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HOW LITERATURE SUPPORTS YOUNG PEOPLE DURING DIFFICULT TIMES

**The Concept and Results
of COIL Projects on Literary
and Cultural Studies among Students
of Ukrainian and Japanese Universities**



Study Guide

**Saitama University,
Poltava V.G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University
2025**

**Olha Nikolenko, Susumu Nonaka, Lidiia Matsevko-Bekerska,
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INTRODUCTION

In today's world, there are many challenges that are bringing about various changes in the education systems in different countries. The most important challenges of the first quarter of the 20th century have been COVID-19, and, at the time of writing, conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine. However, despite these serious issues, students must learn and master professional competencies because the youth of today will determine the future of humanity. In this respect, in the modern world, it is very important that young people learn to cooperate in an international environment, as well as develop an understanding of the peculiarities of different cultures, and have the ability to solve common problems and establish mutually beneficial partnerships. This undoubtedly contributes to the development of friendly relations between countries and brings the world closer to the establishment of lasting and long-term peace.

In this regard, the educational technology system COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) is becoming more and more prevalent in different universities. It allows students from different countries to come together in a common online space and create an educational environment in which they can learn facts about different cultures, share experiences, communicate and learn more about each other via a foreign language as well as question their own assumptions they hold about their personal beliefs. .

In 2020, Professor Olha Nikolenko (Poltava V.G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University, Ukraine) and Professor Susumu Nonaka (Saitama University, Japan) and their students, initiated the annual COIL project. In 2021, Professor Lidiia Matsevko-Bekerska (Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, Ukraine) and her students also joined this project. Thus, the Ukrainian-Japanese COIL project has become a trilateral one and has been ongoing for more than five years. During that time, Professors Olha Nikolenko, Susumu Nonaka and Lidiia Matsevko-Bekerska have been involved in organizing international scientific student seminars (in English), which have examined the literature and art of different countries of the world.

During these five years, several generations of Ukrainian and Japanese students have changed, but this form of COIL cooperation continues to be interesting for young people. It has become especially important for young people during the period of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia on February 24, 2022. In a dangerous and uncertain world, national and universal values of culture have proven to be extremely necessary for young people. During the forementioned seminars, students have found ways not only to develop new knowledge and skills, but also gain spiritual support in such difficult times. They discuss the complex issues of our time and realize the exceptional importance of literature and art for the development of the world.

In this study guide we would like to share with you the results of the trilateral Ukrainian-Japanese COIL project between Saitama University, Poltava V.G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University and Ivan Franko National University of Lviv. We will present the experiences we have gained during these five years, as well as the results of surveys of the

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project undertaken with the participants. In addition, we will also identify the successes of our COIL project as well as examine some challenges and perspectives for its development. Since we are going to develop the Ukrainian-Japanese COIL project further, summarizing some results will be useful both for ourselves and for other universities.

We hope that you will review our experience of organizing online international scientific seminars for students from different countries and will apply it to your own respective courses.

We are grateful to all our students who have participated in our online international scientific seminars for the past five years. They made a great contribution not only to the development of COIL technology, but also to the development of world education in general, as well as to the development of friendly relations between Ukraine and Japan.

*Sincerely
the authors' team*

1. THE CONCEPT OF COIL: RELEVANT ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

The concept of COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) appeared in the early 2000s in the USA. It is associated with one of the popular areas of innovative pedagogy, which has been successfully developing in different countries for more than twenty years. Leask (2020: 188), defines COIL as “online learning in an international setting, with interactive involvement of students and faculty from different international and intercultural backgrounds in and outside the classroom.”

A leader in COIL is The State University of New York (SUNY), where the COIL Center was established in 2004. Its activities have contributed to the development of the core principles of COIL, as well as COIL standards, which are successfully applied in different universities around the world.

COIL involves online collaborative learning with the participation of students and teachers from different countries. This innovative technology has opened up opportunities for students to gain not only new knowledge, but also provide experience in understanding global issues, skills of communication and working in an international context, in addition to understanding concepts related to intercultural interaction and cooperation. Furthermore, COIL contributes to students’ social adaptation to the conditions of the modern world, such as gaining practical skills of working on common tasks with representatives of other countries, expanding students’ understanding of other national cultures and values, establishing connections through the recognition of differences, friendship and cooperation between people of different races, nations, countries.

According to the SUNY vision, among the COIL standards, the most important concepts are: 1) intercultural communication (learners engaging in scaffolded opportunities for communication among intercultural virtual team members), 2) cultural awareness (learners engaging in activities that help them recognize their partners’ cultural values, beliefs, and biases, as well as their own), 3) collaboration (learners constructing a culturally collaborative and respectful dialogue in an international virtual team, both verbally and non-verbally) and finally, 4) which involves the development of teamwork skills (learners in cross-cultural groups building skills to organize and distribute the work in asynchronous and synchronous technology platforms) (COIL Standards).

In order to implement COIL, it is important that it does not occur sporadically or for short periods of time, but is applied systematically over a fairly long period of time (four weeks or more). COIL should be implemented within the framework of accomplishing common goals that are relevant to different universities in their respective educational contexts.

Recently, a lot of scientific works on the theory, methodology and practice of COIL have appeared. Scientists from different countries are not only successfully mastering this innovative pedagogical technology, but also sharing their experiences, noting the advantages of COIL and simultaneously noting any difficulties that arise in its use.

The growing need for the internationalization of higher education has been emphasized in the works of B. Leask (2009, 2013, 2015, 2020) F. Rizvi (2009), H. Schattle (2009), G. Webb (2005) and others. J. Knight (2003: 2) defines internationalization “at the national, sector, and

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institutional levels ... as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education.” Knight also draws attention to the broadening scope of terminology in the field as new notions appear, such as transnational education, borderless education, and cross-border education.

Clifford (2009), accentuates the need to consider the future multi-cultural work environments for students, while underlining the fact that disciplines of the humanities seem to be better suited for cross-cultural exchange compared to other subject areas. Among key attitudes for intercultural competence, Deardorff and Jones (2006: 245) define respect, openness, curiosity, and discovery.

Lilley (et al., 2015: 961), explored the idea of educating global citizens within the framework of higher education, citing such key characteristics of a global citizen as an attitude or disposition towards others and the world in terms of moral and transformative cosmopolitanism and liberal values (openness, tolerance, respect and responsibility for self, others and the planet), a mindset for mature, critical, ethical and interconnected thinking.

With all the diversity of scholars’ opinions, it should be noted that COIL is generally recognized as an effective technology in modern education. Its importance increased in 2020–2021 in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as under the influence of the rapid development of digital learning tools such as AI.

Universities are currently using COIL in a number of ways. The most common of these is when COIL is used within the framework of common educational programs, disciplines or their respective modules. For this purpose, universities are able to coordinate and modify their programs to make them relevant to each other.

However, this is not the only direction of COIL. KP University (Copenhagen) and Poltava V.G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University (Ukraine), which are participants in the common international program ERASMUS+ (KA1, KA2), implemented a joint methodological project COIL in 2023–2024 within the framework of the implementation of global development goals. On the KP side, there were students from an international group, representatives of 10 countries, and on the PNPU side – representatives of Ukraine; amounting to 11 countries in total. Through this methodological project, students were able to learn about and experience COIL technology. They worked together to create effective methods and techniques for teaching global goals through English. The successful results of this project and its evaluation are outlined in the paper by O. Nikolenko, C. Watson, M. Zuyenko, et al. (2024).

However, the potential of COIL to improve students’ scientific work has not yet been sufficiently explored. Currently, there are few specific works regarding the role of COIL in building students’ scientific work skills and studies. Therefore, we are also aiming to achieve an effective model for using COIL in this area.

One of the important directions in modern education is to involve students in research, the creation of joint scientific projects, and the development of critical thinking. Educational programs of many universities involve writing scientific term papers, diploma and master’s theses (projects), as well as their formal academic defense of their dissertations (viva). For this purpose it is necessary to develop students’ skills in scientific work. COIL can help students acquire these skills. In addition, COIL can also give students the opportunity to present their research in an international context, to discuss scientific problems together and to gain experience in an interculturally interactive and communitive environment.

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It is also worth noting the need to consider the potential of COIL in wartime conditions to help Ukraine overcome educational losses that have occurred with the present conflict in that region. As is well known, the full-scale war with Russia that began in February, 2022, has had a profound impact on the state of education in Ukraine and the country's teaching methods. More than 8 million Ukrainians, including students, have left their country since the invasion began. More than 6 million Ukrainians, including students, have lost their homes as a result of the hostilities and have been forced to relocate to other territories in Ukraine. According to the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, about 130,000 to 150,000 students are still residing abroad, unable to return because of the danger posed by the ongoing conflict. However, they continue to receive education in Ukrainian higher education institutions online. And those students who are still living in Ukraine are often unable to attend university classes in person due to constant shelling, which is why many of them also study online.

In this regard, the role of online learning, including COIL, is increasing, which gives Ukrainian students the opportunity not only to obtain the necessary knowledge in their respective fields of study, but also to feel the strong support of countries around the world, to be participants of the global education system.

2. OBJECTIVES AND TASKS OF THE JOINT COIL SEMINARS BETWEEN SAITAMA UNIVERSITY, POLTAVA V.G. KOROLENKO NATIONAL PEDAGOGICAL UNIVERSITY, IVAN FRANKO NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF LVIV

Our purpose here is to present the concept and results of the various 2020–2025 COIL projects on literary and cultural scientific research between students in Japan (Saitama University) and Ukraine (Poltava V.G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University, Ivan Franko National University of Lviv).

In this study guide we will describe the concept and results of the COIL research seminars on literary and cultural studies that we have conducted between Ukrainian and Japanese universities since the winter of 2020 up until now (2025). These student research seminars were held annually (in English). Each session of the workshops took place over a period of seven to eight weeks with a frequency of once a week or once every two weeks. A total of five sessions were held (December 2020–January 2021, December 2021–January 2022, December 2022–January 2023, December 2023–January 2024 and December 2024–January 2025).

It is a good time to make an interim record of our five-year project so that we can evaluate its results and get feedback from colleagues specialized in COIL and literary education for the purpose of achieving further evolution of the concept. Although it is difficult to summarize an ongoing project, we hope that it is worthwhile sharing some knowledge about the significance and challenges of our venture as we believe that COIL-based active learning of literature and culture has had a remarkable educational, scientific and psychological benefit for students suffering from catastrophic events such as a pandemic and war.

As our project is still ongoing with continuous improvements, our study guide describes what we have done these five years, and shows what we are currently doing and the objectives we are aiming to attain. In this respect, the results of the questionnaire targeting the participants of this year's seminar will hopefully support our discussion. In conclusion we will summarize the characteristics, significance, and problems we experienced in following through with our project so that it will become clear to what extent our version of COIL-based active learning of literature and students' research work is applicable in the various learning contexts in which they were applied.

3. “PERSPECTIVES OF COMPARATIVE WORLD LITERATURE AND CULTURAL STUDIES” (2020–2023)

Our cooperation in education started in December 2020 when COVID-19 had restricted students in many countries to online classes for several months. Professor Olha Nikolenko (Poltava V.G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University) and Professor Susumu Nonaka (Saitama University), who had had an academic relationship for ten years, came up with the idea of holding an online student seminar between their students.

The seminar was named “Perspectives of Comparative World Literature and Cultural Studies” so that the participating students could choose their presentation themes concerning not only literature but also culture. The general structure of our seminars, which have since become established among the participants, is as follows. The first meeting, which usually starts in the beginning of December, was dedicated to checking a stable connection link and icebreaking talk which included students’ self-presentations and presentations about their respective universities. At the second meeting a week or two later, teachers gave short lectures on topics related to national and world literature which consisted of presentations related to their common academic interests. Students were also encouraged to ask questions or express their opinions, although not all the students involved were used to taking part in discussion in English. Generally speaking, though, COIL activity among non-native speakers of English helped lower the psychological hurdles participants experienced. (Borger, 2022; Phan et al., 2023).

The main part of the seminar consisted of presentations and discussion by the students. On the third and fourth meetings they gave their presentations on literature, culture and social issues. As they were given the initiative to choose their topics by themselves, there was a wide range of presentation themes. Still, it is worth noting that of the twelve presentations, three were on gender, and six on Ukrainian and Japanese traditional culture. It seems that the students found it easy and interesting to present and discuss about gender and traditional culture in their respective countries. The fifth meeting was dedicated to a round table discussion which the students themselves organized and facilitated. They reviewed and further discussed some of the important topics raised at the seminar. It was on gender and its reflection in literature and the culture of different countries that the discussions were particularly lively.

With the consent of the participants, all meetings were recorded and made available on YouTube for a limited time for the purpose of reviewing and improving the project. After the seminar was over in January 2021, we gave the participants certificates and made a collection of papers (Nonaka & Nikolenko, 2021). The seminar organizers were generally satisfied with the results, but realized that there were some challenges that needed to be addressed. This included the need for better preparation of presentations and improvement of English skills which were especially needed (Shoji & Okura, 2024). Still, the seminar organizers agreed to continue this project in the coming academic year.

The second research seminar (December 2021–January 2022) followed basically the same format as the previous one, while there were some new features. Firstly, Professor Lidiia Matsevko-Bekerska (Ivan Franko National University of Lviv) and her undergraduate students majoring in Philology, as well as graduate students specializing in Germanic languages

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and literature (translation inclusive) joined the seminar, which increased the number of presentations and the liveliness of the discussions.

It is relevant to note here that at this point, political and military tensions were rising as Russia and Belarus were gathering large-scale numbers of troops near the Ukrainian border in the name of military exercises in January–February 2022 (Galynska & Bilous, 2022). Though all the participants felt anxious about the situation, we did not talk about it and concentrated on discussions of research problems in literature and cultural studies. Besides gender and traditional culture, contemporary literature, including youth literature, was a popular topic chosen by many students. From the perspective of literary education, it is noteworthy that compared to canonized classical literature, contemporary literature seems to give younger readers more familiar and earnest depictions of themes related to establishing a sense of self, relationships with family, friendship, love and social participation (Nonaka & Zhao, 2024).

The organizers edited the collections of papers based on the presentations of the second seminar, which was published after February 24th, 2022 (Nonaka et al., 2022).

The third-year seminar (December 2022–January 2023) was held under unprecedented circumstances brought about by the Russian military invasion of Ukraine and the conflict that followed. Despite this crisis, the organizers had decided early on to hold the seminar that year as well. Above all, this was because Ukrainian students showed an undiminished desire to study and to interact with Japanese students who also were willing to support Ukrainian students in any way they could. As is well known, universities in many countries, especially in the EU, started conducting joint online seminars with Ukrainian universities (Rzhevskaya et al., 2020; Antoniuk, 2021; Drobotun et al., 2023). They became more effective when combined with the actual acceptance of Ukrainian students, which was done at Saitama as well as other universities (Katz et al., 2024).

Since the seminar was in its third year, experience in preparation (lectures, report writing, rehearsals, etc.) had been developed at each university, and many of the student presentations that year were substantial despite the difficult situation in Ukraine. When we edited the collection of papers (Nonaka et al., 2023), we divided the papers into four sections: “Disasters and Their Representations in the Arts”, “Contemporary Culture”, “Challenges of Today’s Society” and “Traditions and Changes”. It seems that those themes reflect the interests and concerns of today’s youth living in turbulent times. It is worthwhile mentioning that some Ukrainian students wrote papers on the novels on World War II, especially on the Holocaust (John Boyne, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* [2006], Markus Zusak, *The Book Thief* [2005], Oleksandr Dovzhenko, *Ukraine on Fire* [1943, 1966] and so on). According to Professor Olha Nikolenko, Ukrainian youth today read literary works on the topic of World War II with special interest and perhaps self-projection (Ніколенко, 2018; Nikolenko, 2019; Ніколенко та ін., 2024).

Here we could observe an important example of the healing power of literature. It was also impressive that a presentation made by Japanese students on contemporary youth literature (Mizuki Tsujimura, *The Lonely Castle in the Mirror* [2017]) gained the interest and sympathy of Ukrainian students who had not known of this piece of work. We might suppose that contemporary world youth literature has certain similarities in themes which are familiar to and urgent for young people such as establishing a sense of self, relationships with family, friendship, love and social participation, which creates some generational universality as well

as providing cultural diversity of the genre.

The fourth-year seminar (December 2023–January 2024) was enlivened by another project “Ukrainian Week in Japan 2023” where we invited Professor Olha Nikolenko, Professor Lidia Matsevko-Bekerska and a PhD student Kateryna Nikolenko to hold in-person seminars on Ukrainian and World Literature at several universities in Japan (ニコレンコ他, 2024). This project, which was done immediately before the online seminar, was especially effective since Saitama University students were able to better prepare for the online seminar by listening to the in-person lectures on Ukrainian and World Literature and interacting with Ukrainian scholars. As is well known, COIL gets more effective when blended with in-person classes (Kaiser & Maisch, 2022).

As for our project, it is true that opportunities for actual interaction among the students are severely limited due to the ongoing war in Ukraine, but we noticed that these few opportunities made online classes livelier as Japanese students’ participation in the seminar became more personal and active than when it was only online. For this reason, we regularly have exchange students from Ukraine come to our classes to give presentations and discuss with Saitama students before the online seminar starts.

In summarizing the results and issues over the time of the four-year seminar, we should first point out the great significance of reading, conducting scientific research and discussing literature with international students for young people living in difficult situations. Some Ukrainian students admitted that they could forget about the hardships of war while having discussions at seminars. Japanese students also have had an invaluable opportunity to realize the value of studying. We should note that the influence of war was reflected also in the selection of presentation themes. As mentioned before, several students chose literary works based on World War II. Furthermore, many students discussed topics related to national identity such as the formation of national literature, the preservation of traditional festivals and food culture. At the same time, international learning naturally makes students interested in comparative and typological approaches to literature and culture, which was the original intention of the organizers.

As for the more technical aspects of international education, courses held among non-native English speakers seemed to help participants speak English more confidently than with native English speakers. This is significant, especially for Japanese students who often feel uneasy communicating in English. It is important for them to realize the usefulness of English as a communication tool with people around the world. Needless to say, what is needed for international communication is not just English proficiency, but also the will to communicate with people from different cultures and the content that individuals want to convey. Hopefully, our project succeeded in having the participants come to understand these basics of international communication.

On the other hand, after holding the seminars for four years, we noticed certain things that needed improvement. As the organizers of the seminar specialize in literature, but not cultural studies, they sometimes felt that they did not succeed in helping students attain a higher level of understanding in their reports on cultural studies. As is well known, without sufficient academic support, cultural studies, like any other discipline, tends to become formulaic. Therefore, we decided to focus the next seminar on literature, which is hopefully broad enough to include a variety of students’ academic and personal interests.

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The goals of our renewed seminar are as follows: 1) facilitating intercultural exchange and collaboration between Ukrainian and Japanese students through discussions on literature, 2) understanding the characteristics of each nation’s literature within the framework of world literature, 3) developing science and scientific skills, 4) promoting communication in English, 5) exploring the positive impact of literature on personality and psychological well-being.

When planning the seminar, we created a list of literary works to be discussed in the seminar. We tried to maintain diversity in terms of era, country, school, and genre so that the students could choose what they are interested in discussing. Specifically:

Plays: Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* (around 429 BC); William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (around 1601); Henryk Ibsen, *A Doll’s House* (1879); Lesya Ukrainka, *Forest Song* (1911).

Poetry: Basho Matsuo’s haiku (1670–1690s); Hryhorii Skovoroda, *Kharkiv’s Fables* (1769–1774); Heinrich Heine, *Book of Songs* (1827); Taras Shevchenko, Testament (1845) and other poems.

Prose: Mykola Gogol, *Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka* (1831–1832); Oscar Wilde, *Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890); Lucy Maud Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables* (1908); George Orwell, *1984* (1948); Yasunari Kawabata, *Thousand Cranes* (1951); Ray Bradbury, *451 Degrees Fahrenheit* (1953) and other stories.

Youth literature: Astrid Lindgren, *Mio, My Son* (1954); Erich Wolf Segal, *Love Story* (1970); Ulf Stark, *Can You Whistle, Johanna?* (1992); Markus Zusak, *The Book Thief* (2005).

Before the joint seminar starts, each instructor at his or her seminar read preliminary lectures concerning the main themes of the seminar such as national literature and its role in culture and society, the formation and function of nations so that the seminar participants would be able to share the basic knowledge about national and world literature. Needless to say, the concept of nation has become extremely acute for Ukrainian students in connection with the war. It is no exaggeration to say that reading and discussing national literature is essential for them to maintain their national identity under extremely difficult conditions. At the same time, reading world literature has also become much more important and healing for them as it gives them a chance to understand that people of different countries often share similar experiences and values. We expected Ukrainian and Japanese students to find for themselves what is common and what is different among various cultures and times.

As for the structure and content of the seminar, the first two meetings (3 and 10 December 2024) were devoted to icebreaking sessions (presentations about each university, self-introductory talks by students) and lectures by the organizing professors. Professor Olha Nikolenko read a lecture titled “The Forms of Intertext in *Anne of Green Gables* by Lucy Maud Montgomery” with a PhD student Kateryna Nikolenko. Professor Lidiia Matsevko-Bekerska read a lecture titled “Literary Lviv”, and Professor Susumu Nonaka’s talk was titled “Reflection on Ukrainian Week in Japan 2023: Towards a Harmony between National and World Literature”. Each instructor tried to draw students’ attention to some aspects of literary studies such as intertextuality, youth literature, regional diversity of national literature, and the role of contacts with world literature in the formation of national literature. It was pleasant

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to see that student morale was high again this year although study conditions on the Ukrainian side are not satisfactory enough given unstable internet connections, a shortage of lighting and heating, in addition to air raid warnings during the seminar.

At subsequent meetings (17 December 2024, 7 and 14 January 2025), four student groups from each university made presentations on writers and works as follows: Poltava students discussed *Kharkiv's Fables* (H. Skovoroda), *Evenings on a Farm near Dykanka* (M. Gogol), *A Doll's House* (H. Ibsen), and *Can You Whistle, Johanna?* (U. Stark). Lviv students chose poems of Taras Shevchenko, *Forest Song* (Lesya Ukrainka), *Picture of Dorian Gray* (O. Wilde) and *Love Story* (E. Segal). Saitama students selected *King Oedipus* (Sophocles), *Hamlet* (W. Shakespeare), *1984* (G. Orwell), and *Mio, My Son* (A. Lindgren).

It seems that the works chosen by students show certain trends in the literary tastes of today's young readers. For example, Ukrainian students chose works of both Ukrainian and world literature while Japanese students chose only world literature, which might suggest differences in literary education between the two countries. As for eras and genres of chosen works, students from both countries exhibited a wide range of preferences.

The last meeting held on 21 January 2025 was devoted to the round table discussion facilitated by students themselves. Having reviewed the presentations and discussions so far, they discussed again the topics that particularly interested them in order to deepen their understanding.

The discussion began with an exploration of William Shakespeare's enduring relevance in the modern world. Students reflected on how his works continue to thrive in contemporary theatre and cinema, as well as his influence through monuments and the inclusion of his works in school and university curricula. They noted that despite the passage of centuries, Shakespeare's themes, characters, and ideas remain deeply resonant and adaptable to modern contexts.

The conversation then shifted to the concept of the “joy of life”, inspired by L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*. Students discussed how Anne, an orphan, found beauty and happiness in the world around her through her vivid imagination and love for nature, books, and friendships. This led to a broader discussion about the pursuit of joy in everyday life. They considered whether it is possible to always remain joyful, and shared personal experiences of what brings them happiness while also talking about strategies for overcoming difficult circumstances by focusing on small yet meaningful pleasures.

Next, students turned their attention to Erich Segal's *Love Story* to examine the complexities of relationships among young people. They discussed what it takes to build happiness in romantic partnerships and the challenges couples often face, such as communication issues, societal pressures, and the struggle to balance personal independence with commitment. The conversation expanded to include generational dynamics, highlighting the differences in values and perspectives that can create tensions between young people and the older generation in their country.

Finally, the discussion addressed Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and its relevance to contemporary issues surrounding gender equality. Students analyzed the challenges women face in their country, discussing stereotypes, societal expectations, and inequalities, particularly regarding gender roles in families. The group reflected on how traditional views of women's roles still persist in many areas, while also acknowledging the gradual evolution of modern

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attitudes toward gender roles and equality in contemporary society.

Over the course of the Ukrainian-Japanese Seminars 2020–2025, universities have shared useful experiences of students’ participation in the COIL research project. For example, under the guidance of Professor Olha Nikolenko, students united (according to their wishes) in mixed age groups to conduct joint research and prepare presentations. As it turned out, students with different backgrounds of knowledge, scientific work, and English language skills helped each other to advance their respective knowledge base of these fields to a higher level. The older students helped the younger ones, and the younger ones learned from the older ones. In the process of working together, they learned to interact, understand, respect each other’s opinions, and value the contribution of each participant. Each year Professor Olha Nikolenko gradually expanded the circle of Poltava participants by inviting younger students, who then became seniors and taught others that came after them etc. This technology of multi-age groups is based on the pedagogical system of the Ukrainian educator Anton Makarenko (1888–1939). Makarenko used this technology to train and educate adolescents in an orphanage. Professor Olha Nikolenko combined this technology with COIL technology which not only had a significant effect on education and the sciences, but also had a formative effect, and contributed to the strengthening of communication and interaction of students in the online space.

As far as participants from Saitama University are concerned, it was especially important for them to get to know the importance of literary education for Ukrainians, to experience international communication through literary studies, and finally to understand the connection between literature and life, in other words, the vitality and universality of classical works. The COIL seminar helped them reread literary works from a new perspective as they discussed them probably for the first time in their lives with international students who read the same works in different cultural and social contexts. At the same time, it was a fresh and pleasant experience for them to learn that contemporary literature from each country often depicts common themes which are important for young people such as establishing oneself, relationships with family, friendship, love and social participation. Just as COIL helps to reveal new aspects of literary works to students, literature will also bring out the potential of COIL because literature is a form of art which provides students with a lot of material to think about and discuss individual and universal, or national and world values. Therefore, the possibilities of literary education using COIL should be explored more and more.

On the other hand, the instructor of Japanese students got alarmed at the results of the questionnaire survey done before and after the seminar (as will be described in the following chapter) indicating that they were much more concerned about the improvements of their English skills than about understanding a different culture (i.e. Ukrainian) or making friends with Ukrainian students. Needless to say, one of the main goals of COIL projects is to foster an interest in different cultures and to motivate participants to communicate with each other. In this regard, it is necessary to guide students not only in English communication skills, but also to develop an interest in different cultures, which will be a central issue for future COIL projects.

The international scientific seminar is an important element of the professional training of future philologists, especially in the field of scientific research such as the development of systematic thinking, skills to plan and carry out research activities, as well as encourage the

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skills of critical evaluation and self-evaluation of the results of work undertaken as part of research and study. In preparing their reports and discussions on a particular topic, philology students (Bachelor's and Master's degree students in English Philology at the Ivan Franko National University of Lviv) improved both their integral competence (by solving complex specialized tasks and problems in the field of literary studies and translation, as well as by conducting research using innovative approaches) and important general and professional competencies of the specialty. To organize the meetings of the research seminar, effective forms, methods and techniques were optimally combined to develop such competencies as the ability to communicate in English (both orally and in writing), the ability to identify, formulate and solve research problems, which is manifested primarily in effective research strategies, as well as the analysis and processing of information relevant to the topic from various sources. During the sessions of the scientific seminar, students demonstrated a high level of use of information and communication technologies, the ability to work in a team (the preparation of research projects) and independently (active participation discussions). Various reports and presentations provided an opportunity to better understand the essence, content, and purpose of the humanities, to show their own attitude to broad issues in the history of world literature, and to demonstrate skills in analyzing national literatures in the context of world culture and history. The content and form of student presentations showed that young people are aware of the role of culture and literature, in particular, in human history, and also understand and respect the diversity and multiculturalism of the modern world. And additionally, through the comprehension of a particular literary and artistic work, are able to comprehend the broad context of universal values and ethical norms. The experience of international academic communication develops in students a meta-skill of socially responsible activity from the standpoint of civic consciousness, a meaningful need to understand the basic principles of human existence along with an appreciation of nature and society. The combination of research principles with the capabilities of various technological tools shows the prospect of forming and developing the discourse of academic ethics, as students use materials from other authors from various fields of humanities knowledge as accurately as possible. The topics, issues, and general intellectual and emotional atmosphere of the seminar promotes students' independent thinking, confidence in their critical judgments, and helps contribute to responsible and reasoned presentations of their own thoughts and conclusions.

5. THREE SURVEYS ON THE 2024 AND 2025 UKRAINIAN-JAPANESE STUDENT SEMINARS

We conducted surveys among participants before and after the student seminars to determine their educational effectiveness and students' psychological perceptions of them. We want to present the results of all three surveys in our study guide.

Method

Two surveys were conducted through Google Forms, from November 2024 to February 2025, before and after the seminars. At the same time, for comparison, students who participated in previous years' seminars were also asked to complete the post-seminar questionnaire.

Participants

The breakdown of students who participated in this year's pre-seminar survey is as follows. 28 Ukrainian students (3 males, 25 females), mean age 20.19 years (SD=2.02). 6 Japanese students (3 males, 3 females), mean age 20.67 years (SD=1.63).

The breakdown of students who responded to the questionnaire in previous years is as follows. 14 Ukrainian students (2 males, 12 females), mean age 23.75 years (SD = 5.88). 4 Japanese students (1 male, 3 female), mean age 22.25 years (SD=0.50).

Procedure

Pre-Seminar Questionnaire

Prior to the seminar, students completed a questionnaire assessing their expectations, background, national self-perception, and personal attributes. Such questions were intended to capture participants' initial perspectives and establish a baseline for evaluating changes in attitudes and experiences throughout the seminar.

Post-Seminar Questionnaire

After completing the seminar, participants responded to a structured questionnaire designed to assess their learning experience, affective responses, and reflections on the seminar. The questionnaire was divided into two main sections:

Section 1: Learning Experience

This section measured cognitive and affective learning outcomes.

Cognitive Learning (Based on Bloom's Taxonomy's Cognitive Domain; Bloom, 1956)

Six open-ended questions assessed different levels of cognitive processing, including knowledge acquisition, comprehension, application, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis.

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Participants were asked to recall key features of their learning, explain concepts, apply knowledge, analyze cultural aspects, evaluate seminar value, and creatively synthesize their learning.

Affective Learning (Based on Bloom's Taxonomy's Affective Domain; Krathwohl et al., 1964)

Six questions examined participants' attitudes and engagement, focusing on their openness to new perspectives, degree of participation, the value of intercultural exchange, and their overall reception of the seminar. Responses included both Likert-scale and open-ended formats.

Section 2: Reflection and Perceived Outcomes

This section evaluated personal growth, challenges, and overall impact of students' experiences.

Self-Reflection and Seminar Evaluation

Participants reflected on their experiences, challenges, and suggestions for improvement. Open-ended questions assessed perceived advantages, difficulties, and recommendations for future seminars.

Perception of Accomplishments

Several Likert-scale questions measured improvements in communication skills, academic interest, intercultural exchange, in addition to clarifying their understanding of world literature. Additionally, questions assessed participants' beliefs in the transformative power of literature and their sense of connection with others.

This questionnaire provided both qualitative and quantitative data to examine the seminar's impact on participants' cognitive development, affective engagement, reflection and perceived outcomes. Please refer to the appendix for the questions in full.

Results

Pre-seminar questionnaire

1. Personal attributes

Most Ukrainian students' English levels are quite advanced, while Japanese students' language abilities could be considered as being generally at the intermediate level. Most Ukrainian students' academic fields are literature and English, while Japanese students have backgrounds in various academic fields.

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Table 1 English proficiency and Academic fields in each country

		Ukrainian	Japanese
English proficiency (self assessed)	Beginner	1	1
	Intermediate	8	4
	Advanced	16	1
	Fluent	3	0
Academic fields	Literature and English language	23	0
	Literature	2	1
	Journalism	2	0
	Philosophy and history	1	2
	Economics	0	1
	Art	0	1
	Misc	0	1

2. Expectations for the seminars

The most common expectation of Ukrainian students is to understand Japanese culture and make friends. Whereas, Japanese students appear to have a greater desire in enhancing their English and communication skills, as well as expanding their knowledge of literature.

Table 2 Expectations

Categories	Sub-categories	Ukrainian	Japanese
Cultural exchange	Understand the other culture	19	1
	Improve English skills	3	4
	Make friends	9	0
	Understand the other culture's students' thinking	6	1
	Improve intercultural communication skills	2	2
	<i>Overall</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>8</i>
Literature learning	Learn knowledge of literature	8	4
	Understand literature's effects on culture	1	0
	<i>Overall</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>4</i>
	Misc	0	1
Total		48	13

3. Anticipated challenges for the seminars

All of the Japanese students believed there are challenges, while one fourth of Ukrainian students thought there would be no challenges. Between the two groups, the most common anticipated challenge came from Japanese students who were concerned about their English skills and proactive public speaking.

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Table 3 Anticipated challenges

Categories	Sub-categories	Ukrianian	Japanese
English skills and cultural barriers	English skills	10	3
	Cultural barriers	3	0
	<i>Overall</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>3</i>
Presentations by teamwork	Proactive public speaking	2	3
	Team work	2	0
	<i>Overall</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>
Online	Equipment problems	3	1
Other challenges	Ukrainian students' situation	1	0
	Cannot understand some unfamiliar works	1	0
No challenges	No challenges	7	0
Total		29	7

4. Experiences of COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning)

Half of Ukrainian students have experience in COIL, and nearly half of them had attended the previous years' seminar, while only one student was attending for the first time. All Japanese students had experience in various COIL sessions, although only one student had attended this seminar before.

Table 4 Experiences of COIL

Categories	Sub-categories	Ukrianian	Japanese
Yes	This seminar	12	1
	Seminars for enhancing English skills	2	1
	Seminars for enhancing intercultural skills	1	1
	Seminars for literature	1	2
	Seminars for multinational management	0	1
	<i>Overall</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>6</i>
No		12	0
Total		28	6

5. National self-identification and values

Most students have a good balance of their national self-image and that of being a world citizen.

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Table 5 National self and values

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Proud of own nation and also interested in other nations	2	1	31
World literature enhances understanding of national literature	2	0	29
Literature to be the best way to understand cultures	2	6	26

After the lecture, 20 Ukrainian and 7 Japanese students from the current year answered the questionnaire. 14 Ukrainian and 4 Japanese students from previous years also answered the same questionnaire.

Section 1: Learning Experience

Cognitive Domains

Q1-1 Knowledge (What are three key points you learned during the seminars?)

The top three learning/awareness points for both Ukrainian and Japanese students were (Table 6): 1) Deepening understanding of literature (especially its universality). Examples of statements include: “I gained a deeper understanding of world literature and Ukrainian and Japanese literature” and “I learned about classical literature and masterpieces (Shakespeare, Oscar Wilde, etc.) again and felt the universality of the themes”. 2) Enhancing intercultural understanding. Examples of comments include: “I learnt about the differences and similarities between Japanese and Ukrainian culture and traditions” and “It was refreshing to be exposed to Japanese universities and students’ lifestyles and ways of thinking”. 3) Improving English communication skills: “I improved my English and gained courage to speak in front of people”, “I learnt the importance of asking questions and expressing opinions, and learned how to communicate in a way that is easy for listeners to understand”.

Table 6 Three key points learnt from the seminars

Categories	Ukrainian	Japanese
Deepening understanding of literature (Especially its universality)	16	4
Enhancing intercultural understanding	13	4
Improving English communication skills	9	4
Total	38	12

Students from both countries felt that they deepened their knowledge of literature in addition to becoming aware of the existence of universality in literature. They also deepened their understanding of different cultures and improved their own English and communication skills. In terms of differences, Japanese students considered all three of the above points important, while Ukrainian students placed more importance on their understanding of literature and culture.

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The previous years showed similar results to the current year.

Q1-2 Comprehension (Explain in your own words a problem discussed in the seminars)

The top three themes of Ukrainian students were: 1) The contemporary significance of classical literature (in relation to modern society) (10 respondents). Examples of comments included: “moral, ethical and social issues dealt with through literary works (the wealth disparities between rich and poor, family relations, social class, etc.)”; “issues of ‘humanity’ and ‘identity’ common to ancient and modern works”. 2) Gender-related discussions (4 respondents). Examples of comments include: “Criticism of the image of the ‘ideal wife’ and patriarchy in Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*”; “The social status and roles of women in both Japan and Ukraine”, etc. 3) Conflict between individual freedom and social expectations (including generation gaps). Examples of statements include “Differences in values between young people and the elderly (generation gap)” and “Nora’s self-realization vs. the constraints of society and family”. Regarding the level of comprehension, many said that they were generally able to grasp the information smoothly.

The top three themes of focus for Japanese students, similar to Ukrainian students, were the modern significance of classical literature (in relation to modern society) and gender issues, but they also mentioned difficulties in understanding and communicating in terms of language (4 respondents). Examples of statements include: “It was difficult to fully grasp the content of discussions and longer presentations in English” and “I felt a lack of understanding of difficult expressions and the background of the works, especially Shakespeare”. Regarding the level of comprehension, the hurdles in terms of language were clear, such as “I was not familiar with the English language and its respective cultural background”.

On the other hand, Ukrainian and Japanese students from previous years mentioned more cultural and generational differences. Examples of statements include “social and cultural differences between Japan and Ukraine” and “generation gaps”.

Thus, students from both countries focused on the social issues reflected in literary works, while Japanese students shared their awareness of these issues while struggling to cope with the language and new knowledge. In addition, the students paid more attention to literature this year because of the course emphasis on that particular topic.

Q1-3 Application (In what areas can you use the knowledge and skills gained from the seminars?)

The main uses by Ukrainian students were: 1) the area of scholarship and education (14 respondents). Examples of statements include: “I use it in my university classes (world literature, literature research, etc.) and research papers”, and “I will introduce Japanese culture and world literature in my classes when I become a teacher in the future”, etc. 2) Intercultural exchange (10 respondents). Examples of comments include: “making use of experience gained through communication with Japanese students and other foreigners” and “promoting intercultural understanding and multicultural cooperation through travel, study abroad and being involved in overseas projects”.

In addition to academic and educational areas, Japanese students also mentioned global

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literacy. Examples of statements include: “As a ‘culture,’ that broadens my knowledge and interests which will help me to enjoy foreign literature in the future”.

As mentioned above, both students cited the use of literature in academic and educational fields and international communication as a major benefit, but Ukrainian students were more career-oriented in terms of “how to use it in a specific job or educational setting”, while Japanese students were more focused on the “cultural” aspect of the subject.

On the other hand, the previous years’ results show that Ukrainian students mentioned that generic areas such as critical thinking and teamwork (5 respondents) can be used in addition to the above. Although both groups shared the idea of wanting to make use of the knowledge and skills they acquired in a variety of situations, Ukrainian students envisaged using their knowledge in more specialized and practical situations, such as translation, writing articles and working in education.

Q1-4 Analysis (What features of another national culture did you notice in the process of discussing literary works at the seminars?)

The top three “Japanese cultural characteristics” of Ukrainian students were: 1) politeness and respect for harmony (9 respondents). Examples of statements include: “Japanese people are very polite and polite in the way they ask questions and make comments” and “they value harmony and tend to avoid strongly confrontational statements of opinion”; 2) Diligence, thorough preparation and in-depth analysis (5 respondents). Examples of comments include: “Japanese students are well prepared in advance and their presentations are deeply analytical” and “I am impressed by their strong sense of responsibility and their willingness to carry things through to the end”. 3) Subtlety and attention to detail and nature (4 respondents). Examples of comments include: “They value the slightest nuance of the story and the emotional expressions of the characters, and try to appreciate them in detail”, “They see deep meaning in small motifs such as nature and scenery”.

The top three “characteristics of Ukrainian culture” identified by Japanese students were: 1) a high awareness of freedom and open discussion of problems in their country (4 respondents). Examples of statements include: “Many students openly discuss social and political issues” and “I have the impression that they strongly value ‘freedom’ and raise issues more frankly than in Japan”. 2) Strong historical and ethnic awareness and unique literary tradition (3 respondents). Examples of statements include: “Ukrainian literature is strongly influenced by the history that has continued since the time of the Grand Duchy of Kiev (Kyiv Rus’) and “the complex relationship with Russia and language issues have a significant effect on the works and identity formation of the authors”. 3) Active cultural activities and enthusiasm for expression (2 respondents). Examples of statements include: “I felt that they tended to actively participate in cultural events, such as theatre-going” and “there is a strong passion for the preservation and dissemination of poetry and literary works”.

Students from both countries felt each other’s enthusiasm and had gained a deeper understanding of their respective cultures. Ukrainian students focused on the “Japanese culture of politeness and harmony” and Japanese students on the “Ukrainian culture of strong historical awareness and positive self-expression”.

The previous years’ Ukrainian students’ responses had similar results. Japanese students,

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on the other hand, mentioned: 1) a strong sense of ethnic and national identity, an identity rooted in history and literature (2 respondents). Examples of statements include: “In the context of war and history, they have developed a strong national identity in their culture and literature” and “I am impressed by their efforts to establish ‘themselves’ in all spheres in order to counter the crisis”. (2) Positive attitude and clarity of self-assertion in making decisions (2 respondents). Examples of comments include: “Compared to the Japanese, they have a stronger will to make their own decisions than to ‘wait for the opinions of those around them’” and “I found it refreshing to see them speak out and express their opinions without hesitation”. 3) A unique “sense of beauty” and richness of expression in culture and arts (1 respondent). This statement was that, “There is a high level of interest in the beauty of sound, literature and poetry. While valuing traditional events and folkloric elements, they actively incorporate them into contemporary works”. Both groups had in common the fact that there were “many elements to learn from the literature and culture of each other’s country”, particularly the respective historical and social backgrounds of each other’s country and the differences in communication styles.

Q1-5 Evaluation (What was most valuable to you in the seminars process?)

The top three most valuable things for Ukrainian students were: 1) International exchange and gaining new perspectives (12 respondents). Examples of statements include: “exchanging opinions with Japanese students and learning about cultural differences and similarities” and “interacting with people from different backgrounds allowed me to look at literature and society from an angle I had not usually considered”; 2) Communication skills and personal growth (English language skills, positivity, presentation and discussion skills, etc.) (8 respondents). Examples of statements include: “In the process of preparing as a team, my sense of responsibility and collaboration skills improved”. 3) Deepened understanding of literature and social issues (6 respondents). Examples of comments include: “I saw literature as a mirror of society and it gave me an opportunity to think about various issues such as the view of family, gender and war” and “I learned about new authors and their works and felt the pleasure of reading them from a broader perspective”.

The top three most valuable things for Japanese students were: 1) Positive attitude towards presentations and discussions in English (5 respondents). Examples of statements include: “I strongly felt the need to express my opinions in English and decided to participate actively” and “The Q&A and free discussions gave me a great opportunity to practice using English and I got a great response”; 2) Learning from the seminar management and discussion format itself (3 respondents). Examples of comments include: “I was able to experience how to proceed with online discussions in the free discussion on the last day” and “I gained know-how that I can use in other seminars in the future, such as the flow of the Q&A session and how to ask questions”. 3) Awareness of social issues (especially gender) and intercultural understanding (2 respondents). Examples of comments include: “It was interesting to know that the social treatment of women is an issue in Ukraine as well as in Japan, and the comparison was interesting” and “We were able to grasp the issues from multiple perspectives by sharing the social backgrounds as seen in the literature”.

Although both countries’ students see great value in learning while interacting with students

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from other countries, Ukrainian students tend to focus on personal growth and expansion of horizons, while Japanese students tend to consider practical matters such as “methodological learning of English and discussion formats” and “creation of opportunities for cross-cultural understanding”.

In the results from previous years, Ukrainian students showed the same trends as this year. Japanese students cited 1) being able to interact with foreign students in real time (2 respondents); 2) asking questions and exchanging opinions from diverse perspectives (1 respondent); 3) contact with Ukrainian culture (1 respondent). The Japanese students emphasized the experience of being able to interact with foreign students in real time, and the enjoyment of learning about a foreign culture by gaining diverse perspectives.

Q1-6 Synthesis (If you were to create a short story about Ukraine and Japan, what would the main theme be?)

The top three stories of Ukrainian students were: 1) friendship, exchange and mutual understanding (meeting through travel, studying abroad, etc.) (10 respondents). Examples of statements include: “a story of learning about culture while travelling from Ukraine to Japan (or from Japan to Ukraine)” and “a story of Ukrainians and Japanese meeting and working together to understand each other’s culture and art in depth”; 2) Contrast between tradition and modernity (6 respondents). Examples of statements include: “A story about how to live in a globalized world while cherishing ancient traditions”; “The intersection of Japanese and Ukrainian history and traditional values with modern ideas and lifestyles”, etc. 3) Discovering common values and cultural similarities (4 respondents). Examples of statements include: “Although the cultures of the two countries seem to be different at first glance, they emphasize commonalities such as love of nature and respect for family” and “In unravelling each other’s history, we rediscover surprisingly similar worldviews and mentalities”.

The top three story themes suggested by Japanese students included the following: 1) stories centered on cross-cultural exchange and differences in values (3 respondents). Examples of statements include: novels depicting differences in values and culture between Ukraine and Japan; contrasts in “modernity” and identity based on historical backgrounds (Ukraine and Russia, Japan and the West, etc.), 2) Connections through literature, art, poetry, etc. (2 respondents). Examples include: stories that cross over between Japanese and Ukrainian children’s literature; stories that link the literary qualities of the two countries through themes of traditional poetry and poets, etc. 3) Stories based on society, history and daily life (2 respondents). Examples of statements include: “a story about the social challenges faced by Ukraine and Japan and their respective lifestyles, such as agriculture”, and “a comparison between the two countries on how they have dealt with modernization”.

Both groups of students wanted to create stories in which they could find new perspectives and connections, while respecting the traditions and characteristics of both countries. In terms of differences, Ukrainian students envisaged “stories that connect cultures through characters”, while Japanese students were more interested in “stories that delve into themes (values, literature, social structures)”.

The results from previous years show that Ukrainian students also drew post-war reconstruction, resilience and international cooperation (3 respondents) in addition to the above.

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Examples of statements include: “a vision of the future in which the two countries, having overcome war and great difficulties, cooperate with each other culturally and scientifically” and “a picture of the two countries sharing the challenges they face and moving forward together in a positive direction”. The Japanese students were interested in: 1) Cultural differences related to nature and sensibilities (2 respondents). Examples of statements include: “how they perceive nature and how it is reflected in their works” as well as “comparison of different views of nature and depictions of landscapes in Ukraine and Japan”, etc. 2) Considerations on war and social systems (1 student). “Comparison of Ukrainian and Japanese history and values around the nature and social structure of ‘war’”. 3) Stories of cultural exchange and recognition of each other’s traditions (1 respondent): “A story about understanding and helping each other despite language barriers’ and ‘a story that creates empathy while introducing customs and events in both countries’”. Students from both countries agreed that “people from different countries and cultures respect and share each other’s traditions and values”, but the Ukrainian students’ stories were more centered on the theme of personal interaction and friendship, while the Japanese students focused on social and environmental themes.

This year, the focus is more on literary works, so there could be more stories about connections through literature, art and poetry.

Affective Domains

Q1-7 Receiving (To what extent were you open to understanding perspectives from other nations and cultures?)

Table 7 Openess to other cultures

	Ukrianian	Japanese
Completely open	16	0
Somewhat open	3	6
Slightly open	1	1
Total	20	7

Both Ukrainian and Japanese students expressed a willingness to understand different cultures. It is notable that Ukrainian students were more candid in their responses indicating an attitude of “full acceptance.”

Results from previous years showed similar trends. All Ukrainian students answered “completely open”, indicating a very positive attitude towards intercultural understanding. Japanese students did not show the same absolute openness as Ukrainian students, with 50.0% (2 students) answering “completely open” and 50.0% (2 students) answering “somewhat open”.

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Q1-8 Responding (How actively did you participate in discussions during the seminars?)

Table 8 Activeness in discussion

	Ukrainian	Japanese
Frequently	6	0
Ocasionally	6	5
Rarely	8	2
Not at all	0	0
Total	20	7

Ukrainian students varied in their level of class participation. Japanese students were the most likely to speak out ‘occasionally’, with a small number of students participating frequently or rarely.

The results from previous years’ surveys show that there is no significant difference between students from the two countries in what they say they participated in frequently, but overall Ukrainian students tended to participate in discussions more frequently.

Q1-9 Valuing (How important is intercultural exchange between students from different countries through literature?)

Table 9 Importance of intercultural exchange

	Ukrainian	Japanese
Very important	16	5
Important	4	2
Slightly important	0	0
Not important	0	0
Total	20	7

Students in both countries thought it was either “very important” or “important”, and perceptions of importance tend to be similar.

The results of previous years’ surveys show that 11 Ukrainian students and 3 Japanese students answered “very important”, with both groups strongly recognizing the importance of intercultural exchange. Overall, both groups rated intercultural exchange as important, but while some Japanese students identified it as “somewhat important”, Ukrainian students consistently rated it higher.

Q1-10 Organizing (What did you like and dislike about the organization of the seminars?)

Fourteen Ukrainian students liked the organization, 6 respondents provided neutral opinions and no negative opinions. Two Japanese students liked the organization, 4 were neutral and

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one negative. Ukrainian students were overwhelmingly positive, and spoke highly of the quality of the organization and management, the opportunities for discussion and the diversity of topics. Japanese students had some positive but relatively neutral opinions, with 1 negative opinion, mainly pointing to time management and the depth of discussions.

The results of previous years show that, as in the current year, Ukrainian students were positive about the overall running of the seminar and appreciated the liveliness of the discussions. Japanese students pointed out issues with the way the seminar was organized (in particular, group size and time setting). Students from both countries shared the feeling that there was not enough time for discussion, but Japanese students referred more specifically to the “way the groups were put together” and the “consistency of the rules”.

Q1-11 Dissemination (Would you recommend these seminars to others?)

All Ukrainian and Japanese students chose “recommend”. The content of the seminar and the opportunities for interaction were very highly rated. The Ukrainian students’ comments highlighted the cultural exchange, academic growth and discussion opportunities. Japanese students’ comments pointed to the valuable opportunities to use English and the importance of interacting with Ukrainian students. Students from both countries cited a deeper understanding of different cultures and personal and academic growth as reasons.

The previous years’ students all chose to recommend it. Ukrainian students felt strongly about the value of intercultural exchange itself and recommended it as an opportunity for communication growth and learning. Japanese students valued the seminar as a content and international learning opportunity, particularly emphasizing that the opportunity to engage with Ukraine was valuable.

Q1-12 Characterization (What did you like /dislike about the work of the students who participated in the seminars?)

All Ukrainian students expressed a positive opinion and rated quality of the students’ presentations and discussions very highly. Four Japanese students expressed positive opinions and there were three neutral opinions. And while they were satisfied with the quality of the presentations overall, they pointed out issues related to the bias in speaking opportunities (difference between speaking and non-speaking students, length of presentations, ease of understanding) and the depth of discussions.

The results of the previous years show that Ukrainian students were generally positive and gave particularly high marks to the “thoroughness of presentation preparation”, “enthusiastic presentation” and “diverse exchange of opinions”. However, they also identified areas for improvement, such as “the quality of the English accent they were exposed to, which sometimes made it difficult to understand” and that “some presentations were redundant”. Japanese students were positive about “being exposed to Ukrainian culture and literature” and “the atmosphere of active discussions”. On the other hand, some felt that there were issues with the time and progress of the seminar, saying that “some students talked too long” and “the seminar felt too long”. In general, the level of preparation and content of the presentations were highly evaluated, with “learning about different cultures and perspectives”

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being particularly popular among the participants. However, some points for improvement in terms of the progression of the sessions, such as the length of the presentations, were also raised.

Section 2: Reflection

Self-Reflection and Seminar Evaluation

Q2-1 What changes or growth did you experience through these seminars?

Table 10 Changes (growth) through the seminars

Categories	Ukrainian	Japanese
Improvement of English proficiency	5	3
Enhancement of confidence and teamwork experience	5	2
Understanding of different cultures and broadening of perspectives	4	0
Development of critical thinking and discussion skills	4	0
Improvement of communication skills	3	2
Total	21	7

The growth of Ukrainian students was diverse and highlighted not only English language skills, but also an expansion of cultural perspectives and improved critical thinking. Japanese students' growth was mainly in specific changes such as improved English language and communication skills. The above were the challenges identified in the pre-seminar survey, but improvements were observed in these areas in the post-seminar survey.

Looking at the results of the previous years, Ukrainian students emphasized that in addition to improving their English language skills, they also gained intercultural understanding and literary analysis skills, and many viewed their learning through the seminar as having led to overall personal growth. The biggest gain for Japanese students was that they felt able to overcome some of their difficulties with English and communication skills. In general, both were positive about the expansion of their language skills and horizons due to the seminar and felt that they had grown in a way that suited their individual backgrounds and learning needs.

Q2-2 What difficulties have you personally experienced during the seminars?

Table 11 Difficulties experienced during the seminars

Categories	Ukrainian	Japanese
Difficulties in speaking English	6	5
Challenges in time management and teamwork	5	0
Technical issues	2	0
Difficulty in forming opinions and question	0	2
Total	13	7

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The top three difficulties identified by Ukrainian students were: 1) Difficulties in speaking English (6). Examples of statements include: “I hesitated to participate in discussions because I felt my language skills were not good enough.” 2) Challenges in time management and teamwork (5). Examples of statements include: “It was difficult to coordinate preparation time with other students” and “I had a hard time coordinating group work, but in the end I managed to cope.” 3) Technical issues (2). Examples of statements include: “The instability of the communication environment was affected by the lack of electricity in Ukraine and the war” and “There were interruptions due to air raid sirens.”

Difficulties for Japanese students were 1) Difficulty in speaking English (5) and 2) Difficulty in forming opinions and questions (2). Examples of statements include: “It was difficult to participate in the discussion because I did not know what questions to ask” and “Even though I could speak English, I had difficulty in thinking of appropriate questions.”

Students from both countries felt anxious about speaking in English and experienced difficulties in participating in discussions. Ukrainian students felt challenges with teamwork and time coordination and faced various technical problems. In addition, Japanese students struggled with the speed of Ukrainian students’ English.

The results of previous years’ survey reveal that Ukrainian students mainly had difficulties with “anxiety about English” and in many cases, “technical problems such as internet and power outages.” On the other hand, some said they had no difficulties, showing variations depending on individual circumstances and personalities. Half of the Japanese students responded that they felt uncomfortable speaking in English. In view of the difficult situation faced by Ukrainian students related mostly to the ongoing war, Japanese respondents pointed out that they needed to pay attention to the content and expressions with respect to the context of the situation. In general, both groups of students felt anxieties about language communication and technical and environmental challenges. And whereas Ukrainian students were greatly affected by the special circumstances in their country (e.g. power cuts), Japanese students tended to struggle more with English language skills and consideration for the feelings of their counterparts.

Q2-3 Do you think these seminars should continue in the future? What aspects of these seminars would you suggest improving for future participants?

Table 12 Suggestions for improvement

Categories	Ukrainian	Japanese
Promotion of small group discussions	5	0
Provision of pre-reading materials	5	0
Enhancement of discussions	2	0
Reduction of presentation time to allow more discussions	0	3
Strengthening of icebreakers	0	2
Improvement of audio and communication environment	0	1
Total	12	6

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All students from both countries strongly supported the continuation of the seminars. The top three suggestions for improvement from Ukrainian students were: 1) Promotion of small group discussions; 2) Provision of pre-reading materials. Examples of statements included, “Distribute presentation summaries and schedules in advance to make it easier for students to understand other students’ presentations.” 3) Enhancement of discussions. Examples of statements include: “Since the Japanese students were reserved, debate-style discussions and more interactive work should be introduced to create an environment where everyone feels comfortable expressing their opinions.”

The top three suggestions for improvement from Japanese students were: 1) Reduction of presentation time to allow more discussion; 2) Strengthening of icebreakers. Examples of statements include: allowing more time for icebreakers to reduce tension between students meeting for the first time; and getting used to speaking in English in a relaxed atmosphere; 3) Improvement of the audio and communication environment. Examples of statements include: “We had poor Zoom connection and audio problems, so we will check technical problems in advance and aim for a smoother progression.”

The previous years’ results showed that all respondents indicated that they would like to continue with these seminars. The top three main suggestions for improvement from Ukrainian students were: 1) optimize discussion time and format (5 respondents). Examples of comments include: “use breakout rooms to discuss in smaller groups” and “more strict time management so that everyone can speak”; 2) Introduce and interact with a wider range of cultures (3 students). Examples of comments include: “Introduce traditional music and dance” and “Focus on art and lifestyle culture other than just the literature in each country”. 3) Add interactive elements (2 participants). Examples of statements include: “More interactive debates and workshops.”

The top three suggestions for improvement from Japanese students were: 1) Management based on the participants’ English level and willingness to learn (2 respondents). Examples of comments include: “Create an environment that makes it easier for students who are concerned about their English ability to participate” and “Set a certain standard for English ability or set up a support system”, and 2) Improve the number of participants and format (ease of participation and discussion) (1 respondent). Examples of comments include: “A fewer number of students would allow a more active exchange of opinions” and “A format that allows more casual participation”, etc. 3) Promoting mutual understanding in the preparation stage (1 respondent). Examples of comments include: “not only in a lecture format, but also provide opportunities for students to share information about the other country in advance” and “deepen the process of presenting and asking questions to each other, rather than just giving a lecture”.

Q2-4 Name the advantages and disadvantages of these seminars.

The greatest advantage for both countries’ students was the practice of English (Ukrainian 7, Japanese 5). Next was cross-cultural exchange (Ukrainian 8, Japanese 4). Ukrainian students also cited “networking” (5) and Japanese students “learning literature” (3) as advantages. Ukrainian students cited “short discussion time” (3 respondents) and “limitations of online format” (2), while Japanese students cited “long presentation time” (2) and “small number

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of Japanese participants” (2) as disadvantages. Thus, Ukrainian students emphasized the importance of the breadth of exchanges, while Japanese students were looking for an enrichment of aspects of the learning process. Improving time allocation was also a common issue.

The results of previous years’ questionnaires show that the biggest advantage for both countries’ students was cross-cultural exchange (6 Ukrainian, 3 Japanese). Next was the practice of English (4 Ukrainian, 3 Japanese), while the disadvantages included time constraints (3 Ukrainian, 1 Japanese). Furthermore, Ukrainian students valued “networking” (3), while Japanese students emphasized “being able to study literature” (1). Ukrainian students cited “technical and war-related problems” (2), while Japanese students cited “limited opportunities to speak” (2) and “limitations of the online format” (1) as disadvantages. As in this year’s survey, Ukrainian students emphasized the importance of the breadth of exchanges, while Japanese students felt that the learning environment and few opportunities to speak out were a problem.

Perception of accomplishments

Q2-5 Do you feel that your communication skills in a foreign language (English) have improved in an international context?

Table 13 Improvement of communication skills

	Ukrainian	Japanese
Significantly improved	5	1
Improved	12	4
Partially improved	2	2
Not at all	0	0
Total	19	7

Overall, students felt that they had improved. Ukrainian students tended to experience greater growth in their language abilities while a larger proportion of Japanese students felt they had improved but still felt inadequate.

The results of previous years’ questionnaires show the same trend.

Q2-6 Do you think that this international seminar made your interest and skills in scientific work better?

Table 14 Improvement of scientific skills

	Ukrianian	Japanese
Significantly	12	2
Moderately	8	5
Slightly	0	0
Not at all	0	0
Total	20	7

Ukrainian students showed stronger improvement in their scientific interests and skills, while Japanese students felt that they had grown to some extent.

The results of previous years' questionnaires show the same trend.

Q2-7: Do you think that you experienced intercultural exchange between Ukrainian and Japanese students through discussions on literature?

Table 15 Experiencing intercultural exchange

	Ukrianian	Japanese
A great extent	15	5
A moderate extent	5	1
A small extent	0	1
Not at all	0	0
Total	20	7

Students from both countries rated their experience of intercultural exchange highly while Ukrainian students felt that they experienced more intercultural exchange.

The results of previous years' questionnaires show the same trend.

Q2-8: Do you understand the characteristics of each national literature within the framework of world literature?

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Table 16 Understanding the characteristics of each national literature

	Ukrianian	Japanese
A great extent	9	3
A moderate extent	8	3
A small extent	3	1
Not at all	0	0
Total	20	7

The overall trends are similar for students in both countries, suggesting that there are no significant differences in their understanding of literature.

The results of previous years' questionnaires show that a certain number of students in both countries feel "To a moderate extent" (8 Ukrainian and 1 Japanese). A high proportion of Ukrainian students (4) feel that they "understand a great deal", while only one Japanese student feels that they "understand a great deal". A high proportion of Japanese students (2) but only one Ukrainian student felt they "understand a little". Ukrainian students felt they had a deeper understanding of the characteristics of each country's literature within world literature, while Japanese students had a relatively low level of understanding.

Q2-9 Do you think that literature has the power to heal and encourage people's hearts?

Table 17 Literature's power to heal and encourage people

	Ukrianian	Japanese
Strongly agree	14	5
Agree	6	1
Partially agree	0	1
No	0	0
Total	20	7

Both countries' students strongly believed in the 'healing and encouraging power of literature', but the opinions of Japanese students were somewhat more diverse.

The results of previous years show that the majority of students from both countries feel that they 'strongly agree' or 'agree' (13 Ukrainian and 3 Japanese students). Ukrainian students were more likely to say they 'strongly agree' (5), while Japanese students were slightly more likely to say 'partially agree' (1), with only 2 students saying they 'strongly

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agree'. Thus, Ukrainian students tended to strongly believe in the healing and encouraging power of literature, while some Japanese students agreed but took a somewhat cautious view.

Q2-10: Why do you think so?

The main reasons given by the Ukrainian respondents were as follows: 1) the content of the literary works provided healing and encouragement (3 respondents), 2) hope and motivation (2 respondents), 3) reflection of reality (2 respondents), 4) new perspectives (2 respondents), and 5) understanding of culture (1 respondent). The main reasons given by Japanese respondents were: 1) the content of the work contained healing and encouragement (2 respondents); 2) the universality of art (2 respondents); 3) the relationship between literature and the mind (1 respondent); 4) providing daily motivation (1 respondent); 5) a skeptical point of view (1 respondent).

Thus, Ukrainian students focus on the emotional impact of literature and its meaning in one's whole life. Japanese students tend to refer to the universality and philosophical aspects of literature and its impact on everyday life. One Japanese student has a skeptical viewpoint, "Is literature really valid in our time?" Looking at the results from previous years, the main reasons given by the Ukrainian respondents were as follows: 1) emotional connection (6 respondents), 2) shared human experiences (4 respondents), 3) new perspectives (3 respondents), 4) reflection of society (3 respondents), and 5) inspiration (2 respondents). The main reasons given by the Japanese respondents were as follows: 1) immersion in another world (1 respondent), 2) empathy and connection (1 respondent), 3) personal support from books (1 respondent), and 4) influence on thoughts and actions (1 respondent).

Ukrainian students tended to focus on the impact of literature on society as a whole and on the common human experience, while Japanese students tended to focus on its impact on their personal experience and thinking.

Q2-11: Do you think this seminar helped you develop the ability to interact and collaborate with people from different cultures and nations?

Table 18 Developing the ability to interact and collaborate people from different cultures

	Ukrainian	Japanese
Strongly agree	8	4
Agree	11	2
Partially agree	1	1
No	0	0
Total	20	7

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Students from both countries consider the seminar to have helped them improve their intercultural exchange and cooperation skills, although Japanese students were more likely to “strongly agree” with this statement.

The results of previous years show that a large number of students in both countries “strongly agree” or “agree” (12 Ukrainian, 3 Japanese). A certain number of students “partially agreed” (2 Ukrainian, 1 Japanese).

Q2-12: Do you feel that this seminar helped you recognize the shared humanity among people and develop a sense of connection to others and the world?

Table 19 Recognizing the shared humanity and developing sense of connection to others and the world

	Ukrainian	Japanese
Strongly agree	11	3
Agree	8	3
Partially agree	1	1
No	0	0
Total	20	7

Students from both countries believed that the seminar “contributed to a greater awareness of common humanity and connections with others”, although Ukrainian students tend to be slightly more likely to “strongly agree” with this statement.

The results of previous years’ surveys show the same trend. Ukrainian students strongly recognized the commonality and connectedness of human beings, while Japanese students generally agreed, although some tended to hold more cautious opinions.

Discussions

From the pre-seminar questionnaire, both Ukrainian and Japanese students identified English proficiency and communication skills as anticipated challenges, with Japanese students expressing particular concern about these areas. While Ukrainian students primarily expected to gain a deeper understanding of Japanese culture and build friendships, Japanese students were more focused on improving their understanding of literature and enhancing their English and communication skills, showing less emphasis on cultural exchange and friendship-building. It is important to consider how these initial concerns and expectations may have influenced their seminar experience.

The results of the post-seminar questionnaire revealed several key findings.

First, responses to Q1-1 (Knowledge) and Q1-2 (Comprehension) indicated that students from both countries recognized the universality of literature beyond national and historical boundaries and acknowledged its social significance.

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Second, the five goals of this year's seminar were observed to have been achieved. Responses to Q1-1 (Knowledge), Q1-4 (Analysis), and Q2-1 (Change and Growth) confirmed the attainment of these five goals. Furthermore, specific responses indicated: Q2-11 confirmed the goal as "promotion of intercultural exchange", Q2-8 confirmed "understanding of the characteristics of each country's literature", Q2-6 confirmed "development of scientific skills", Q2-5 confirmed "enhancement of communication in English", and Q2-9 confirmed "the positive impact of literature on personal development and psychological well-being".

Third, differences between Ukrainian and Japanese students were also observed. Ukrainian students' strong motivation for cultural exchange made them more open, engaged, and growth-oriented, leading to diverse learning outcomes and a narrative-focused literary approach. Japanese students, with practical goals like language improvement, took a more structured approach, focusing on methodology, thematic analysis, and discussion depth rather than cultural connections. Regarding various accomplishments, Ukrainian respondents showed a stronger agreement overall. However, with regard to the question "Do you think this seminar helped you develop the ability to interact and collaborate with people from different cultures and nations?", Japanese respondents showed stronger agreement. This may be because Japanese students have fewer opportunities for intercultural exchange in daily life, making this seminar a particularly valuable experience for them. They initially felt anxious about communicating in English, but successfully interacting with others boosted their confidence. In contrast, Ukrainian students were already more experienced in intercultural exchange, so while they found the seminar meaningful, their sense of growth was less pronounced compared to Japanese students, leading to a lower proportion of strong agreement.

There may be other reasons why Japanese students do not strongly agree to the same extent as the Ukrainian students. One possible explanation is the Middle-Response Bias (MRB). This refers to the tendency of respondents, particularly in East Asian cultures, to avoid extreme response options and prefer moderate ones. Research has shown that Japanese respondents are more likely to select middle-point answers rather than expressing strong agreement or disagreement (Chen, Lee, & Stevenson, 1995; Masuda & Sakagami, 2014). Therefore, Japanese students may actually agree more strongly than their responses indicate.

Fourth, while many results this year were similar to those of previous years, the focus on literature led to a greater number of comments related to literary understanding rather than intercultural exchange.

Additionally, areas for future improvement in the seminar were also identified.

- 1) Promote small group discussions;
- 2) Distribute presentation summaries and schedules in advance;
- 3) Enhance discussions, such as debate-style discussions and more interactive work;
- 4) Reduce presentation time to allow more discussion;
- 5) Strengthen icebreakers;
- 6) Improve audio and communication environment.

Another crucial point is encouraging Japanese students to have more interest in their counterparts and the culture they represent, to have more interest and connection with people. If this is achieved, their English proficiency and communication skills are likely to improve even further. Additionally, it may be good to convey to Japanese students that they should be fully accepted and appreciated just as they are, even if they have limited English proficiency and struggle with verbal expression. The function of language ultimately being the ability to convey meaning rather than do so with perfection in the linguistic structure.

Limitations and future research

1) Our COIL educational objectives are not limited to literature; they also encompass various goals such as intercultural understanding and collaboration. Therefore, when creating question items based on Bloom's taxonomy, it was challenging to determine which objectives to prioritize. As a result, some questions may deviate to some extent from the original intent of Bloom's taxonomy. Also, the 'Organization' and 'Characterization' questions in the Affective Domain can be improved. The former should be 'Did you experience any changes in your attitudes toward the other culture after the seminars? If so, how?' and the latter, 'Would you seek out more literature from the other culture in the future?'"

2) Based on the results, some items can be integrated to a greater extent, so for the next seminar, we aim to simplify the questionnaire to reduce the burden on students.

3) This time, many responses were qualitative, but based on these, we plan to develop specific items and conduct a quantitative analysis in the next survey.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

After having held online student seminars regularly from 2022 to 2025, we have once again recognized the significance of literature, education and research. Classroom observations and survey results showed that reading, conducting research and discussing literature with international students has a remarkable healing power. The participants discussed explicitly or covertly those issues that are particularly acute in their respective everyday lives, for example, such as nation, responsibility, freedom, fighting for national independence, striving for peace and harmony, and the relationship with the dead. Reading literature allows us to look at our own experiences from a different angle and give them new meanings.

We also realized the potential of online international student seminars which allows participants to understand the interpretation of literary works based on different cultural and social backgrounds. It seems that online discussions on specific aspects of academic studies made it easy for them to feel an appropriate sense of both intimacy, and at the same time, distance, which hopefully gave them an understanding of what intercultural dialogue is and should be.

As a result of the surveys we found that communication, mutual understanding, friendship with representatives of another country is very important for Ukrainian students. They also demonstrate a strong desire for knowledge, communication and connection with the civilized world. Ukrainian students want to openly discuss issues of culture, youth, and society. Their enthusiasm inspires Japanese students and is useful both for gaining new knowledge and for building communication skills.

From the survey results, we found that Japanese students primarily aim to improve their English proficiency and communication skills through COIL. However, if we convey to students the importance of having more interest in their counterparts and the culture they represent, their English proficiency and communication skills may improve even further. Additionally, it may be good to convey to some students that they should be fully accepted and appreciated just as they are, even if they have limited English proficiency and struggle with verbal expression.

We hypothesize that one way to improve students' communication skills might be to combine COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) and CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) technologies. We are going to try and achieve this in the next workshops.

We should also consider holding the seminars in three or more countries. In the future, we also want to bring together students from different countries for common research projects. We hope that these multicultural groups will allow students to better communicate, share cultural experiences, and develop academic and social skills.

As the contemporary Ukrainian poet Serhiy Zhadan said, "books are not able to end the war. But books can help us stay ourselves during the war. And it is books that will prevent us from losing ourselves and disappearing". In other words, literature heals those tired and hurt, giving energy for life, intellectual and spiritual passion. Based on this recognition, we would like to continue our seminars in the future, and we hope that similar initiatives will increase.

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APPENDIX (2024-2025 QUESTIONNAIRES FOR STUDENTS)

1) 2024 Pre-seminars questionnaire

Section 1: Expectations and Background

Q1-1: “What outcomes do you expect from these seminars?” (Open-ended)

Q1-2: “What challenges, if any, do you anticipate during these seminars?” (Open-ended)

Q1-3: “Have you participated in similar seminars or cross-cultural activities before?”

Yes No

If yes, please describe your experience briefly. (Open-ended)

Section 2: National Self

Instruction: Please rate how much you agree with the following statements.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Q2-1: I am proud of my own nation and culture, but am interested in other cultures too.

Q2-2: If you want to understand your national literature, you should read world literature as well.

Q2-3: Reading literature is the best way to understand your own and other cultures.

Section 3: Personal Attributes

Q3-1: Age: ___ years

Q3-2: Gender:

Male Female Other

Q3-3: Nationality:

Ukrainian Japanese Other: ___

Q3-4: Native Language:

Ukrainian Japanese Other: ___

Q3-5: English Proficiency (self-assessed):

Beginner Intermediate Advanced Fluent

Q3-6: “What is your field of study or academic focus?” (Open-ended)

Q3-7: “Why did you decide to participate in these seminars?” (Open-ended)

- 2) 2025 Post-seminars questionnaire (after the seminars)
- 3) 2025 A separate questionnaire (past years' students)

Section 1: Learning Experience

Cognitive Domains

Q1-1: Knowledge

1. What are three key points you learned during the seminars? (Open-ended)

Q1-2: Comprehension

2. Explain in your own words a problem discussed in the seminars. Did you understand everything? (Open-ended)

Q1-3: Application

3. In what areas can you use the knowledge and skills gained from the seminars? (Open-ended)

Q1-4: Analysis

4. What features of another national culture did you notice in the process of discussing literary works at the seminars? (Open-ended)

Q1-5: Evaluation

5. What was most valuable to you in the seminars process? (Open-ended)

Q1-6: Synthesis

6. If you were to create a short story about Ukraine and Japan, what would the main theme be? (Open-ended)

Affective Domains

Q1-7: Receiving

7. To what extent were you open to understanding perspectives from the other nation and culture?

Not at all Slightly open Somewhat Open Completely open

Q1-8: Responding

8. How actively did you participate in discussions during the seminars?

- Not at all Rarely Occasionally Frequently

Q1-9: Valuing

9. How important is intercultural exchange between students from different countries through literature?

- Not important Slightly important Important Very important

Q1-10: Organizing

10. What did you like and dislike about the organization of the seminars? (Open-ended)

Q1-11: Dissemination

11. Would you recommend these seminars to others? Why yes or why not? (Open-ended)

Q1-12: Characterization

12. What did you like /dislike about the work of the students who participated in the seminars? (Open-ended)

Section 2: Reflection

Advantages/disadvantages, successes/difficulties

Q2-1: What changes or growth did you experience through these seminars? (Open-ended)

Q2-2: What difficulties have you personally experienced during the seminars? (open-ended)

Q2-3: Do you think these seminars should continue in the future? What aspects of these seminars would you suggest improving for future participants? (Open-ended)

Q2-4: Name the advantages and disadvantages of these seminars. (Open-ended)

Perception of accomplishments

Q2-5: Do you feel that your communication skills in a foreign language (English) in an international context have improved?

- Not at all Partially improved Improved Significantly improved

Q2-6: Do you think that this international seminar made your interest and skills in scientific work better?

- Not at all Slightly Moderately Significantly

Q2-7: Do you think that you experienced intercultural exchange between Ukrainian and Japanese students through discussions on literature?

- Not at all Yes, to a small extent Yes, to a moderate extent Yes, to a great extent

APPENDIX

Q2-8: Do you understand the characteristics of each national literature within the framework of world literature?

Not at all Yes, to a small extent Yes, to a moderate extent Yes, to a great extent

Q2-9: Do you think that literature has the power to heal and encourage people's hearts?

No Partially agree Agree Strongly agree

Q2-10: Why do you think so? (Open-ended)

Q2-11: Do you think this seminar helped you develop the ability to interact and collaborate with people from different cultures and nations?

No Partially agree Agree Strongly agree

Q2-12: Do you feel that this seminar helped you recognize the shared humanity among people and develop a sense of connection to others and the world?

No Partially agree Agree Strongly agree

Section 3: Personal Attributes

Q3-1: Age: ___ years

Q3-2: Gender: Male Female Other

Q3-3: Nationality: Ukrainian Japanese Other: ___

Q3-4: Native Language: Ukrainian Japanese Other: ___

Q3-5: English Proficiency (self-assessed):

Beginner Intermediate Advanced Fluent

Q3-6: "How many sessions of the seminar did you attend?"

1–2 sessions 3–4 sessions All sessions

ABSTRACT

Nikolenko O., Nonaka S., Matsevko-Bekerska L., Zhao D., Nikolenko K. (2025). How Literature Supports Young People During Difficult Times: The Concept and Results of COIL Projects on Literary and Cultural Studies among Students of Ukrainian and Japanese Universities. Study Guide. Saitama University, Poltava V.G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University. 48 p.

The study guide presents the educational technology COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) and features of its application by three universities in Ukraine and Japan. During 2020-2025, professors and students of Poltava V.G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University, Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, Saitama University conducted online seminars on world literature. This experience of intercultural communication in English was very useful for the development of students' academic, professional and personal skills, as well as for the formation of their worldview and ability to work in an international context. This proved particularly important during COVID, as well as during the difficult time of war in Ukraine (2022-2025).

The authors described forms of the organization and methodology of student seminars. The study guide also presents questionnaires and results of student surveys about seminars in 2024–2025, which provide directions for further development of COIL. As student surveys have shown, the seminars are of great importance not only for developing communication skills and improving English language proficiency, but also by providing a great social and psychological effect through introducing students to world literature and culture. The authors plan to continue student seminars with the participation of not only universities of Japan and Ukraine, but also other countries.

Keywords: *COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning), national literature, world literature, literary education, cultural values, student research seminar, virtual exchange, building research skills, students working together in mixed age groups on common goals.*