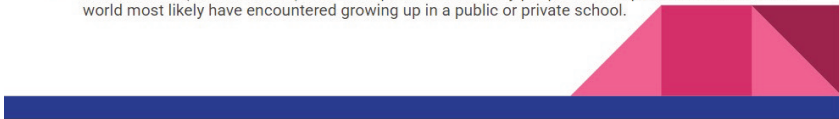


Image 3: A student team demonstrates how the techniques from the course influenced their game design choices.

Each team member was assigned a role: writer, developer, project manager, dialogue developer, developer of emotions for dialogues, or designer. The team used a variety of technologies and tools. A primary example is the Unity Engine, which served as the foundation for integrating the Dialogue Editor Library and managing the complex narrative branches (see Image 4).

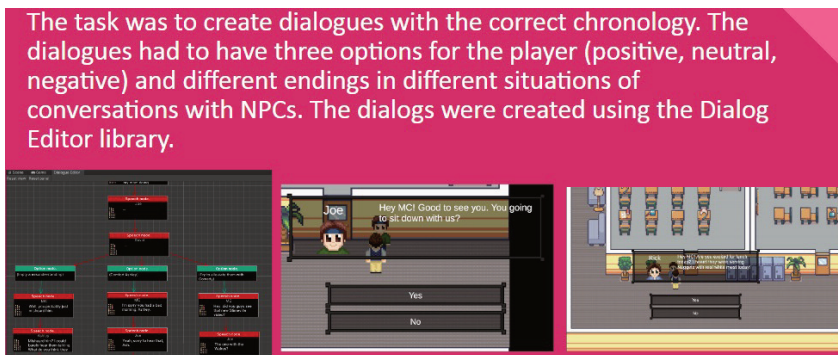


Image 4: A student team describes their NPC interaction system and dialogue chronology.

Students presented their final creative projects to the class. As part of the pilot course, the Ukrainian students also undertook short research projects applying critical game design analysis to games of their choice. Their findings were disseminated at an annual college conference (Cherkasy State Business College, 2024).

IMPACT DATA AND ANALYSIS

To assess the impact of the pilot course, we conducted a survey of participating students using Google Forms. The survey was designed to elicit feedback regarding student impressions of the project and its efficacy in achieving intended outcomes. We gathered data related to skill development, cross-cultural understanding, engagement, and student perceptions of the project's overall success.

It is interesting to note that for 90% of participants, this project marked their first communication with either Americans or Ukrainians, depending on their country of origin, and for all participants, it was their first international learning collaboration. Following the project, 80% of participants felt comfortable communicating and collaborating with students from diverse cultural backgrounds. This suggests that the project provided a unique opportunity for most participants to engage in cross-cultural communication and international collaboration for the first time. The findings underscore the project's potential to broaden students' horizons and expose them to diverse perspectives. High

comfort level implies that the project provided a safe and supportive environment to practice communication, collaboration, and intercultural skills and gain confidence.

Students' overall impression of the course was overwhelmingly positive. Sixty percent of respondents rated the project a 4 (on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is negative, 5 is positive), while 40% gave it the highest possible rating of 5, indicating strong satisfaction. The fact that no respondents rated the project below a 4 highlights its effectiveness in engaging and satisfying students.

The open-ended question, "What is the first association that jumps into your head when you remember the project? Why?" provided valuable qualitative data. The responses paint a picture of a successful project that fostered positive team dynamics, provided valuable learning opportunities, and promoted cross-cultural understanding. While communication challenges existed, they were ultimately overcome, contributing to the overall learning experience.

Key aspects mentioned include:

- **Communication/Collaboration:** This was the most prominent theme. Several responses mentioned the importance of communication, both positive ("People. They are lovely. I loved communicating with them") and challenging ("how difficult it was sometimes to understand each other"). However, even the challenges related to communication were ultimately resolved ("we found a common language"). This suggests that while communication might have been a hurdle at times, the project fostered resilience and problem-solving skills in this area.
- **Positive Atmosphere/Team Dynamics:** Words like "friendly atmosphere," "politeness," "openness," "jokes," and "positivity" point to a strong team spirit. This suggests that the project created a supportive and enjoyable environment for participants.
- **Learning and Growth:** Several responses highlight learning new skills ("new experience. Skills...", "learned a

new program for pixel drawings”), gaining new perspectives (“collaborate across different perspectives”), and adapting to new situations (“Adaptability”). This theme indicates that the project was a valuable learning experience for the participants.

- **Cross-cultural Interaction:** The mention of the American team member, and the discussion of navigating cultural differences in communication (“understanding his ideas”), explicitly highlights the cross-cultural aspect of the project. This suggests that the project provided participants with opportunities to develop intercultural competence.
- **Curiosity/Excitement:** The responses mentioning “curiosity” and “excitement” indicate that the project sparked interest and enthusiasm among the participants.

The open-ended question about the project being a journey provides insightful metaphorical data. The most common metaphor was a “road trip” highlighting exploration, adaptability, collaboration, and enjoyment despite challenges. Other metaphors used included “airplanes” (emphasizing speed and impact), “stormy boat trips” (challenges overcome), “hikes” (effort and progress), “skydiving” (initial fear, eventual excitement), “train journeys” (structured learning), and “camping trips” (adventure and connection).

The responses to “What is your brightest discovery?” revealed diverse takeaways from the project, highlighting both skill development and broader personal insights. Learning new software (Unity, Wix) and gaining a “new understanding of the game industry” were concrete examples of skill acquisition, demonstrating the project’s impact on practical abilities. The observation about differences in education systems, individual judgment, and overall mentality between Ukrainian and American students was a significant discovery. The comment about Clark University students being “more open” also contributes to this theme. The “new point of view on games” and the mention of “critical game design” suggest that the project influenced participants’ perspectives, encouraging them to think more deeply about the purpose and potential of games. The comment about native speakers’ rapid speech

and word shortening points to a heightened awareness of communication nuances and the challenges of understanding different speaking styles.

Communication challenges with international peers centered on time zone differences, difficulties with verbal communication (accents, audio quality, speed), and intercultural differences, including varying approaches to tasks and misunderstandings due to language barriers or unclear explanations. One participant noted a partner's insistence on a specific, unfamiliar program as a challenge. Shyness due to lower English proficiency was also mentioned.

Participants overcame communication challenges through various strategies: adjusting meeting times, relying on text communication and intermediaries, mutual team support, seeking common ground, escalating issues to professors for resolution, patience, additional language practice, flexibility, planning, and open communication. Family and friends were also noted as a source of support.

Support provided by the instructor and project coordinator was highly rated, with 70% of respondents giving it the highest rating of 5 ("Excellent") and 30% rating it a 4 ("Good"). This indicates a strong positive perception of the support provided.

A 100% positive response regarding the effectiveness of communication channels strongly suggests that the chosen communication tools and strategies facilitated clear and efficient interaction among participants. This is a significant finding, especially in a project involving international collaboration where communication can be a major hurdle. It demonstrates that the project likely prioritized and effectively implemented communication strategies that worked well for all participants.

While most participants reported no significant technical difficulties, a few recurring challenges emerged. The most frequently mentioned issue was power outages/lack of light related to the situation in Ukraine. This highlights the resilience of the participants who were able to continue despite the disruptions. Occasional issues with the Internet were named, though these were generally described as minor. The inability to access paid services represents a more systemic technical

challenge and points to a potential barrier for students with limited resources.

In a CLIL context, the responses to the question, “Which college subjects did you draw upon during the project?”, are important because they show how students are actively using and applying their English language skills while simultaneously drawing upon and developing their knowledge and skills in other subject areas. The frequent mention of programming and object-oriented programming demonstrates the project’s focus on technical skills and its connection to computer science curricula. The mention of “startup studies,” “electronics,” and “circuit engineering” suggests that the project may have touched upon elements of entrepreneurship or other technical fields, indicating potential interdisciplinary connections beyond just language and programming. Responses provide evidence of the integrated learning that is central to the CLIL approach.

Participants ranked the importance of several factors for a successful CLIL project (see Image 5). Half of the respondents ranked cultural exchange as the most important. Language learning was also highly valued, with the majority of respondents ranking it among the top two factors. Team collaboration was considered moderately important, while project outcomes were seen as the least important factor.

Rank the following factors in order of importance for a successful CLIL project. Assign a number (1, 2, 3, or 4) to each factor, with 1 being the most important and 4 being the least important.

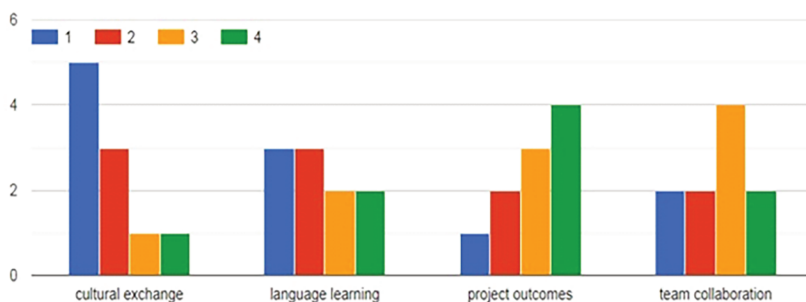


Image 5: Students’ rankings of the factors they consider most important for a successful CLIL project.

In summary, the 100% recommendation rate, combined with 100% interest in future participation, paints a picture of a highly successful and impactful project that provides a positive learning experience and fosters a desire for continued engagement in international collaboration.

The responses to “What was the most valuable lesson you learned?” revealed several key takeaways from the project, focusing on collaboration, communication, and personal growth. Illustrative examples are provided below:

- “The most valuable lesson I learned from this project was that people united by a common goal do not stand in the way of any language barrier”
- “Trust your teammates”
- “We need to learn languages for better communication with people”
- “Not everything is as difficult as it seems”
- “Effective communication can solve almost anything and help people understand and like you. I’m still a bit scared of speaking in front of large groups in English, even though I’ve been working on it a lot lately.”
- “You don’t have to be afraid or anxious to talk to other people”
- “Studying a new trend in design”
- “The importance of collaboration and adaptability when working with people from different backgrounds”
- “Less fear, more confidence”

CONCLUSIONS

This pilot study explored the effectiveness of the Resistance Games Course, a novel approach to internationalization through CLIL, for fostering intercultural competence, communication skills, and collaborative learning among students. Our findings offer compelling evidence of the course’s positive impact. The quantitative data reveal high satisfaction ratings for instructor support, significant increases in self-reported comfort levels with cross-cultural communication, and positive

feedback on the communication channels used. These results are further strengthened by the rich qualitative data, which highlight the importance of overcoming communication barriers, the value of cross-cultural exchange, the development of both technical and interpersonal skills, and the positive impact on confidence and motivation. Specifically, participants emphasized the awareness that shared goals and activities transcend language barriers. The 100% recommendation rate and strong interest in future CLIL projects underscore the perceived value and positive impact of this approach.

These findings contribute to the growing body of research on the effectiveness of CLIL in internationalizing higher education. The Resistance Games Course demonstrates the potential of integrating content (game design) with language learning (English) to create meaningful and impactful cross-cultural experiences.

While this pilot study provides valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge its limitations, including the small sample size, the specific context of the Resistance Games Course, and the reliance on self-reported data. Future research could explore the transferability of this model to other disciplines and the effectiveness of different communication strategies in CLIL projects. Despite these limitations, this study offers promising evidence for the effectiveness of the Resistance Games Course as a novel approach to internationalization through CLIL, offering valuable lessons for educators seeking to prepare students for a globalized world. The course's success in fostering intercultural competence, communication skills, and collaborative learning suggests its potential as a model for other institutions seeking to enhance internationalization efforts.

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