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**A Linguistic, Telecollaborative and Multicultural
Perspective in EFL Facing the Global Digital Divide: “On
the Other Side of the World” Project.**

**Thesis Submitted to the Department of English in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Doctorate ‘LMD’ in Language Sciences and Didactics.**

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DEDICATION

To my parents.

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ABSTRACT

The continuous advancement and spread of internet-based technologies have created the need for an interconnected world where digital disparities or Global Digital Divide between countries keeps expanding. In this regard, people from different geographical areas and cultural backgrounds require appropriate and effective communication skills that can be developed through telecollaboration. The present study reports on an action research project and examines the impact of integrating telecollaboration in English as a foreign language classroom on bridging the gap between groups, as well as, developing learners' linguistic and intercultural competences through social networking sites. A telecollaborative project was designed between Algerian and Brazilian University English learners, using Padlet as the exchange platform over the course of ten weeks. Participants shared information based on assigned tasks, topics and comments on each other's posts and reactions. 30 Algerian students' experiences and learning outcomes based on their pre- and post- project questionnaires and group meetings, in addition to teachers' questionnaire that investigated their perception on the integration of telecollaboration were analysed. Participants achieved a notable development in terms of their linguistic components in relation to the tasks as well as their intercultural communication competence and awareness. In regard to the global digital divide, this project helped bridging the gap between the two groups as they overcome cultural and technological barriers. Hence, telecollaborative experience helped students develop their understanding towards different cultures and be better cross-cultural communicators.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Artificial Intelligence
API	Application Programming Interface
CACD	Computer- Assisted Classroom Discussion
CACW	Computer- Assisted Collaboration Work
CAI	Computer Assisted Instruction
CALL	Computer-Assisted Language Learning
CBT	Computer- Based Training
CC	Communication Competence
CMC	Computer- Mediated Communication
CMI	Computer Mediated Instruction
COIL	Collaborative Online International Learning
CSCL	Computer- Assisted Collaborative Learning
CSLL	Computer- Supported Language Learning
DLVE	Dual Language Virtual Exchange
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EIEGL	Échanges Interculturels Exolingues en Groupe en Ligne
ELT	English Language Teaching
FL	Foreign Language
FLE	Foreign Language Education
GDD	Global Digital Divide
IC	Intercultural Communication
ICC	Intercultural Communication Competence
ICFLE	Internet- Mediated Intercultural Foreign Language Education
NNS	Non Native Speakers

NS	Native Speakers
OIE	Online Intercultural Exchange
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SLVE	Single Language Virtual Exchange
SNS	Social Networking Sites
VE	Virtual Exchange
WWW	World Wide Web

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, with the rapid growth of information and communication technologies (ICT) the need for access to information and mutual understanding overcomes geographical barriers as well as differences in educational systems between countries. This unprecedented development in their use went hand in hand with the creation of changes in educational psychology and philosophy, teaching methods, procedures, strategies, and techniques. It also resulted in the social, economic and cultural transformations. ICTs have been offering enormous opportunities to alter the way the educational system operates as a whole. Authorities at schools and universities, educators, and students are becoming more and more conscious of their new obligations.

This ICT demand in education necessitates the construction of a networking system that can assist individuals in sharing knowledge and information while also delivering various sorts of educational services. Recent advances in technologies increased its use in academic institutions, especially in language classrooms and offered new ways of communication and methods to engage learners in using target languages. James (1996) asserts that: “Educational technology is often presented as a potential means for making the students’ learning experiences richer and the teacher’s job easier” (p. 20). With increased online options, learners will be able to reach out to the globe, creating more opportunity for language and cultural exchange and learning.

To fill in the gap for the use of technologies in academic institutions, instructors need to make reforms into their pedagogical systems. This could be achieved through the implementation of telecollaboration, which provides an authentic learning environment for students by using web facilities to interact with other native and non-native speakers of a target language who are geographically dispersed. Through the years, telecollaboration has been proven to promote learners’ active role, develop their linguistic and cross-cultural skills.

Furthermore, it brings classes together and bridges the gap between different groups by making learners overcome the global digital divide, attitudes and stereotypes towards others.

The present study reflects upon a telecollaboration action research project that was carried out, as well as, the lived experiences of students and teachers within the Padlet platform. It describes how digitalized technological facilities can help well-informed instructors to adopt innovative ways in teaching and increase students opportunities to be more linguistically, technologically and interculturally competent. A narrative and chronological approach has been followed in an attempt to explain the reasons of the potential of English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching through discussion- based telecollaboration.

Statement of the Problem

In an EFL class, students are usually learning English while living in their own countries, thus, have limited exposure to the target culture and lack the ability to become interculturally competent. Their English classes are typically one-way transmission courses in which students are not given much flexibility for authentic and creative classroom discussions where they can express openly their opinions on various topics, and they do not learn how to be tolerant and accept others as different persons. With telecollaboration, the intercultural exchange occurs with native and non-native speakers of the target language using a lingua franca, in this case English, in which participants investigate the linguistic aspects of conversations and pay attention to cultural characteristics. The present research study reports on the integration of a telecollaboration project called “*On the Other Side of the World*” in which it would help learners develop their linguistic skills, as well as, raise their awareness and sensitivity to other cultures.

Aims of the Study

This research presents a telecollaborative project that brings EFL university students from different cultural backgrounds together using English as a lingua franca. The focus is on providing the most real experience for learners through effective and appropriate synchronous/ asynchronous communication. Therefore, the project aims to:

- 1- Use telecollaboration to promote learners' linguistic and cross-cultural exchanges and develop intercultural communicative competence (ICC)
- 2- Develop participants' intercultural awareness.
- 3- Get students to be more autonomous in their learning.
- 4- Establish the principles of intercultural learning into practice within the supportive context of the classroom.
- 5- Bridge the global digital divide (GDD) between the different groups.

Research Questions

The research questions grew out of the literature review which established that foreign language teaching methods must blend theory and practice (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Using telecollaboration to achieve that and the aforementioned objectives, led to the following research questions:

- 1- Does telecollaboration develop learners' English as a foreign language?
- 2- Does telecollaboration develop learners' Intercultural communicative competence?
- 3- Does telecollaboration bridge the gap between the groups?

Significance of the Study

The first significance of the present study is that it can assist to refine our understanding of the novel notion of Telecollaboration and that the future of English

language teaching and learning in Algerian institutions is in the normalization of such facilities. We live in a changing world, thus, web- based technologies have to be reconsidered as valuable components of daily English language instruction. University students will be more productive, self- directed and responsible for their own learning. Furthermore, English language instructors will become more technologically adept with a certain level of willingness, motivation, and awareness. Another area of significance is the development of authentic conversation-based English instruction instead of following the regular, traditional classroom approach. A last but not least significant aspect of this documented action research is that it provided me the opportunity to reflect on my own practice as a teacher and a researcher through collaboration and sharing experiences with my students and Brazilian partner.

Research Methodology and Design

There are a myriad of appropriate methodologies for studying various educational challenges. It is not an easy process to choose one and avoid others. The type and objective of the inquiry will aid researchers in determining the best approach to use.

Choice of the Method

This present study investigates the efficacy of telecollaboration in promoting Algerian EFL university students' linguistic and intercultural competences. Learners had the opportunity to participate in a 10 week web-based intercultural exchange with their peers from Brazil using English as a lingua franca. The interaction took place in a Social Networking Site (SNS) called Padlet, where the partnering teachers uploaded the weekly tasks. More specifically, participants shared information about weekly subject matters and commented on the target culture posts.

A collaborative action research technique as a cyclical reflective process was purposefully adopted. It was an investigation aimed at enhancing and streamlining classroom

practices. It also sought to elicit what participants needed, knew and understood, as well as the actions they took. The focus was brought on a quantitative and qualitative research method through the analysis of students' pre- and post- project questionnaires, teachers' questionnaire and group meetings in order to better reflect on learners' experiences, learning outcomes, attitudes, and behaviors towards the exchange.

Population and Sampling

Over the 10-week telecollaboration project, 30 willing third year EFL students from the Department of Foreign Languages at Mohamed Cherif Messaadia University, Souk-Ahras were selected to a convenience sampling protocol. Their participation was part of their "Written Expression" course, but as an extra- curricular initiative. Students collaborated with their peers from Brazil. The latter were EFL learners at Araraquara University. In action research or qualitative research, small groups are the ideal sample size because generalization is not the goal and it presents detailed information that is pertinent to the phenomenon being studied.

Data Gathering Tools

To shed light on the potential impact of telecollaboration on developing Algerian EFL students' linguistic and multicultural competences, it is necessary to triangulate data sources. The interactive combination of both qualitative and quantitative approaches will render the research findings more valid and reliable. Thus, this study incorporated several methods to get an accurate picture of the issue of interest. Indeed, a single method, source theory can be easily biased but triangulation can overcome such challenges and confirm results. Teachers and students were encouraged to take part, and share their experiences and viewpoints. Such design was adopted based on the following:

- a. In-depth questionnaire for teachers on the integration of ICTs in general and the impact of telecollaboration on EFL teaching and learning.
- b. In-depth pre- project questionnaire for students on the use of ICTs in general and their expectations from the exchange.
- c. In-depth post- project questionnaire for students on their impressions and reflections on the exchange and their learning outcomes.
- d. Structured group interviews and meetings involving students and teachers in order to express their thoughts and experiences about the conducted actions.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the reams of the data collected was based on my research investigation objectives which were to understand, explain, and interpret the experiences and behaviors of the participants in such a digital-enriched context. There were two overlapping types of analysis. One was quantitative and it concerned the statistical descriptions and classifications of the obtained data from teachers' questionnaires and the pre- and post- project questionnaires destined to students in terms of ICTs use, telecollaboration integration and the intercultural exchange outcomes. A Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software was of great help in the analysis of quantitative data.

As far as qualitative data is concerned a descriptive- interpretive analysis was implemented to narrate and examine the ten action research cycles, hence, answer research questions. Data analysis software NVivo 12 was chosen for the coding, along with Sonix, an automated transcription service that transcribes audios and videos. These tools helped the researcher to organize, categorize, and analyze the collected sets of data from teachers' questionnaire, participants' pre- and post- telecollaboration project questionnaires, group meetings, and the weekly task-based posts and comments.

Organization of the Thesis

The overall structure of this research takes the form of two main parts with three theoretical chapters that present the literature review of the present study's concepts; two practical chapters dedicated to the description, discussion, and analysis of the collected data, in addition to a general introduction and a general conclusion.

Part one includes chapter one that covers the concept of telecollaboration, its definition, main lexical and discourse features. In addition to its models, aims and relation to the global digital divide (GDD); chapter two which deals with the notion of culture, its types, and its relation to language; and chapter three, intercultural communication competence (ICC), that is devoted to its history, definition, and the difference between related concepts. Moreover, it discusses its most famous models and the barriers faced.

Part two is concerned with the methodology used in the study; it ties up the theoretical strands with the findings, interpretations, and implications of the research. Chapter four is concerned with the description of the methodological framework designed for the present action research, as well as the process and outline of the telecollaboration project. Chapter five analyzes and reflects upon the collected data from the teachers and students' questionnaires. It also deals with the discussions and analysis of the action research cycles.

CHAPTER ONE

CHAPTER ONE: TELECOLLABORATION

With the advancement of Internet technology recently, a more viable and direct connection manifested between native speakers and foreign language learners. Thus, several researchers adopted and promoted a new approach by incorporating the use of digital tools in cross-cultural communication. They believed it allows learners to interact with native speakers, hence, be exposed to the target culture which would be ideal for foreign language (FL) and cross-cultural learning. Telecollaboration, in the last couple of decades, has developed and flourished in all fields, but mainly in the foreign language learning and teaching field. This shift resulted in telecollaboration being one of the major pillars in introducing interculturality.

This chapter sheds the light on the theoretical underpinnings about telecollaboration in foreign language education. It starts by giving the historical perspective of telecollaboration and how it developed through time from a Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) to teletandem to telecollaboration; along with the other different terms it went through and used by each researcher. Then a review of webs' generations was discussed and their relationship to telecollaboration, as well as, its models. The chapter ends with stating the goals of telecollaboration in foreign language learning and teaching.

Historical Perspective on Telecollaboration

The term telecollaboration went under different terms through the years. It is also known in an informal context as “e-pals/ key-pals”, or, in academic contexts as “Computer assisted collaboration work (CACW)” (Grudin, 1994), “Computer supported language learning (CSLL)” (Stahl, Koschmann & Suthers, 2006), “Internet-mediated intercultural foreign language education (ICFLE)” (Belz & Thorne, 2006), “telecollaboration” (Belz 2003; O’Dowd & Ritter 2006), “Online Interaction Exchange” (Dooly & O’Dowd, 2012),

“Collaborative Online International Learning” (Rubin, 2016), or “Virtual Exchange” (Helm, 2016, as cited in Lewis, T., & O’Dowd, R. 2018) and in France as “EIEGL” (*Echanges Interculturels Exolingues en Groupe en Ligne*; Audras & Chanier 2008). The implementation of each term depends on the educational environment.

Mark Warschauer (1996) first used the term “telecollaboration” in his publication entitled “Telecollaboration and the Foreign Language Learner”. *The journal Language Learning & Technology* (2003) devoted a special edition to talk about the subject. Belz (2003), a prominent researcher in the field, has actually published in this journal, what he referred to as “the main characteristics of foreign language telecollaboration” (p.2), which are: “institutionalized, electronically mediated intercultural communication under the guidance of a languacultural expert (i.e. a teacher) for the purposes of foreign language learning and the development of intercultural competence” (p. 2).

Telecollaboration as a concept was originally implemented in the business and work fields with no relation to education, which would create new environments for collaboration where digital tools helped integrate videoconferencing alternatives to enhance personal interconnectedness and cooperation. The environments are reinforced by spontaneously shared contents, and thus place an emphasis on face to face communication and collaboration simultaneously. Therefore, users can easily share and edit documents, files and applications synchronously.

Until the early 1990’s, online collaborative exchanges began, where it was first introduced as a teaching technique (Krajka & Marzack, 2013, as cited in Zielińska & Górski, 2013). Yet, the educational system benefited a lot from this modern tool in teaching. It is used in projects of language learning, intercultural communication exchanges, and teachers’ training. Through the decades, studies have been made in this field, and investigated the

concept from all different perspectives and dimensions; from an interdisciplinary perspective to a cultural component, a linguistic viewpoint, and a teaching approach.

Researchers became aware and took interest in publishing articles about telecollaboration in terms of language learning after their increased studies on the use of technologies in pedagogical practices. They addressed it from different angles like the relationship between telecollaboration and culture, intercultural competence, language acquisition and autonomous learning. Therefore, they designed curriculums and tasks to promote the above-mentioned subject matters (O'Dowd, 2007).

In more recent years, linked to the language learning context, telecollaboration was described by Belz (2007) as: “the use of Internet communication tools (e.g. e-mail, chat, blogs, videoconferencing) to link linguistically and culturally disparate groups of language learners and teachers in institutionalised settings for the purposes of (bilingual) social interaction and project-based intercultural collaboration” (p.127).

Definition of the Different Terms Telecollaboration Went Through

Computer- Supported Collaboration

Computer – supported or assisted collaborative work (CSCW) is considered by many researchers as an interdisciplinary research area. According to Grudin (1994), CSCW was first coined in 1984 by Greif and Castman; where individuals were interested in employing several tools and methods to assist their working activities. Since then the term has been interpreted in many different ways. Howard (1988) and Kling (1991) provided one of the most prevalent interpretations, in which the notion of coordinating among a group of persons through a computer is examined. Others call it “software for groups of people” or “groupware” (Hughes et al., as cited in Bannon et al., 1991; Suchman, 1989).

Bannon and Schmidt (1989) further explained the concept as: “an endeavor to understand the nature and characteristics of cooperative work with the objective of designing

adequate computer-based technologies” (pp. 3-5). In other words, CSCW is a collaborative system reached by using computer networking technologies through activities to improve productivity and quality.

Computer- Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL)

In the 1960s, researchers especially in the field of psychology began investigating group learning, even before the emergence of personal computers’ systems. Stahl (2006) argued that by the 1990s, interest in CSCL peaked as a response to the use of web-based tools only in individuals instead of social interaction or collaborative learning. This latter was the core focus of this pedagogical approach in which learners share and build knowledge.

The contrast between CSCL and earlier group learning research is centered towards two terms: cooperative and collaborative. They could be often used interchangeably since they share the idea of group work and the goal to be achieved; however, the main difference is that cooperation is when a group of individuals work separately on the same task. Collaboration, on the other hand, is when a group of people work together on a project or a task. Furthermore, Dillenbourg (1999) argued that: “In cooperation, partners split the work, solve sub-tasks individually and then assemble the partial results into the final output; in collaboration, partners do the work ‘together’” (p. 8).

Roschelle and Teasley (1995) defined the term collaboration as follow:

This chapter presents a case study intended to exemplify the use of a computer as a cognitive tool for learning that occurs socially. We investigate a particularly important kind of social activity, the collaborative construction of new problem solving knowledge. Collaboration is a process by which individuals negotiate and share meanings relevant to the problem-solving task at hand....Collaboration is a coordinated, synchronous activity that is the result of a continued attempt to construct and maintain a shared conception of a problem. (p. 70)

To put it another way, cooperative learning is only accomplished by individuals, who then share their findings and offer them as a communal output. Learning in cooperative groups is regarded as an individual process that may be researched using classic educational and psychological research conceptualisations techniques, such as observations, interviews and surveys. However, collaborative learning, according to Roschelle and Teasley's definition, is an active process of social engagement in solving a problem or what they referred to as “collaborative construction of knowledge” (p.70). Individuals take part in a social exchange as a group by interacting and working on a shared task.

The goal of CSCL is for students to work together rather than simply react to post content in solitude. The contact between pupils facilitates the learning process. They learn by jointly questioning, discovering, teaching, and learning. It can be achieved through distant or face-to-face (F2F) collaboration, i.e., synchronously or asynchronously. In other words, the interaction could take different forms like: (a) online communication, (b) simulation, or (c) interactive multimedia. Thus, learners can use digital tools to search and compile data so they can discuss, examine and solve problems in a group as a whole.

Computer – Assisted (Supported) Language Learning

CALL is considered a rather new technique to language learning but evolving, despite the publications and work carried out by researchers on collaboration and cooperation. Hence, investigations on the use of digital tools in language learning and teaching through designed internet-based collaborative tasks were limited, as opposed to traditional classrooms (Clark & Mayer, 2003; O'Dowd & Ritter, 2006; Stahl, et al., as cited in Swayer, 2006). Levy (1997) explained that CALL is: “the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning” (p.1). The term refers to the use of software tools in order to facilitate the revision, the consolidation, and the acquisition of general language skills.

CALL has been claimed (Chapelle, 1997; Levy, 1997; Stahl et al., as cited in Swayer, 2006; Warschauer, 1996) to be originated from the broader terms Computer-Assisted Instruction (CAI), Computer-Based Teaching (CBT), and Computer-Mediated Instruction (CMI). The concepts are based on the same mechanistic paradigm to teaching FL, where instructors approached learning practices like it is a machine. Learners are required to answer elements like: texts, sounds, and videos, using hardware tools. Software used to design the activities can later analyze, assess, and provide feedback to students' responses.

According to Warschauer (1996) CALL went through three influential phases: behavioristic, communicative, and integrative. By the end of the 1960's, the behavioral view dominated FL teaching methodologies, and this was implemented in CALL. Instructors adopted the Audio-lingual method and developed drills and practices, stimulus and response formation in teaching the language. In the 1970's- 80's, communicative CALL emerged where the focus is more on having real or authentic communication rather than repetitive drills. The computer is considered as a tutor, software is designed to help, motivate and make them interact through the activities. Learners are not judged nor rewarded based on their responses. The last phase, integrated CALL, developed in the 1990's. Teachers grew out of the cognitive view to a more social cognitive view by integrating internet, web 2.0 tools, and multimedia in authentic interactions, skill-based, and content-based tasks. Students are expected to interact, search, solve problems, and get assessed all at once.

Internet- Mediated Intercultural Language Education (ICFLE)

ICFLE is the creation of intercultural environments where individuals from different regions and cultural backgrounds engage in social interactions using internet-based tools. Belz and Thorne (2006) explained:

As pervasive and alluring as the role of technology in FLE might be, we do not view the adjective "Internet-mediated" to be the most important word in the title of this

volume and, correspondingly, this volume is not primarily about the use of technology in FL learning and teaching. Instead, the emphasis for us lies on the adjective “intercultural” and the potential for FLE to serve as a site for the complexification of the self on linguistic, social, cultural, and ethical planes through lived experiences of communicative interaction with persons from other cultures in both additional and native languages. (p. 3)

In other words, as Thorne (2005) explained, the intercultural perspective, which is a key element and one of the main different aspects within the already existing terminologies, such as: “tandem learning” and “telecollaboration” that these latter failed to include. Another aspect is the emphasis on language learning and the focus on education as a general term rather than using teaching or acquisition like in other terms. Scollon and Scollon (2001, as cited in Schiffrin et al., 2003) asserted that ICFLE is a language-related research from an intercultural viewpoint that focuses on the phenomena of intercultural communication.

According to Kecskes (2004) intercultural communication and cross-cultural communication are two different concepts arguing that: “cross-cultural communication is usually considered a study of a particular idea(s) or concept(s) within several cultures that compares one culture to another on the aspect of interest” (p. 1), while intercultural communication “focuses on interactions among people from different cultures” and that it is “the study of distinct cultural or other groups in interaction with one another” (p. 2). In the cross-cultural paradigm, on the other hand, “the members of the distinct groups do not interact with each other...but are studied as separate and separable entities” (Scollon & Scollon 2001, p. 539).

Echanges Interculturels Exolingues en Groupe En Ligne (EIEGL)

Audras and Chanier (2007) defined the term Echanges Interculturels Exolingues en Groupe en Ligne (EIEGL) as follow:

Une situation d'Échanges Interculturels Exolingues en Groupe en Ligne (EIEGL) est une situation dans laquelle des groupes d'apprenants résidant dans des pays différents sont impliqués dans des tâches de travail à visée interculturelle en groupe à distance, tâches intégrant des échanges exolingues. Nous privilégions ici les tâches de nature collaborative. (p. 2)

[A situation of Online and Exolingual Intercultural Exchange is a situation where groups of learners from different countries are involved through intercultural and exolingual exchange task-based. Here we privilege collaborative tasks.] (Audras & Chanier, 2007, p. 2)

This definition indicates that cultural phenomena are not considered as parameters to take into consideration among others into learning a language, but rather, intercultural competence is the core of the exchange. Therefore, this exchange is made between the different groups gathering students speaking different languages, from different backgrounds and institutions. Audras and Chanier (2007) argued that their definition is quite the same stated by O'Dowd and Ritter (2006) in defining Telecollaboration; however, this latter is mainly used for learning at a long distance without reference to language and cultural learning.

Collaboration Online International Learning (COIL)

In the context of collaboration online international learning, Rubin (2017) defined this collaborative approach as:

COIL is not a technology or a platform, but is rather a new teaching and learning paradigm that develops cross-cultural awareness across shared learning environments. It is a format of internationalization at home that spans the world, utilizing the Internet to connect students and professors with their peers abroad. (p. 29)

In other words, COIL started as a method in the pedagogical field in order to expand students' global engagement, and provide them with the experience of international learning without the need to move to the target country. This can be achieved through the use of digital software to interact with individuals from other countries. The exchange is linking university-based classes in different geographical areas. Rubin (2017) highlighted that this teaching paradigm aims not to only use technologies, but to also disseminate intercultural understanding in culturally diverse settings.

The process for students to improve their intercultural learning can be achieved through collaboration in which they address specific topics and matters and teachers' assessment of the shared content from a cultural perspective. In addition, the application of communication skills that would help build the understanding between students from all different countries, increase their intercultural awareness instead of being ethnocentric. COIL can take place according to Rubin (2017) through the following points:

Initially, teachers from two cultures work together to develop a shared syllabus, leading to experiential and collaborative student engagement and learning; The courses give new contextual meaning to the ideas and texts they explore, while providing students new venues in which to develop their cross-cultural awareness. Classes may be online or more often are offered in blended formats with traditional face-to-face sessions taking place at both institutions, while collaborative student work takes place online. Cooperating teachers work closely with all students, but in most cases these students are enrolled, charged tuition (if there is any), and are awarded grades only at their home institution. (p. 34)

Virtual Exchange (VE)

VE as explained by the INTENT group (2015) is: "technology-enabled, sustained, people to people education programs... entailing the engagement of groups of students in

online intercultural exchange, interaction and collaboration with peers from partner classes in geographically distant locations, under the guidance of educators and/or expert facilitators” (para. 2). This allows learners to acquire the target language and culture without the need to travel. The idea of VE being particularly useful is by overcoming students’ lack of interaction with native interlocutors by making them use English in authentic situations.

VE is promoted by many universities all around the world because it gives the chance for students to experience real interaction and to develop connections with learners from other places with different cultural backgrounds without the enormous cost of travel. The exchange could occur through two possibilities, in terms of using the language of communication; there is the Dual Language Virtual Exchange (DLVE), where two languages are used by students in order to interact with the others. Also, there is the Single Language Virtual Exchange (SLVE), in which a language is used as a lingua franca.

Online Intercultural Exchange (OIE)

In 2012, Melinda Dooly and Robert O’Dowd replaced the term “Telecollaboration” and coined a new and contemporary concept instead “Online Interaction and Exchange (OIE)”. Its foreign language (FL) initiatives incorporate the use of private technological platforms referred to as text-based communication; in order to bring classes of language learners from various regions together to study one another's language and culture. O’Dowd (2012) introduced three sub-categories to the concept: in-class interaction, class-to-class interaction, and class-to-world interaction.

In-Class Interaction

In-class interaction was known previously as Computer-Assisted Classroom Discussion (CACD), viewed by Ortega (1997) as: “Student to student type of interaction within the same class using online networks for learning a foreign language” (p.82). According to O’Dowd, in-class interaction refers to E-Tandem (O’Rourke, as cited in

O'Dowd, 2007), which is when two native speakers of a certain language communicate together in order to learn each other's native language.

These interactions are based on learners' autonomy, reciprocity, and the responsibility of a successful input. Learners must provide each other with feedback on their performance; in this sense, the communicators act like tutors by correcting their partner's errors and providing solutions and formulations in the target language. The exchange can occur synchronously (e.g. chat, online oral discussions, and videoconferencing) or asynchronously (e.g. emails, blogs, and wikis), requiring students to interact equally in the target language and in their mother tongue, therefore, implement them with opportunities and authentic input in practicing the language.

Class-to-Class Interaction

Also called "Online Interaction and Exchange" or "Telecollaboration Exchange", according to Dooly and O'Dowd (2012) it is the interaction: "Via virtual intercultural exchange between classes of English as foreign language (EFL) learners in geographically distant locations." In other words, in this interaction, occurs the telecollaborative exchange between students' groups of EFL from different distant locations. This interaction is incredibly attainable nowadays because of synchronous oral and visual communication, like: videoconferencing, and multimodal exchanges; wikis, blogs and emails.

Described by Dooly and O'Dowd (2012) as *Blended Interaction Telecollaboration*; the aim of this model is to utterly integrate the web interaction into students' language learning practices and curricula. This exchange is deeper than the previous one, as it requires the involvement of projects and tasks at an international level to be developed by teachers who seek partnership in the collaborating institutions. The interaction occurs between classes from different locations in the world, where online interactions and tasks are prepared and analyzed under the guidance of the teacher. The most common activities include

collaborative projects in which the different cultures of partners are compared, also, the creation of videos, texts, essays, or presentations explaining each one's culture. Yet, the emphasis of this model is cultural and linguistic awareness and competence. He claimed that the tasks associated in Blended Intercultural Telecollaboration undertake three main categories: Information Exchange Task, Comparison and Analysis Tasks and Collaborative Tasks.

Information Exchange Task. Students are required to introduce themselves to their telecollaborative partners by providing them with personal biographies and information about their country, customs and culture.

Comparison and Analysis Tasks. In this sub-category, students are intended to fulfill more demanding activities and tasks. Students need to provide their partners with further information through making comparisons or critical analysis of their cultural products of both target cultures (e.g. movies, newspapers' articles, and books).

Collaborative Tasks. Partners or students are required to work together in order to create a sort of conclusive piece of work, rather than just exchange and compare information. The product can be in the form of a text, essay, research, a presentation or a co-producing of cultural and linguistic translated texts from their native language to the target language, or from one culture to another.

Class-to-World Interaction (Telecollaboration 2.0)

The last category is viewed by Dooly and O'Dowd (2012) as: "FL learners using their target language to interact with individuals or groups in the 'real world' without participating in a language course". In other words, class-to-world interactions refers to FL learners interacting with individuals, native speakers, one or more groups of students in the 'real world' through the target language focusing on real interaction rather than language learning.

It is a third generation model of telecollaboration exchanges. In this model the focus is not only on developing students' linguistic and intercultural competence, but also developing the necessary technological literacies, in order to learn and work in the digital world and society that is today. This approach aims for further interaction between students and teachers, other students from different fields of study, or native speakers who are not involved in education at all. The language used in this model does not need to be based on students' bilingualism, since they can use lingua franca or be multilingual.

Telecollaboration

The term telecollaboration consists of two combined words: tele- and collaboration; tele- is defined according to Meriem Webster dictionary as: "at a distance" or "over a distance", however, the definition of the word collaboration as stated by the Cambridge dictionary: "the situation of two or more people working together to create or achieve the same thing." Collaboration, in other words, is the process of working practice in which individuals work together synchronously and asynchronously to a specific purpose to achieve a certain goal.

Therefore, collaborative learning is an educational approach, and an e-learning technique that can involve either two students or groups of students and teachers to work together in solving a problem or learning an educational course. It could be achieved through technological aids, where the connection between peers and individuals is established. Gerlach (1994, as cited in Bosworth, 1994) defined the term as: "Collaborative learning is based on the idea that learning is a naturally social act in which the participants talk among themselves." Gerlach argues that, in order for the process to be accomplished, there should be successful communication between the one or more students involved in the learning.

In the context of foreign language education, Telecollaboration is defined by Belz (2003) as:

Internationally dispersed learners in parallel language classes use Internet communication tools such as e-mail, synchronous chat, threaded discussion, and MOOs (as well as other forms of electronically mediated communication), in order to support social interaction, dialogue, debate, and intercultural exchange. (p.1)

In other words, it refers to the application of digital tools that would facilitate online communication, in order to bring together different language learners from different classes in distant geographical locations through collaborative tasks and project work, to develop their foreign language skills and intercultural competence. Traditionally, the interaction is text-based and asynchronous (i.e. not real time). However, nowadays, due to recent technological tools and online communication advances, the interaction can be achieved through synchronous (i.e. real time) oral communication and multi model exchanges.

Thorne (2006) explains that these days telecollaboration is considered one amongst the foremost necessary foundations within the intercultural transition to foreign language teaching, since it encourages the frequent participation of learners in semi- authentic interactions with people of various cultural backgrounds in remote locales. In addition, it offers them the chance to mirror on and learn from the outcomes of this intercultural exchange inside the ancillary and knowing context of their foreign language classroom. As a network- based education, telecollaboration enables students to:

... Use the Internet not so much to teach the same thing in a different way, but rather to help students enter into a new realm of collaborative enquiry and construction of knowledge, viewing their expanding repertoire of identities and communication strategies as resources in the process. (Kern et al., 2004, p. 21)

In another definition of the term, Belz (2003) states that it is established as a part of institutions where intercultural communication is mediated through technological tools, under

the guidance of the teacher, who plays the role of language and culture expert, in order to develop intercultural competence and foreign language learning.

O'Dowd (2010) at the Eurocall Symposium, discussed “telecollaboration” in terms of: “The application of online communication tools to bring together classes of language learners in geographically distant locations to develop their foreign language skills and intercultural competence through collaborative tasks and project work” (p. 342). Simply put, telecollaboration is a structured activity that only needs to be achieved through distance. Learners could use one or many types of communication and collaboration tools in order to perform the process of exchanging, gathering and analyzing information, through internet platforms, in the context of carrying out a task.

A more specific definition is given by Helm and Guth (2010) where they referred to it as: “internet-based intercultural exchange between people of different cultural and/or national backgrounds, set up in an institutional context with the aim of developing both language skills and ICC through structured tasks” (p. 14). A narrower definition is introduced by Dooly (2008): “Instead of [...] simply having interpersonal exchanges of information collection, telecollaboration aims at providing problem-solving objects that will facilitate genuine interaction” (p.67); in her definition she emphasizes more on the collaborative component of the term telecollaboration.

Goals of Telecollaboration

Researchers like Warschauer (1996), Thorne (1999), and Belz (2002) assert that telecollaboration is the integration of internet- based technologies and platforms in distant language classes within educational institutions to develop:

- a- Linguistic skills; acquire or improve a foreign language, and;
- b- Intercultural skills; better understanding of the target culture.

As a result, according to Agar (1994) learners from both ends of the virtual exchange have an immediate, low- cost accessibility to the platform and materials.

Web

In today's society, web development is becoming an undeniable necessity. It involves the use of current revolutionary technology, in which it would be the way people organize, communicate, and collaborate with one another. A web, which is an Application Programming Interface (API), is software that enables communication using a computer and internet access. The World Wide Web (WWW) is the largest information database humans have ever invented, with a web browser; the users view web pages that may contain all the different information (e.g. books, research papers, news, videos, etc).

In 1989, the web was created by Tim Berner-Lee. WWW is defined as a system of interlinked information in different forms that can be found on the internet. Simply put, it is an information space in which resources of all kinds are accessible. It mainly has gone through three stages known as: (Web 1.0) which is the web of documents, (Web 2.0) which is the web of people and (Web 3.0) which is the web of data (Choudhury, 2014).

Web 1.0

First generation web was the first implementation of a web service that was used from 1989 to 2005. Generally, defined as “read-only” (Berners Lee, 1989) web, where content is available online for viewing. Authors on Web 1.0 can create web pages for the readers, writing and publishing what they want. The goal of creating this web was to make content available and accessible to visitors at all times. As a result, readers and consumers could get information by just visiting the source. They can also contact the publisher if their contact information is available online. However, first generation web features limited communication, in which users have the ability to only share information with one another; it enabled people to merely examine and read information.

Web 2.0

The second generation of web or “read-write” web was first coined by DiNucci in 1999, as an opposition to web 1.0. This latter is referred to as “the static web”, whereas Web 2.0 is considered rather as “the dynamic web”. Nevertheless, the term started to be used in 2004 and is actually identified and labeled with O’Reilly (2006) Media 2.0 Conference, who defines it as:

Web 2.0 is the business revolution in the computer industry caused by the move to the internet as platform, and an attempt to understand the rules for success on that new platform. Chief among those rules is this: Build applications that harness network effects to get better the more people use them. (para. 3)

O’Reilly (2006) popularized Web 2.0, as he emphasized on the fact that it is definitely the next big transition and revolution in WWW, since it brought a new way of interconnecting and interacting with the world by means of collecting and sharing data using the latest technologies.

Web 2.0 and the tools that it offers multiplies more the opportunities to communicate and collaborate. Furthermore, according to Hughes (2010):

Web 2.0 represents a significant change in the way the Internet is used. Opportunities are now more diverse and Internet users engage in more varied activities. People no longer simply consume online resources. It is increasingly a part of life to construct an online identity and present yourself online, to publish your thoughts and opinions, your photographs and your experiences, to form social groups, make friends and share parts of your life via the Internet. (p.252)

Web 2.0 fosters the involvement, collaboration and transmission of practices, in which it allows for the continuation of daily operations. Users can read, write and collaborate to a certain extent; thus, having more interaction. It is regarded as an innovative web generation,

primarily, due to its notable characteristic of facilitating cooperation and assisting in the collecting of knowledge. Stephen Fry (2007, as cited in Yang, 2008) further states that Web 2.0 is:

An idea in peoples' heads rather than a reality...It's actually an idea that the reciprocity between the user and the provider is what's emphasized. In other words, genuine interactivity, if you like, simply because people can upload as well as download. (p.95)

Second generation improvements are illustrated withinside the new technologies through the creation of websites that support social networking, such as: Flickr, Orkut, YouTube, Blogs, Wikipedia and Scribd, etc; and new web techniques like: Ajax, Extensible Markup Language, Adobe Flash, Python, etc.

Web 3.0

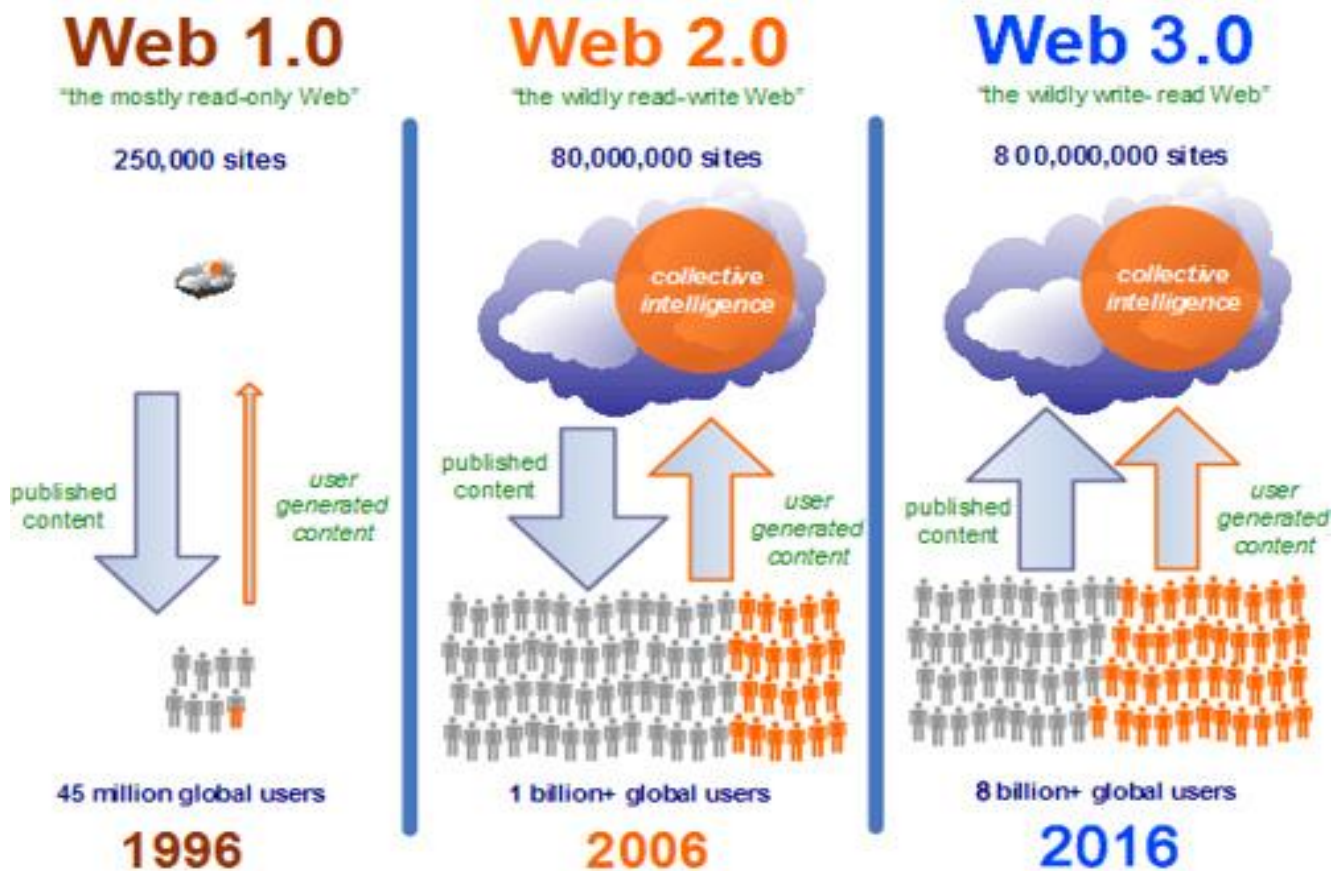
The third generation of WWW was first coined by John Markoff in 2006. It depicts the evolution of Web usage and interaction, including the conversion of the web to a database. Berners-Lee explains the term as it would be “read-write-execute” web; i.e., “executable web.” Data in Web 3.0 is obtained through specific search engines, called vertical search engines that are centered on content personalization. It is displayed through diverse services (like engine browsers) with different perspectives. The difference between the three webs is demonstrated through the next table and figure.

Table 1*The Difference between Web 1.0, Web 2.0 and Web 3.0*

WEB 1.0	WEB 2.0	WEB 3.0
1996 – 2004	2004 – 2016	2016 +
The Hypertext Web	The Social Web	The Semantic Web
Tim Berners Lee	Tim O'Reilly Dale Dougherty	Tim Berners Lee
Read Only	Read and Write Web	Executable Web
Millions of Users	Billion of Users	Trillions+ of Users
Echo System	Participation and Interaction	Understanding self
One Directional	Bi-Directional	Multi-user Virtual environment
Companies Publish Content	People Publish Content	People build application through which people interact and publish content
Static content	Dynamic content	Web 3.0 is curiously undefined. AI and 3D the web learning
Personal Websites	Blog and Social Profiles	SemiBlog, Haystack.
Message Board	Community Portals	Semantic Forums
Buddy list address book	Online Social networks	Semantic Social Information

Note. From “Comparative Study of Web 1.0, Web 2.0 and Web 3.0”, by M. Naik, & D.

Shivalingaiah, 2008, *International CALIBER: Mangalore*, 499-507

Figure 1*Comparison between the Webs*

Note. From <https://chamnanvanakit.wordpress.com/2013/08/02/web-1-0-2-0-and-3-0/>

Web 2.0 and Telecollaboration

Web 2.0 focuses more on the collaborative side, participative elements and as O'Reilly (2005) calls it the notion of 'web as a platform'. Web 2.0 provides social networking platforms where the participants can interact through the online spaces by creating and sharing communicative content in which web 1.0 failed to do (Vossen & Hageman, 2007). Steele and Cheater (2008) stated that second generation websites are more about users' willingness to exchange information with one another, not about using specific services. In addition, Helm and Guth (2010) explained that: "in particular web 2.0 is not

merely a tool for mediation but a significant social phenomenon which has generated a multiplicity of new contexts in which people interact” (p.20).

Tools used in cross-cultural exchanges falls into different categories, depending on the use and service of the interaction; mainly:

- 1- Social Networking Sites (SNS) that include: Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, Instagram, etc,
- 2- Video hosting sites like YouTube and Daily motion,
- 3- Discussion sites, such as: Reddit, Quora, and Discord; and,
- 4- Community blogs.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Web 2.0 Tools in Telecollaboration

Web 2.0 tools have been of benefit as it appeared in many studies in online intercultural learning. The main advantage of using these tools in telecollaborative studies, as stated by Stickler and Emke (2011) is that the technologies of Web 2.0 make it possible for learners to socially interact with each other, through an active participation in learner-centered activities, in order to own the content of language production on the web. Therefore, to share, react, and edit information publicly.

Furthermore, the implementation of web 2.0 tools in virtual exchanges promotes authentic learning spaces, whether synchronously or asynchronously (Scalter, 2008; Tamada & Akahori, 2009). The interaction becomes more natural and rich at the different levels; Prensky (2012) refers to it as: “tech- savvy” and “digital natives”. O'Dowd (2007) asserts that web 2.0 technologies provide all forms of information to learners; from digital literacy to the development of the target language. He argues that this would contribute to the understanding and growth of cultural awareness.

Helm and Guth (2010) further stressed the idea of Web 2.0 services developing intercultural communication competence (ICC) that they thought traditional materials failed

at. They believe telecollaboration 2.0 is a tool to “promote reflection, understanding, criticism, equality and transformation” (p. 23). To sum up, they claim that these technologies enable the collaboration and participation in the cultural exchanges and activities, thus “enrich the sociocultural potential of telecollaboration” (pp. 21-22).

However, researchers claim that there is always the possibility for individuals to face some problems in establishing web 2.0 spaces. It could be challenging to manage due to technological problems, the lack of digital skills, authenticity of online materials, websites’ licensing restrictions, etc. Consequently, this can lead to unwanted results like creating cultural conflicts amongst the groups through the increase of misunderstandings and attitudes, yet, stereotypes reinforcement (Belz, 2002; Guth & Helm, 2010; Ware, 2005). The lack of direct communications with other people from the other side, i.e., societies with different cultural backgrounds, participants may consider them as the only representation of the target culture.

The relationship between Web Development and E-learning

There is definitely a correlation between web generations’ progress and web-based learning. As mentioned above, Web 1.0 is the “read- only”, however, Web 2.0 is the “read and write web”, whereas Web 3.0 is the “read, write and collaborate” web. In terms of e-learning 1.0 (parallel to Web 1.0), it is simply about allowing students access to data; e-learning 2.0 (equivalent to Web 2.0) gives learners the possibility to write and interact, besides the aforementioned characteristics; e-learning 3.0 (related to Web 3.0) merging previous qualities, it adds the ability for users to collaborate in simulated settings. With the development of webs along e-learning technologies, individuals would be brought together synchronously or asynchronously.

Table 2*Relationship between generations of Web and e-Learning*

Web		E-Learning					
Concept	Technologies		Concept	Technologies			
1	Read-only or write only, security, web of documents	HTML, URL	http,	Content management, Unidirectional activities	CBT,	LMS,	eBooks, VLEs
2	Read/write web	Social Dynamic technologies, ASP, AJAX, podcasts, SNS.	web	Blended learning, content authoring, activities, content	Bidirectional Multimedia	LCMS,	Social video conferencing, VLEs, Mashups
3	Read/write/request/ collaborate data, linked data	RDF, OWL, second life	XML, 3D,	Learner-centered, learning, representation	U- Knowledge	PLEs, semantic second	Social web, life, personal avatars

Note. From “Metadata and Knowledge Management driven Web-based Learning Information System towards Web/e-Learning 3.0”, by H. Rego, T. Moreira, E. Morales, F. J. Garcia, 2010, *Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning*, 5(2), 36–44.

E-learning

The educational system from twenty years ago is different from today's since it was in a traditional classroom with students and a teacher who led the process of learning. In which any other type of learning was questionable at being the best. Until the early 2000s, when the computer evolution happened, it radically changed the learning landscape; the term

“electronic learning” or as it is referred to in the present “e-learning”, was first used in the 1999 at Computer-based training (CBT) symposium.

The use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) is to facilitate and enhance learning and teaching (Cooper & Madden, 2007). Learning and teaching processes can be enhanced through the incorporation of ICTs in tasks, either executed by an individual or groups; at a real time or not; using all types of technological devices (Romiszowski, 2004). E-learning, also called “A3” by Crane (2009) which stands for: anytime, anywhere and anybody. Basically, it is a computer based educational tool or system that enables individuals to learn. Before the development of Web tools, e-learning was offered via a combination of computer techniques, whereas now it is managed through the internet.

The Development of E-learning

The first phase of e-learning is called “*Traditional Computer-Based learning*”. A number of alternative concepts used frequently with e-learning; that were largely employed in the 1970s and 1980s (computer-based training, technology-based training, online learning, virtual learning, or web- based learning). Pedagogically speaking, the early programs involved electronic page turning and were didactic in approach with transmitted knowledge as the purpose; where teachers were only the transmitters as opposed to facilitators (Dinevski & Kokol, 2005; Gray et al, 2004).

Later, it was not until the 1990’s when the second phase was introduced, “*The Blended Learning*”. It is a shift from a computer-based instruction where students learn from technology, to enabling them to learn with the technology (Young, 2003). Therefore, a new concept of “negotiated- knowledge” (Gray et al, 2003) was proposed, in which learners could have discussions and exchanges using ICTs; mainly E-mails. By the late 1990’s, computer hardware, software, and internet technologies all contributed to the development of a series of educational tools and products, establishing the educational industry (Nawaz et al, 2011).

The last phase, '*Virtual Learning*' emerged by the late 1990's. Different tools, products and techniques were first used in the course-management and the interaction between teachers and students. Communication in this phase can be achieved through web-based applications that enable not only to deliver knowledge, but also empower learners to develop the different skills.

E-learning 1.0

With the development of the Web, the most significant shift was the availability of content online. This shift was presented in teachers generating web pages with their materials. Later, with the emergence of commercial programs, teachers had access to online materials, including resources and tests. This is considered a more conventional method of learning rather than a hierarchical one in which communication is mono-directional. In this direct-transfer model, the instructor is the one who transfers learning materials and addresses learners through various communication channels.

E-learning 2.0

E-learning 2.0 occurred as a shift from e-learning 1.0, relatively Web 1.0. The focus in this age of learning was on social learning and the usage of social software (Redecker et al., 2009). O'Reilly was the first who coined the term web 2.0, thus, its popularity grew within its applications, and thus, e-learning 2.0 is in a way the title of bringing the benefits of web 2.0 in education. E-Learning 2.0 is relatively designed and based on interactions that depend on social constructivism. Web 2.0 tools need the creation of dynamic content, which may include reflections and dialogues, necessitating cooperation and participation (Terrell et al., 2011). In other words, this is a collaborative way of learning where communication is multi-directional where knowledge may be socially constructed.

The Difference between E-learning 1.0 and E-learning 2.0.

Table 3

The difference between e-learning 1.0 and e-learning 2.0

	E-Learning 1.0	E-Learning 2.0
Main Concepts	Courseware, LMS, Authoring tool	Wiki, Social Networking, Add-ins, Mash-up.
Ownership	Top-down, One-way	Bottom-up, Learner Drives, peer learning
Development Time	Long	None
Content Size	60 Minutes	1 Minute
Access Time	Prior to work	During work
Delivery	At one time	When you need it
Content Access	LMS	Search, RSS feed
Drivers	ID	Worker
Content Creator	ID	User
Training's Role	Gourmet Chef	Food Critic

Note. Retrieved from “e-Learning 1.0 to e-Learning 2.0: Threats and opportunities for Higher Education Institutions in the Developing Countries”, by G. Kundi, & A. Nawaz, 2014, *European Journal of Sustainable Development*, 3(1), 145-160.

E-learning 3.0

Researchers (Baird 2007; Moore, 2010; Walters, 2010; Wheeler, 2009) explained that nowadays people are using e-learning 3.0. With it emerged new technological devices and features, like: cloud storage, better devices' screen and sound resolutions, tactile screens, and

3d user interfaces. One of the most prominent aspects in this generation is the universal access to different resources using phones anytime and anywhere. Moreover, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is discussed to be implemented in educational practices because it can filter and classify large amounts of data, giving the learner a deeper and more complete grasp of the learning process (Rubens et al., 2011).

Telecollaboration 2.0

“Telecollaboration 2.0” has no different meaning to the general definition of the term as a network- based exchange learning but it is more about the transition from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0. With telecollaboration 2.0, learners have the access to different features like discussing, commenting on posts, sharing materials online using different applications and so on (Steele & Cheater, 2008). Helm and Guth (2010) presented the benefits of using telecollaboration 2.0 precisely and concisely:

As well as increasing the different modes in which learners can communicate, exchange, compare and contrast information, telecollaboration 2.0 facilitates the collaborative construction of knowledge in the form of what can be seen as new cultural practices or artifacts such as blogs, wikis and virtual worlds, to name just a few. (p. 22)

Numerous researchers designed intercultural exchanges trying to link native (NS) and non- native speakers (NNS) of English using web- based tools (figure 2). Because they were not investigated adequately, particularly in developed countries, the tools present in free Web 2.0 have much more prominent characteristics than those found in Web 1.0. In order to successfully improve EFL learners' intercultural communicative ability, a requirement to investigate the feasibility for employing free Web 2.0 or telecollaboration 2.0 technologies and suitable intercultural exchange activities is set. This goal can be demonstrated through

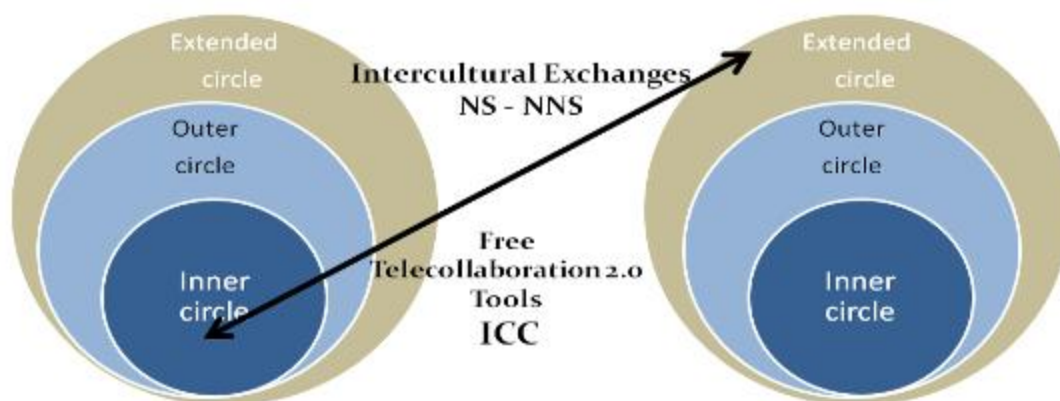
Kachru's (1985, as cited in Quirk et al., 1985) prominent "World Englishes" model that categorizes English into three main concentric circles:

- Inner circle, in which it includes English as a first language speaking countries or native speakers of English;
- Outer circle, it comprises nations where English is widely used amongst its people as a second language, mainly territories with long-standing historical British colonial ties; and;
- Expanding circle covers regions that teach EFL in educational institutions, mostly for them to communicate with the other circles.

With the adaptation of this model into the integration of Web 2.0 tools in telecollaboration projects, intercultural exchanges are going to be applied within the inner and expanding circle, i.e., NS and NNS participants, which would definitely facilitate the language learning and have learners better understand the target culture; from each end. This theory is best presented in the figure below:

Figure 2

The adaptation of Kachru's (1985) circles of Englishes



Note. From *Free telecollaboration 2.0 tools and activities for enhancing intercultural communicative competence*, by K. Bui, 2012, Eastern Michigan University.

Models of Telecollaboration

Telecollaboration can be found in the form of different approaches, like: monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual virtual exchange. This model is about the use of languages in the interaction between learners, from using only one language to more than one. However, the most adapted model is divided into two types: e-tandem and intercultural communication (Adali et al., 2015; O'Dowd, 2016) where learners are put in a bicultural and bilingual environment. E-tandem is believed to promote students' autonomy and their ability to carry out learning practices outside the classroom. Intercultural telecollaboration, on the other hand, is thought to develop students' ICC and societal components in the context of language learning.

E-tandem

Kotter (2003) defines the concept as an online learning that can be achieved by joining learners from different classes and mother tongues together with the aim of learning the target language; linguistic competence. Motivated participants tend to contribute by giving feedback and comments on the others' FL (Bower & Kawaguchi, 2011). The term e-tandem was first used in the early 1980's, from then it kept being implemented in learning. E-tandem as a web-based tool was first tried online in 1992 (Brammerts, 2003, as cited in Lewis & Walker, 2003). In the course of time, tandem-based projects were funded in order to develop establishing its core ideas and principle, as well as, assist future partnerships.

O'Rourke (2007) further explains that in e-tandem, two natives of two different languages interact for the purpose of acquiring the target language. As a result, partners would have the chance to exercise and improve the language, while offering relevant feedback. The interactions are built upon learners' autonomy and collaboration in delivering information and input. In other words, the teacher's role is minimal in e-tandem, whereas

partners are responsible for instructing each other by correcting potential mistakes, solving problems, and suggesting new ideas.

Class-to-class telecollaboration can adopt the e-tandem approach where instructors can engage students through a set of themes to discuss, tasks and activities to do, or texts to analyze; this is referred to as “Tele-tandem”, in which it relies on asynchronous voice-over-internet software, like: Zoom, Google Meet and Skype.

Intercultural Telecollaboration

Also known as the Cultura Model; it was developed in the late 1990s by French teachers at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Furstenberg, Levet, English, & Maillet, 2001). The objective of this model was on making culture the focus of FL classes. It is the basis of what O’Dowd has described as a “blended intercultural model” (O’Dowd & Ware, 2009) which is the combination of e-learning approaches and interculturality as a core element. Instructors set activities for participants to be engaged in, so they can identify cultural similarities and differences. According to Belz & Müller-Hartmann (2003) studies that employ this approach blended projects are usually based on sociocultural paradigms with a focus on the function and development of intercultural competence, as well as, linguistic skill.

E-tandem differs from this model, as it shifts educational goals into a more linguistic and cultural approach rather than just focusing on language learning; in other words, participants are put into online environments for a better cross- cultural understanding. Projects are created by the partnering institutions and designed for class-to-class e-learning communication to be more used in their language learning curricula. Tasks set by teachers and learners’ parallel texts for the exchange are later analyzed upon their objectives from the project (O’Dowd, 2016)

This model takes its inspiration from the words of the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin (as cited in Furstenberg et al., 2001): “It is only in the eyes of another culture that foreign culture reveals itself fully and profoundly ... A meaning only reveals its depths once it has encountered and come into contact with another foreign meaning” (p. 58). The cultural model is built upon the process and idea of cultural comparison. It involves students and teachers analyzing cultural products, as well as engaging with others in authentic interaction, which would later develop their intercultural understanding.

Global Digital Divide

Global digital divide (GDD) is a term used to describe the disparity between individuals or groups of people at the different social and geographical levels in accessing ICTs or the usage of the internet. This division could be within the same country or beyond. Rogers (2001) defines it as: “the gap that exists between individuals advantaged by the Internet and those individuals relatively disadvantaged by the Internet” (p. 96). GDD can also refer to the knowledge gap, where one set of individuals has higher access to digital resources (computers, cell phones, the internet) and hence is better informed, educated, and aware of new advances faster than those who either do not have these things or have restricted access. As information is today's major currency, the final effect is growing inequality between the “haves” (those who have access to technologies) and the “have nots” (those who do not have access to technologies).

These definitions assert that there are people who do not profit from the usage of the Internet and other ICT resources, despite the fact that these technologies have been apparent in most regions of the world. Concerning "developing" countries, many are on the wrong side of the fence, with unreliable and poor Internet connection. Moreover, it is incredibly pricey, especially at the level of educational institutions.

The main reason for this gap, according to many researchers (Egbert & Yang, 2004; Van Dijk, 2006) is social and economic inequality. A lack of access to technology typically indicates that institutions, teachers, and/or students do not have the appropriate hardware (computers, projectors, tablets, phones, etc.) or software to carry out specific tasks. Even with the rapid growth of technologies all around the world, some educational institutions do not have access to basic ICT tools.

Van Dijk (1999) identified the different limitations of technological access presented in GDD:

1. “Lack of any digital experience caused by lack of interest, computer fear and unattractiveness of the new technology (‘psychological access’)” (p.1); this refers to the user’s basic knowledge on how to use technologies, to be then integrated in educational institutions.
2. “No possession of computers and network connections (‘material access’)” (p. 1); this refers to the inaccessibility of technologies and software for students and teachers to use in their classrooms.
3. “Lack of digital skills caused by insufficient user-friendliness and inadequate education or social support (‘skills access’)” (p.1); this involves users who lack the required ability to use operating system they can access.
4. “Lack of significant usage opportunities (‘usage access’)” (p. 1); due to instructors’ course delivery and preparation, students may lack.

This separation is going to create a gap between individuals and groups of EFL classes. According to Warschauer (2003) GDD would not only be bridged by providing ICT access but:

Meaningful access to ICT comprises far more than merely providing computers and Internet connections. Rather, access to ICT is embedded in a complex array of factors

encompassing physical, digital, human, and social resources and relationships. Content and language, literacy and education, and community and institutional structures must all be taken into account if meaningful access to new technologies is to be provided. (p.6)

The notion of GDD can even be stretched to the video of reinforcing stereotypes between “haves” and “have nots”. The goal of this research is by implementing telecollaboration in teaching and learning classes, the gap would be bridged and participants overcome attitudes and stereotypes.

Conclusion

Several studies have demonstrated the value of employing social media platforms in foreign language schools. Online social networking encourages students to spend more time with the language, fosters meaningful informal dialogue in a natural setting, brings the class group closer together, and may encourage lifelong learning. Telecollaboration in foreign language learning is described to be a part of internet- mediated pedagogy. The tools employed differ from one situation or research to the next, because it is impossible to describe all of the tools that may be utilized in telecollaborative projects. In the sphere of language teaching and learning, the development of learners ICC is unavoidable. Intercultural pedagogy, which employs a variety of strategies and procedures, is offered as a means of achieving this aim. Telecollaboration is the most modern way that is seen to be effective and may make use of a variety of internet tools.

CHAPTER TWO

CHAPTER TWO: CULTURE

The link between language and culture is unbreakable and deeply ingrained. Many linguists and researchers are interested in the whole tangling of this link. In the context of foreign language teaching it has been highlighted through different approaches that the native culture is inseparable from its language. Without a thorough understanding of the target culture's customs, learning a foreign language is impossible. As a result, it is critical for both students and teachers of foreign languages to devote more attention to the teaching of cultural components in EFL courses.

This chapter aims to give an overview of the different definitions of the concept 'culture' and its various approaches and aspects (philosophical, anthropological and sociological perspectives). This would pave the way to the other chapters, and to understand related terms. This section also explains the fundamental components that make up each given society's culture, as well as its associated features. Finally, it also investigates the relationship between culture, language and language teaching.

Culture

Damen (1987) points out that: "Culture is a universal fact of human life" (p.88), in other words, culture is deeply embedded in our way of being, it is everything around us, anything we think about, say or do. There is no specific or a single definition of the term; it is rather a vague and broad concept that covers an open range of dimensions and aspects of peoples' life. In this regard, Byram (1989) clarifies that: "Culture is admittedly an omnibus term" (p. 80), also, Stern (1992) argues that: "the concept of culture is notoriously difficult to define" (p.207).

Over the years, culture was and still is a concern or a subject of investigation of many scholars and it was a necessity to understand what is meant by the word 'culture'. It attracted many researchers, anthropologists, psychologists, social scientists and culture investigators in

which they tried to interpret the concept into a one precise, valid, accurate and universal definition. Thus, they failed to agree on just one interpretation; as explained by Apte (1994, as cited in Asher, 1994) as follows: “Despite a century of efforts to define culture adequately, there was in the early 1990s no agreement among anthropologists regarding its nature” (p. 2001).

Scholars’ definitions through the years of the term represent various disciplines and perspectives. Culture is an interdisciplinary concept that is formed and used differently by each individual; hence, it is defined differently. Hinkel (1999) indicates that: “It may not be an exaggeration to say that there are nearly as many definitions of culture as there are fields of inquiry into human societies, groups, systems, behaviours and activities” (p. 01). On that same note, Hall (1977) asserts the idea that culture is a muddled concept, elusive of any definitive definition.

Other researchers gave up on defining the concept so they will not be falling into a countless number of definitions, as Byram (1989) states: “The result is a multiplicity of definitions which show that culture has resisted any kind of agreement among scholars from different disciplines” (p.80). In the same context, Kroeber and Kluckhohn, American anthropologists who critically examined the concept, gathered a list of 164 different definitions of culture.

Definitions of Culture

To know more about the concept, we need to trace back the etymological development and the history of its meanings. The word culture is originated from the Latin words “*colere; colo; colui; cultus*” which means “*cultivate, or tend*”. As stated by Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) the term is derived from the Latin word “*cultus*” which means “*tending the soil*”, and “*colere*” that means “*cultivate*”. In which, both meanings hold on to the same idea that it is related to cultivation to designate a cultivated plot referring to a state

of farming and agriculture. In classical antiquity, the term was used by the ancient Roman orator Cicero through introducing the concept of “*cultura animi*”, an agriculture metaphor that means the cultivation or development of the mind and soul, as opposed to the original meaning where an outer nature is cultivated.

According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, culture is defined as: “the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group” or “the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization”. Also, as stated in Macmillan dictionary, culture is: “a set of ideas, beliefs, and ways of behaving of a particular organization or group of people.” And “a society that has its own set of ideas, beliefs, and ways of behaving.”

A definition that covers all elements of culture is presented by Hofstede (1997):

Culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving. (p. 279)

Most understandings of the word culture have been developed within the traditional limits of individual scientific disciplines, basically in the context of cultural theories. It interested the researchers from all fields mainly philosophers, anthropologists and sociologists.

Philosophical Perspective of Culture

Cultural philosophy is introduced by Cassirer in his different books and essays between 1942 and 1961. He intended to debunk the relation between life and culture, yet, like many other researchers, he was faced with the seemingly problem of how to approach the concept of culture, when there is no exact definition of this notion. As mentioned above, it is widely argued and represented in the research literature that culture is a multi-faceted

concept, with literally hundreds of definitions. The more fundamental a concept for human beings, the less restricted to scientific disciplines, the more difficult to define exactly.

Cassirer introduced the typology of symbolic forms in his book entitled *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen* (1923), arguing that the most important ones are: myth, religion, language, art and science. Based on his typology, he defined culture as symbolic activities that encompass all aspects of life and human behavior. Cassirer considers philosophy to be primarily a matter of culture. As to what precisely symbolic forms are, He defines it in his lecture “Der Begriff der Symbolischen Form im Aufbau der Geisteswissenschaften” [The Concept of Symbolic Form in the structure of Humanities] of at the Warburg Library (1921, as cited in Kirke, 2008) as:

By ‘symbolic form’ I mean that energy of the spirit through which a mental meaning-content is attached to a sensual sign and inwardly dedicated to this sign. In this sense language, the mythical-religious world, and the arts each present us with a particular symbolic form. For in them all we see the mark of the basic phenomenon, that our consciousness is not satisfied to simply receive impressions from the outside, but rather that it permeates each impression with a free activity of expression. In what we call the objective reality of things we are thus confronted with a world of self-created signs and images. (p. 65)

Cassirer uses an illustration of a “curved line on a flat plane” to understand his philosophy. Each researcher interprets the “line” here according to his field of interest and own specific, different experience. It affects their visual sensations in different ways, because it brings different mental energies for each human experience. To the geometer, the line means a quantitative relation between the two dimensions of the plane; to the physicist, the line perhaps means a relation of energy to mass; and to the artist, the line means a relation between light and darkness, shape and contour.

Nevertheless, none of these interpretations can be considered as true or correct. The way of experiencing the object has its own pragmatic use within the individual disciplines. Cassirer argues that philosophy helps to understand each of these mental energies separately, to their relation toward the others, in other words, culture.

According to Cassirer, '*Meaning*' is the essence of culture, which is subjective. Yet, culture cannot be just meaning, it is also quite similar to a '*symbol*', which is objective and subjective simultaneously. In this sense, culture can be regarded as the meaning part of the symbol or the cultural object. In other words, culture is a subjective concept in an objective and universal way, even though what has cultural meaning for someone, does not need to mean anything to another.

Kant (1798, as cited in Louden 2007) based his definition of Anthropology on his lecture "Anthropologie in pragmatischer" [Anthropology from a pragmatic perspective]. He links anthropology to the investigation of human beings' nature in general. He describes it as empirical and pragmatic; i.e. it is separated from being metaphysical but being examined through ordinary lives. He views it as the study of what humans do because of their free spirit, as opposed to the natural laws that govern human physiology. This definition is formed through his view on culture, which he defines in his book *The Critique of Judgment* as the ability to set arbitrary or non-natural ends, which is a necessary condition for human behavior.

This perspective is further expressed in G. W. Hegel's phenomenology of the mind. He argues that people are different from animals, as human beings are able to control their instincts and overcome distinctive characteristics by sharing needs and accepting universal standards. Hegel conceived the process of culture as an *estrangement* of the natural self. It is the capacity to adopt others' perspective rather than sticking to your own only; and by this procedure you can have knowledge about both oneself and the other. Knowledge is a

theoretical way of thinking. The word he uses to describe culture is instructive, i.e., formation or shaping (of matter thought).

Thus, speaking from a philosophical point of view, the notion of culture is strongly connected with the essence of man, human activity. Therefore, culture cannot exist without a person. Despite the diversity of definitions, a unifying feature can be singled out. Culture is featured as an expression of the essence of a person concerning the surrounding world.

Anthropological Perspective of Culture

The urge of humans to explore the differences of cultural practices around the world led to the emergence of cultural anthropology. However, it was not the core focus of Anthropology. The zoologist Alfred Haddon claimed that in 1501, the Latin word “*Anthropologium*” was used for the study of human bodies, then, the word “*Anthropology*” appeared in 1655 in an English paper on human nature and anatomy. Even though, it began to take shape in the late 1700s and early 1800s due to colonialism and early-modern science.

Theodor Waitz (1863/2008), in his book *Introduction to Anthropology* stated that the discipline: “aspires to be the science of man in general; or, in precise terms, the science of the nature of man” (p.3). i.e., “Study man by the same method which is applied to the investigation of all other natural objects” (p.5); to further explain, Kroeber (as cited in Wolf, 1964) confirmed that Anthropology is: “the most humanistic of the sciences and the most scientific of the humanities” (p. 88). In other words, originally, the human body was the main focus in Anthropology and not culture, yet, this dual of interests still maintains today.

The nature of humans is to organize themselves into groups, which can be at different levels: families, clans, villages, cities and nations that would represent what is called social systems or societies. Basically, a set of ideas starts to be spread among members of a certain society, and at the same time other ideas are shared in other societies. These ideas pass

through different stages into becoming at last “*things*” or “*objects*” people make and interact with, which in other words becomes their culture.

Therefore, culture can be represented through different forms: ideas, actions, skills, words, styles, religions or languages and also bodies; i.e., gender or race. Besides, unlike animals, humans can pass and share their culture, knowledge and skills to others not just through face to face interactions but also across generations. Edward Taylor (1870) in his book *Primitive Culture* provided the classical and most reliable anthropologist definition nowadays of the concept of culture.

Also, it provides a base for the many different definitions given over the years. He defines it as: “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (p.1). Basically, he was the first one to describe the concept in this way; i.e., the Tylorean model claims that culture is universal and it is a collection of learnt human behavioral tendencies. A more to the point definition given by Ruth Benedict (1934) who asserts the idea that neither race nor common blood are what connect people together but rather: “What really binds men together is their culture, the ideas and the standards they have in common” (p. 14).

Taylor’s definition raised anthropologists’ interest and was argued over the years about the meaning of “*complex whole*”. Cronk Lee (1999) in his book “*That complex whole: culture and the evolution of human behavior*” argues that over 130 years, anthropologists focused on relating peoples’ behavior to culture, in other words, they proclaim that culture made them do it. The problem with this definition is that they overestimate the role of biology. Cronk recommends removing behavior and its elements from anthropological definitions, but maintaining its ideational aspects and socially transmitted information. Shaules (2007) explains the expression “*Complex Whole*” as: “The shared knowledge, values and physical products of a group of people” (p.26).

Cultural Anthropology was first coined by Haddon in his work "*Physical Anthropology*" linking it to topics like ethnology, archeology, technology, religion, language and environmental influence. What signifies the field in this era; i.e., the late nineteenth century is body and race. On that same note, it was called 'the scientific racism' era. Dan Sperber (1985) argued that just like epidemiologists study disease transmission within or between societies, cultural anthropologists are the epidemiologists of culture, by exploring the spread of what he called representations.

Hence, relating anthropology to race was the reason cultural anthropology emerged in the first place through critics. The German scholar Franz Boas (1938) who is considered the father of "*Modern Cultural Anthropology*", conducted studies and researches to prove that: "the old idea of absolute stability of human types must...evidently be given up, and with it the belief of hereditary superiority of certain types over others" (103). Particularly, Boas dismissed the idea that there is a uniqueness of the concept geographically, historically and in explanatory terms. But rather dispersed it in the sense that each cultural element must be explained in reference to local conditions. Boas, also, explained that anthropologists disregarded the role of biology in determining people's behavior on the level of race and singularity.

Boas (1911/1963) brought the idea of contrast between nature and culture into American Anthropology. Basically, he was greatly influenced by Immanuel Kant's philosophy and the idealist philosophers of the 19th C, who argue that the human mind is related to their understanding of the world. He defines culture as:

Culture may be defined as the totality of the mental and physical reactions and activities that characterizes the behavior of the individuals composing a social group collectively and individually in relation to their natural environment, to other groups,

to members of the group itself and of each individual to himself. It also includes the products of these activities and their role in the life of the groups. (p.149)

Geertz (1973), an American anthropologist and one of the leading figures in linguistic anthropology, was highly influenced by philosophers like Langer, Heidegger and Weber. Thus, he adopted many of their views into his establishing interpretive and symbolic anthropology. This latter, studied the process of how human beings understand the actions and speech of their surroundings. According to Geertz (1973) people require symbolic aspects that would orient the system of a meaning that is found in any culture. He based his approach on a linguistic point of view. He interpreted culture as a linguistic tool that has its own grammar, rules and “*ought to do*” norms.

Geertz (1973) in his compilation of essays *The Interpretation of Cultures* analyzed culture as a system of meanings and symbols. He asserted that in order to analyze a culture, there should not be a scientific experiment to find a law, but rather an interpretive science to find a meaning. He defined culture as: “an historically transmitted pattern of meaning embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic form by means of which men [and women] communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life” (p. 89).

Therefore, culture is rather manifested through external symbols that societies use than inside peoples’ minds. In this regard, Ortner (1983) argued that people use these symbols to show their spirit and the world around them. For Geertz, symbols are *vehicles of culture*, they connect individuals in the way they see, feel and think about their surroundings. Parker (1985) asserted that Geertz identified culture as both a social phenomenon and an intersubjective system of meanings.

Thus, considering culture is learned, and then it should be examined as knowledge. Accordingly, it becomes necessary for people who share the same culture to have to a certain

degree a similar system of thoughts, ways of how they see, feel and understand the world, and form of predictions. Goodenough Ward (1981) referred to as *the cognitive view of culture*, in which he described as:

A society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members, and do so in any role that they accept for any one of themselves. Culture being what people have to learn as distinct from their biological heritage, must consist of the end product of learning: knowledge, in a most general, if relative, sense of the term. By this definition, we should note that culture is not a material phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people, behavior, or emotions. It is rather an organization of these things. It is the forms of things that people have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating, and otherwise interpreting them. (p. 109)

Goodenough's explanation states that there is a linguistic homology; i.e. knowing a culture, is knowing a language. They are interrelated, by describing a culture, you are describing a language.

Sociological Perspective of Culture

The term sociology was first introduced in French philosophy by August Comte in the late 1970s, however, the concept was firmly established by scholars like Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx and Max Weber. When social sciences emerged the term culture was not used at all, until the Second World War. The concept culture was popularized by anthropologists to understand

Society refers to a group of people living together in a defined territory and sharing the same culture; this latter is a crucial component of any society. Being one of the most used notions in sociology, culture refers to the way of life for each member or a group of people within a society. The lifestyle including the way they dress, their customs, art, literature,

music and religion; according to sociologists it can reach beyond this level. The notion is defined by Calhoun et al. (1994) as:

A society is an autonomous grouping of people who inhabit a common territory, have a common culture (shared set of values, beliefs, customs and so forth) and are linked to one another through routinized social interactions and interdependent statuses and roles.

The common issue with theorists and scholars is if society is cultural, which many agree that they are key concepts to different paradigms. According to Kroeber (1952) humankind and animals live in groups but only human beings have cultures. Thus, culture is what distinguishes humans from animals, so, culture defines and surpasses society. It can be simple or more complex. Many behaviors are not considered biological or instinctive but rather learned as a part of the culture. The relationship between culture and sociology is achieved if the culture influences people of a certain society's beliefs and behaviors. Therefore, without culture, society would be non-existent; i.e. culture is a pillar to sociology.

In this case, Malinowski (1944/ 1960) defined culture as the whole aspect of life; it is about the style of a certain society, including all daily activities that would differentiate a nation from another. Syed Ismail (2010, as cited in Ramiah, 2014) summarizes Malinowski's idea by claiming that the idea of culture is the reaction to the needs of human beings. Another definition by Eppink (2011) as: "Cultures are the outcome of individuals' thoughts and actions, their habits and values. A culture reflects the "mentality" of its participants" (p. 7); in other words, culture is about the social values, norms and structure that define communities, as well as knowledge, and religion.

Rohana Yusuf (2010, as cited in Ramiah, 2014) a sociologist, explains that culture is the material and non- material aspects of life; by material it includes objects or equipment that are man-made, like clothing, housing, weapons and so on. However, the non- material is

about abstract matters like philosophy, ideas, beliefs, customs, taboos and art. Even though he argues that culture differs from a nation to another, a set of features are shared across all societies:

- **Changes:** Cultural change is a process in which portions of the cultural aspects of the experience are modified from time to time and according to circumstances.
- **Learned:** This means that all forms of behavior, customs, and examples followed by individual communities are not from instinct, but each one has learned from the learning process.
- **Shared:** Every culture is shared by a group of people. For example, language is a system of symbols used by members of the community to interact with each other.
- **Having Integrative Value:** Generally, every nation is integrated by common culture. For example, a kind of favorite food is the culture in which these foods bring the community together. (p. 77)

Along with these features, she argued that culture is the collaboration of individuals together in terms of elements that would shape later on cultural groups and separate them into components:

- **Cognitive Component:** Culture in the form of cognitive is an overall thinking in a community. Key elements in cognitive culture are symbols, language and values; including knowledge and belief.
- **Normative Component:** Culture is an element in the form of normative social norms. Every culture contains rules that regulate the conduct of every member of society's life situations. Social norms are standards of behavior that are shared by members of the community and are expected to comply.

- **Materialistic Component:** Material culture is in the form of concrete objects and physical objects such as shelter, things, including technology and how to use and present the idea in a concrete well as books and writing. (p. 55)

It differs as societies change; every culture does not need to stand for the purpose of another culture. Society is about a group of people that are mostly unknown to each other but related through abstract categories like the nation, social class or gender. Culture being a complex whole, is dynamic rather than static, thus, it is in a constant state of change in subtle but tangible ways. Cultural changes can be both internal and external; the former occurs due to external factors from outside societies, like war, technology evolution, and getting exposed or influenced by foreign culture. However, the latter occurs within the community itself, i.e. internal factors, like conflicts, new social values, inventions, and population change.

Components of Culture

Culture has been referred to as a unit in the different definitions that is achieved through its components. This is depicted through every day practices (ways of clothing, eating or talking) to verbal and non-verbal communication using symbols (voice, words, facial expressions, or gestures) as well as, other aspects.

Beliefs

Beliefs are thoughts learned and shared across individuals by living in a society and shared by a group of people that they believe to be true, that control interactions with others from the same cultural background, as well as, other groups. The socialization process is the reason beliefs get discovered and recognized, in which culture is united, preserved, and disseminated.

Cultural beliefs are: “a set of behavioral patterns related to thoughts, manners and actions, which members of society have shared and passed on to succeeding generations” (Hatah et al, 2015: 589). Individual members of any community are bound together by a set

of common ideas that shape their experiences and perceptions of the world. Beliefs are certainty about the meaning and substance of events and human behavior that are learned and gained via inherited group experiences and practices (Holmes- Eber & Salmoni, 2008).

Values

According to Schwartz (1992), Values are a collection of deeply ingrained and abstract reasons that govern, justify, or explain people's beliefs, attitudes, conventions, and code of conduct. Culture is formed and based on values; the conceptualization of good, desirable or worthwhile and bad, avoided or undesirable by a given group of a society (ex. Freedom, individualism, relationships, or time orientation) This is explained by Damen (1987): “values are related to what is seen to be good, proper, and positive or the opposite” (p. 22). Another definition by Schwartz and Bardi (2001): “desirable, trans-situational goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in people’s lives” (p.269).

Definitions give a general overview, yet, values are subjective, and they differ from one person to another, a group to another, a society to another etc; what is acceptable to someone or a group is not necessarily for another. The difference in values does not mean a culture is better or superior over the other, as Peterson (2004) explains: “The values seen in culture A and culture B might be polar opposite, but that certainly does not mean that one group should consider the other ‘valueless’, nor that one group has it wrong and the other has it right” (p.23).

Behaviors

Values and behaviors are inextricably linked. All members of culture exhibit behaviors, yet, like values they differ from one person to another and from a society to another; patterns perceived as normal with a group of people, does not necessarily be practiced by another group. These cultural patterns are defined by Matikainen and Duffy (2000) as:

The cultural behaviors of people from the same country can be referred to collectively as cultural patterns, which are clusters of interrelated cultural orientations. The common cultural patterns that apply to the entire country represent the dominant culture in a heterogeneous society. (p.41)

In addition, they put an emphasis on the idea that not everyone belonging to the same group has to follow the same pattern, as other factors play a role in shaping their views. Culture as previously mentioned is dynamic, and so is behavior and values, they change as for patterns. This serves as guidelines to individuals' behavior, whether being appropriate or not.

Norms

They are also a really important cultural component. The origin of the word according to different dictionaries comes from Latin, which is a rule, pattern or *a carpenter's square*, that helped in having standard lines. Hence, norms serve as guidance. We can say that they are common rules, conventions, and principles that regulate society and determine how individuals should act and interact.

Critto (1999) asserts that: "social norms are shared ways of thinking, feeling, desiring, deciding and acting which are observable in regularly repeated behaviours and are adopted because they are assumed to solve problems" (p. 3). A further explanation given by Postmes et al. (2001) defining a norm as: "a standard or a rule that is accepted by members of the group as applying to themselves and other group members, prescribing appropriate thought and behavior within the group" (p. 919).

Norms and values tend to be used interchangeably, even though scholars explain that there is a definite difference; values to some are referred to as "internal" or "implicit", i.e. the desirable state of being of an individual, however, norms are referred to as "external" or "explicit", which is rather endorsed by a group through generally accepted instructions or

sanctions. In other words, cultural values exist on a more inner or subconscious level, however, norms are explicitly articulated in order to maintain and justify their behaviors.

Assumptions

Assumptions are the most abstract aspect of culture and are thought to be hardest to comprehend. They serve as the foundation for norms and values; the ideas about how the world works and the role of humans that underpin culture are mostly unseen. Assumptions are essential to everyday life and inevitable for the interaction within societies.

Assumptions aren't always harmful. Because individuals share recognized standards and do not have to examine every behavior, they allow you to communicate effortlessly within a culture. They facilitate cooperation by allowing us to interact without having to explain and expound in depth since our intrinsic cultural knowledge offers us the assurance that our message will be received in the right manner.

Worldviews are different from a culture to another, and so as assumptions, Hinkel (1999) explained:

To members of a particular culture, these assumptions appear self-evident and axiomatic. They are not however necessarily shared by members of other cultures whose values are also based on questioned and unquestionable fundamental notions and constructs. In this sense, conceptualizations of reality and social frameworks in different cultural communities may occasionally be at odds to varying degrees. (p. 6)

Following that, recognizing one's own and others' cultural assumptions is critical in assisting a foreign interlocutor or reader in analyzing what a foreign culture bearer says or writes.

Big Culture 'C' and Little Culture 'c'

Culture through the years of research was categorized into two major types: big 'C' culture and small 'c' culture. The former is considered the formal and visible culture as it comes from the humanities, unlike the latter which is considered the deep or hidden culture

which comes from social sciences. A definition of culture was provided by Richards and Schmidh (2002) as:

The set of practice, codes and values that mark a particular nation or group: the sum of a nation or group's most highly thought of works of literature, art, music etc. A difference is sometimes made between "High" culture of literature and the arts, and small "c" culture of attitudes, values, beliefs, and everyday lifestyles. Culture and language combine to form what is sometimes called "Discourses" ,i.e. ways of talking, thinking , and behaving that reflect one' s social identity. (p.151)

Big C

Culture, as a humanistic term, is also known as big "C" culture and it's the mark of the educated middle class. It has been encouraged by the state and its institutions like schools and universities as national heritage since it was crucial in the formation of the nation-state throughout the nineteenth century. It is the culture that has historically been taught through national languages.

Teaching about the target country's history, institutions, literature, and arts bind the target language to the reassuring continuity of a national community, giving it purpose and worth. One of the primary objectives for studying such subjects is that students will get relevant vocabulary items for describing places, events, and people.

According to Tomalin and Stempleski (1993), big "C" is the "achievement culture", which is the material production of human-kinds, like: architecture, art, literature, music, food and sciences. It is referred to as the visible culture because this category's products of culture are easier to notice and first to emerge when learning about any new culture; i.e. a nation's products and contributions. Lafayette (1997, as cited in Lange, 2003) claimed that: "those that fit the Big "C" category include recognizing and explaining geographical

monuments, historical events, major institutions (administrative, political, religious, educational, etc.), and major artistic monuments” (p. 243).

Little c

Since the 1980s, the most significant and relevant idea of culture has been that of little “c” culture, also known as “small cultures” (Holliday, 1999) of everyday life, with the emphasis mainly on communication and interaction in social contexts. It comprises native speakers' methods of acting, eating, speaking, and living, as well as their customs, beliefs, and values.

Cross-cultural pragmatics and the sociolinguistic appropriateness of language use in its true cultural context have piqued researchers' interest in the cultural component of language learning. The convention “one language Means one culture” is maintained in order to investigate how native speakers use their language for communicative purposes, and teachers are enjoined to teach sociolinguistic norms in the same way they teach grammatical rules (i.e., through modeling and role-playing).

According to Tomalin and Stempleski (1993) little “c” culture is referred to as “behaviour culture” which includes beliefs and attitudes; i.e. hidden or less visible form of culture that is related to a group of people, a community or a society. They have explained that it has come to be characterized as a “way of life”, or everyday living and culture patterns that include the routine elements of life, like food, holidays, living style, customs, and values.

Chlopek (2008) stated that:

Small-c culture [...] comprises a wide variety of aspects, many of which are interconnected, including attitudes, assumptions, beliefs, perceptions, norms and values, social relationships, customs, celebrations, rituals, politeness conventions, patterns of interaction and discourse organization, the use of time in communication, and the use of physical space and body language. (p. 11)

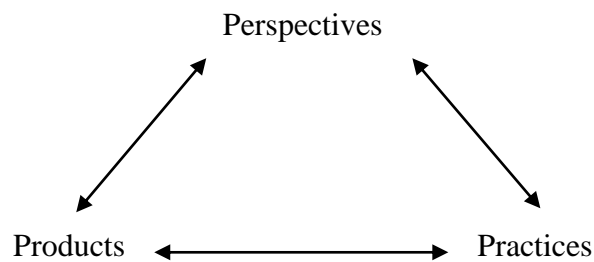
The 3P Model of Culture

The National Standards for Foreign Language Education Project, 1999 (NSFLEP) presented a set of elements to the term culture that are interconnected, through a triangle diagram (figure) they are called 3ps: *Products, Practices and Perspectives*.

Products are all items made or accepted by members of the culture, reflecting its perspectives, including those in the environment, such as plants and animals. Products span from tangible creations _like literature, buildings, clothes, paintings, or tools_ to intangible yet still visible structures _like language, laws, music, education, oral tales and religion. The cultural elements of Big C are referred to as products.

Practices (little c) refer to the whole spectrum of behaviors and social interactions that members of a certain society engage in using products. Language and other modes of communication and self-expression, as well as acts linked with social groupings and product use, are all examples of these practices. They encompass perceptions of time, place, and the context of communication in social circumstances verbally or nonverbally. The conceptions of appropriateness and inappropriateness, as well as taboos, are all part of the rituals.

Perspectives are the meanings, ideas, beliefs, values and attitudes that underpin a society's products influencing individuals' cultural practices. They can be explicit, but most frequently are implicit; occurring outside of conscious awareness. Perspectives, when considered as a whole, create meaning and form a distinct approach or direction toward life—a worldview. Such as: the importance of freedom or the value of ownership.

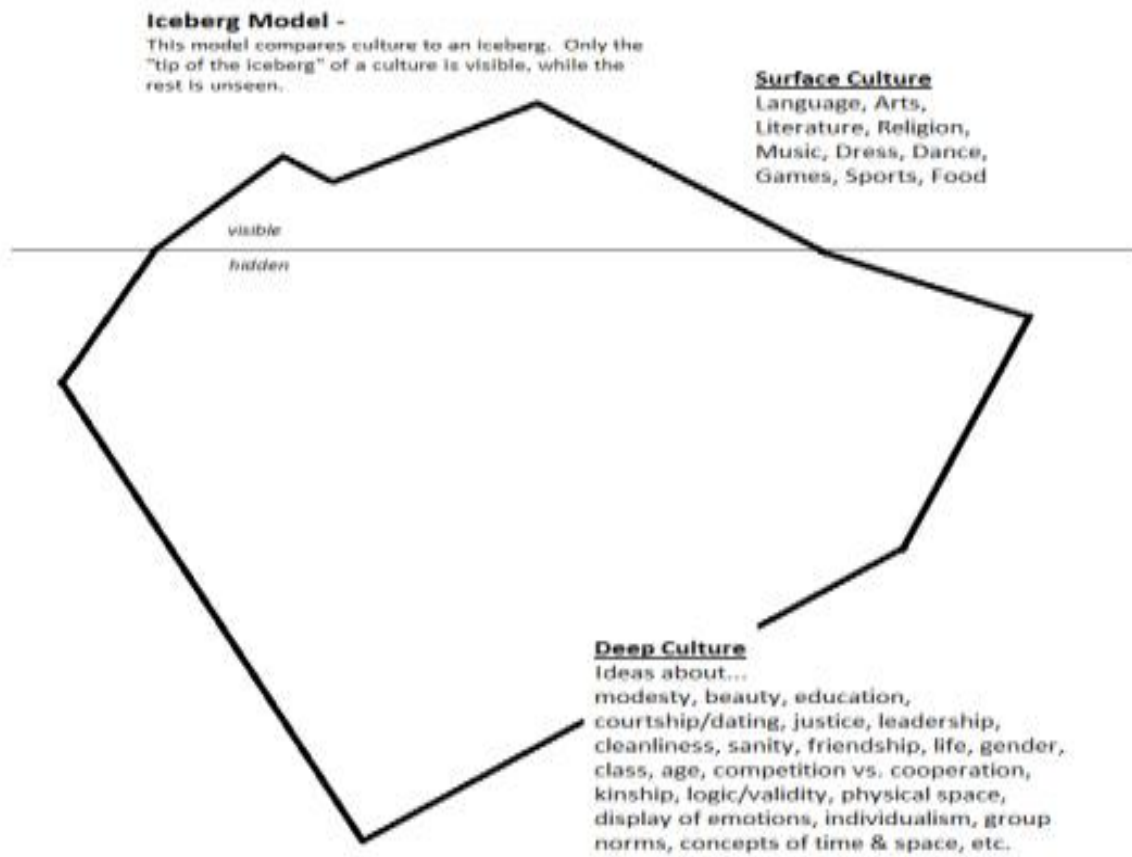
Figure 3*The Culture Triangle*

Note. From *Standards for foreign language learning in the 21st century*, (p. 47), by *National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project*, 1999, Lawrence, KS: Allen Press.

Another prominent model of culture is developed by Hall (1976), his analogy is known as “the iceberg model” or “cultural iceberg”. The analogy is to help people facing a new culture by distinguishing what can be clearly visible (products of a culture) which is depicted as the tip of the iceberg and what is not easily apparent (perspectives and practices of a culture) which is portrayed as the submerged part of culture.

Figure 4

The Iceberg Model



Note. From US History 11, Global Trade Source:www.globaltradeandlogistics.org/

Table 4*Big “C” Vs. Small “c” Culture*

	Big “C” culture: Classic or grand themes	Little ‘c’ culture: Minor or common themes
Invisible Culture “Bottom of the Iceberg”	Examples: Core Values, attitudes or beliefs, society’s norms, legal foundations, assumptions history, cognitive processes.	Examples: Popular issues, opinions, viewpoints, preferences or tastes, certain knowledge (trivia facts).
Visible Culture “Tip of the Iceberg”	Examples: Architecture, geography, classic literature, presidents or political figures, classical music.	Examples: Gestures, body posture, use of space, clothing style, food, hobbies, music, artwork

Note. From Peterson, B. (2004). *Cultural Intelligence. A Guide to Working with People from other Cultures.* (p. 25). Boston/London

Language and culture

It is commonly known that language and culture are correlative concepts, and the relationship is important, whenever communication is occurring between groups of people who speak two or more languages, culture is represented therein. The link between language and culture is unbreakable and deeply ingrained. At one's birth, the whole tangling of this maintained interconnectedness begins. Language is used to communicate culture and to maintain cultural ties.

According to Corder (1993), language serves as a bridge between an individual and their community's culture. Because the child acquires the attitudes, values, and ways of behaving that we call culture, which is the process of socialization, through the language of the community. In this way, the community's language reflects its culture and fulfills the community's needs.

Language is more than just semantics; it encompasses more than what may be contained in spoken words or scripted texts. Language does not end with the meaning or use of words associated with a culture. Words represent history, beliefs, and the culture of their origin indefinitely, which is acquired and usually inherited, as well as learnt to be used effectively in suitable settings. This view of language sees it not just as a body of knowledge to be learned, but also as a social practice in which to engage (Kramersch, 1993)

Gunderson (2000) depicts the link between the two concepts as:

Language and culture are inextricably linked. Unlike the Gordian knot, nothing comes from separating them because they have little or no meaning apart from each other. And English has become a world language, one that dominates business and science. In many respects it is hegemonic. To participate in the world economy and to benefit from the advances of science, it is believed, one must know English. (p.694)

Language, according to Kramersch (1998), is linked to identity and culture. She claimed that there is a natural link between speakers' language and their identity; i.e. speakers are recognized as members of a group based on their accent and vocabulary. By speaking in the language of the group to which they belong, speakers convey social significance, pride, historical and cultural togetherness. She made three connections between language and culture, which are as follows:

- First, people of a culture communicate cultural reality through verbal communication. The proper arrangement of words reflects not just thoughts but also manners and attitudes.
- Second, language embodies cultural reality; people use language to give meaning to their daily life activities.
- Third, culture represents cultural reality (community members see their native tongue as a representation of their cultural identity: “When [language] is used in contexts of communication, it is bound up with culture ... [and] Speakers identify themselves and others through their use of language; they view their language as symbol of their social identity” (p.3).

According to Byram (1989), language is a tool that allows speakers to express their understanding and experience of the world around them. As a result, it expresses their cultural values and ideals. He went on to say that one cannot study a language without also learning its culture, because culture is present anywhere language is addressed. It is, in other words, ingrained in the language. Brown (1994) talked about language and culture as well: “A language is a part of a culture, and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language and or culture” (p. 165). In other words, language and culture are inextricably linked, and their connection is impossible to ignore.

In addition, Sapir (1921/2008) looked at the connection between language and culture. He went on to add that: “again, language does not exist apart from culture, that is, from socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that determines the texture of our lives” (p. 1). The existence of language, according to Sapir, is linked to culture. Language is inextricably linked to the social practices and beliefs that guide people's actions. To put it

another way, language and culture are intrinsically linked. Sapir argued that language changes people's perceptions of the world and, as a result, their reality.

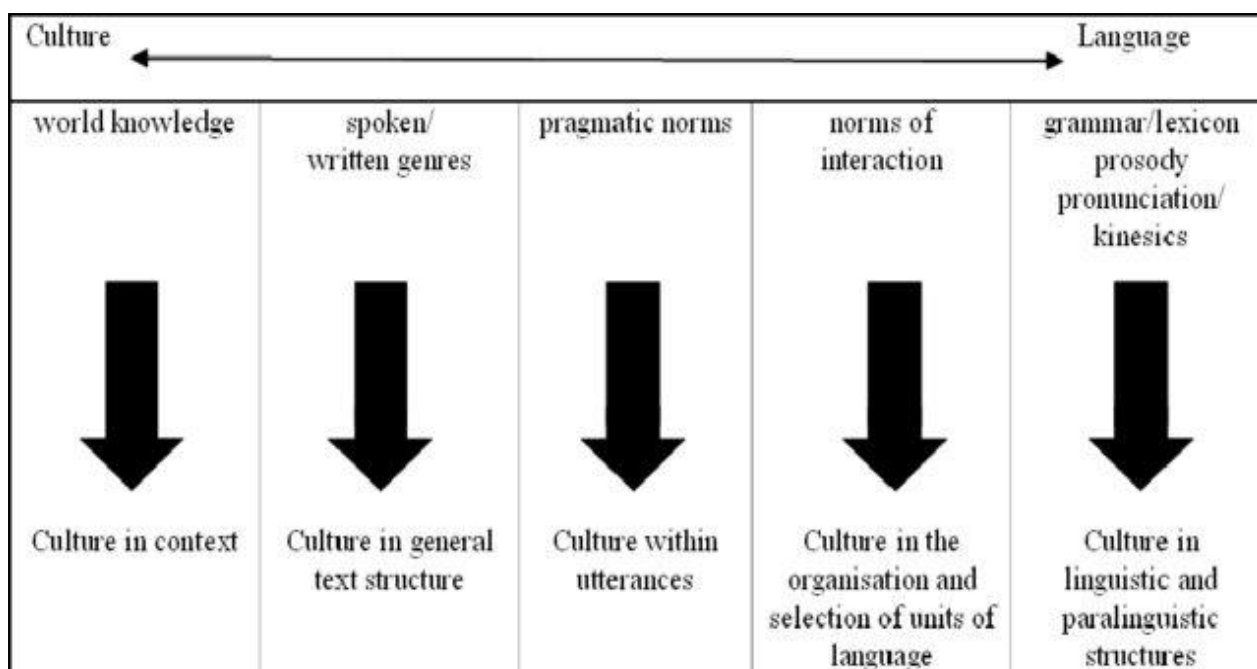
Furthermore, Whorf et al. (1956) asserted that: “the universe is presented in a kaleidoscopic flood of sensations that must be ordered by our minds, primarily through the linguistic system in our minds” (p. 213). This means that variations in perceptions, thought, and culture are caused by differences in language, which implies that differences in language are the cause of differences in perceptions, mind, and culture.

Linguistic relativity, which asserts that language has an impact on one's thoughts and perceptions. As a result, speakers of different languages see and perceive the world differently, and each language has its unique worldview. Sapir (1921) believed that people's perceptions of the world are mostly impacted by their language. Due to cultural variations, the distinctions contained in one language are not found in any other language:

Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection. The fact of the matter is that ‘real world’ is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. (p.20)

Figure 5

Points of articulation between culture and language



Note. From *Report on intercultural language learning*, (p.9), by A. J. Liddicoat et al., 2003,

Figure 5 shows how language and culture interact in different ways, and how language- related culture contains more than just a few facts; culture is much broader and encompasses many other factors. Then, when it comes to practice, fostering their natural connection by emphasizing both language and culture education is essential. It is, in other words, a cornerstone around which the study of foreign languages is built.

Culture Integration in Foreign Language Teaching

Cultural competence is eminently a necessary aspect of foreign language learning, and it is commonly agreed that culture should be taught in language courses. Many academics feel that in foreign language teaching and learning, acquaintance with the target country's customs, conventions, and meaning system is critical.

Knowing grammar and vocabulary isn't enough for language learners. Learners must also understand how language is used to generate and represent meaning, as well as how to communicate with others and engage in other people's conversation. This necessitates a

growing understanding of the nature of language and its impact on the world (Svalberg, 2007). Language's importance in learning cannot be overstated.

As further explained by Kramersch (1998) the development of learners' ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in varied settings is a key goal of language teaching. Thus, teaching culture is certainly required. Byram (1989) argues that cultural components should be included in language curriculum since language reflects the speakers' values and perceptions of the world. As a result, learning a language while ignoring its culture is a near-impossible task. Speaking a language, in other words, requires expressing its culture.

Teachers' primary resource for facilitating learning is language. Teachers and students are concurrently engaging with language as an object of study and as a medium for learning when studying languages. When it comes to teaching languages, the target language is more than just a new code - new labels for the same things; when properly taught, the new language and culture provide opportunities to learn new concepts and ways of thinking about the world.

Politzer (1959, as cited in Valdes, 1986) agrees that:

As language teachers we must be interested in the teaching of culture not because we necessarily want to teach the culture of the others country, but because we have to teach. If we teach language without language teaching at the same time the culture in which it operates, we are teaching meaningless symbols or symbols to which the students attaches the wrong meaning; for what he is warned, unless he receives cultural instruction he will operate American concepts or objects with the foreign symbols. (p. 123)

There are at least two basic perspectives on the relationship between culture and language teaching: static and dynamic perspectives. According to Liddicoat (2002), this static

view of culture ignores the relationship between language and culture. It merely conveys cultural information to students while ignoring the dynamic aspect of culture. Cultural knowledge is viewed as either facts or artifacts in this perspective. Students are supposed to learn about a country or people, their lifestyles, their history, institutions, and customs, as well as the cultural icons that these people have generated.

As a result of this approach, the cultural component becomes self-contained and is frequently separated from the language. Furthermore, Liddicoat (2002) argued that by teaching and presenting the cultural component in the students' first language rather than the target language, the cultural component can be further removed from language. Although cultural facts may have a place in a language curriculum, it is more vital to study culture as a process in which the learner will eventually participate rather than as a series of facts that he or she would be expected to retain.

The dynamic perspective of culture requires learners to actively participate in culture learning rather than passively learning about the target culture's cultural knowledge. Culture, according to Liddicoat (2002), is defined as a set of varied practices that individuals engage in to live their lives and that are constantly generated and re-formed by participants in interaction. These cultural practices provide a context within which people form and interpret their social reality, as well as communicate with others.

To learn about culture, one must engage with the culture's language and non-linguistic activities and obtain insights into how people live in a given cultural environment. Cultural knowledge is so much more than just knowing facts about a culture; it also includes knowing how to interact with it. Cultural knowledge is thus not restricted to a specific task or activity, but rather to a broader understanding of how language is used and how things are said and done in a cultural context.

Communication and Culture

Hall (1959) argues that culture is a kind of communication. According to Samovar et al (1981) one of the fundamental roles of culture is to set rules for interpersonal communication:

Culture and communication are inseparable because culture not only dictates who talks with whom, about what, and how the communication proceeds, it also helps to determine how people encode messages, the meanings they have for messages, and the conditions and circumstances under which various messages may or may not be sent, noticed, or interpreted. In fact, our entire repertory of communicative behaviors is dependent largely on the culture in which we have been raised. Culture, consequently, is the foundation of communication. And, when cultures vary, communication practices also vary. (p. 24)

In other words, there can be no cultural norms or prescriptions without some form of communication. This shows that signals concerning social units, individuals, conduct, relationships, and other issues (symbolic communication) are influenced by culture far more than ones about less culturally relevant topics (such as messages with data). Communication is one of the most important aspects of a managerial position.

Hall (1959) claimed that language is utilized to express individual identities, interpersonal relationships, and social group and community participation. She goes on to say that people who speak the same language tend to have similar linguistic conventions, and that any transgression of these rules would result in a breakdown in communication. Researchers believed that culture affects all sorts of communication. It has an impact on what you say and how you communicate with friends and family in everyday situations. Yet, there are cultural differences in communication, from how to use eye contact to how to build or break a

relationship. As a result, various cultural differences may obstruct understanding and foster negative attitudes among native and non-native speakers.

To prevent becoming a *fluent fool*, we must better understand the cultural dimension of language, wrote Bennett (1997). Language is a tool for communication, but it is also a “system of representation” for perception and thinking. A *fluent fool*, according to Bennett (1997), is someone who can speak a foreign language fluently but does not comprehend its social and cultural content. According to him, such people are prone to getting themselves into a lot of problems since both they and others underestimate their abilities.

Another type is non-verbal communication in which the communication is achieved without the use of words. Devito (2006) explained that hand gestures, a smile or frown, eye contact, utilization of space, wearing jewelry, touching someone, raising the vocal volume, or even saying nothing are all examples of nonverbal communication. In fact, according to some academics, we communicate more information nonverbally than we do orally. Nonverbal communication, according to Brown (1987), includes proxemics (i.e. space and distance between people) and kinesics (i.e. facial expression, posture gestures) as well as paralanguage. The way these nonverbal forms of communication are interpreted differs by culture.

Technology and Culture

Cultural technologies did not come out of nowhere in late modern society. Language is, undoubtedly, our first cultural technology, and one that each human possesses. According to Shilling (2005) technology and online communication, also known as computer mediated communication (CMC), have an impact on how people develop and reconstruct their identities and social/cultural structures in order to adapt to others these days.

A technological object is a representation of people’s views at things and the environment. It has the ability to change culture in unexpected and strong ways that are

generally favorable and is widely believed that technology is culture as it allows it to exist. The integration of this new approach of technology and culture into teachers' pedagogy, would in ways complement and enhance their teaching.

This approach to the interaction between technology and culture is shown by Mumford's classic study of how a monk in a monastery invented the clock in the 12th century, drastically changing western concepts of time and space. According to McLuhan, humans shape tools, which subsequently modify humans and their civilizations in unexpected ways.

Combi (1992) argued that the advent of new technologies has resulted in changes that have necessitated readjustment, or new articulations, of relationships between diverse domains of knowledge and daily lives of both individuals and communities. As evidenced by the transformations imposed by inventions such as the wheel, the steam engine, and the transition from an oral to a written society, technological revolutions have also turned out to be cultural revolutions.

Through norms and ideals, communication helps groups and people to represent themselves and engage with the world. For years, the media has been predicting a future of cultural homogenization, a leveling-out, or even the eradication of cultural differences. Anthropologists have been doing field research and ethnography all across the world for decades, and this has been validated by contemporary trends. Culture is a tool for developing social cooperation and political unity. This is represented by a comment from Jean Monnet, the principal architect of the European Community (EC), who lamented, "If we were starting the European Community all over again, we should begin with culture"

The Relationship between Culture and ICC

Patel et al. (2011) have written: "People from different cultures and societies construct and perceive reality differently because of differences in their upbringing, education, and

political and social contexts” (p. 26). This means that intercultural communication issues are very likely to arise as a result of these disparities, accordingly, individuals should try to better understand, tolerate, and respect one another's cultures and differences. It is critical to recognize and accept cultural differences in order to communicate effectively with people from other cultures.

Another perspective on culture by Greetz (1973) was that: “culture is located in the daily lived experiences of individuals as they participate in processes of creating, communicating and making sense of their social system” (p. 21). As stated by Bhabha (1994) culture is considered as dynamic, complex, and dialogic; constantly being created and challenged via the acts of individuals in their daily lives. Because it allows learners to negotiate meaning and travel between cultures, this concept of culture appears to be most strongly related with ICC (Köhler & Gölz, 2015). Effective intercultural communication requires negotiating meaning, understanding, and respecting the other.

Thompson (1996) argued that:

When we interact with other people... we bring with us a whole range of values, beliefs and assumptions. ...the way I relate to people will owe much to my gender, my ethnic group, my class background and so on. These factors, in turn, will interact significantly with the equivalent factors for the persons concerned. (p. 69)

It is all about connecting and communicating with other English speakers around the world who have their own languages and cultures, recognizing, appreciating, and respecting the differences that are essential. This is consistent with Kelly's (2009) work, who stated that:

Language learning then appears as a way of improving mutual understanding. We may not fully understand one another and perhaps we do not always want to. However, with good will we can understand and work better with each other.

Intercultural communication has the potential to promote a greater respect for different ways of being. (p. 17)

Conclusion

Understanding the connection of language and culture, and the mechanics of cross-cultural communication, leads to an educational approach that incorporates the three components of language, culture, and learning, referred to as “Intercultural Pedagogy”. This chapter has been devoted to delving into the notion of culture, describing how it is conceived by scholars from different perspectives and angles. It discussed how it is linked to language. This inextricable link between language and culture is critical in foreign language teaching and learning. As a result, several academics have advocated that features of the target culture should be included in the teaching of a new language.

CHAPTER THREE

CHAPTER THREE: INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

We live in a world that is culturally diverse. The globe today is referred to as a global village that is constantly developing. Thus, people will come into contact with others of different cultural backgrounds on a daily basis. As a result, understanding and improving intercultural communication (IC) has recently been a priority. With the growing importance of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), scholars are more interested in studying the concept and its different perspectives.

Strong cultural awareness, as well as the capacity to reflect it in language communication, comprehension, and production, are widely agreed to be necessary for obtaining professional levels of language performance. The development of foreign language (FL) linguistic competence and the promotion of intercultural competence are often mentioned as objectives of telecollaborative language study.

This chapter explores the concept of ICC and its literature in an attempt to clarify it. It starts by presenting a collection of conceptualizations from different academic perspectives and differentiating it from other related or close terms. This would lay the ground for the discussion of ICC in the whole dissertation. Additionally, a review of the history of the concept also provided some of the most known models to ICC and its application in foreign language teaching. Moreover, this section shows the common barriers to achieving successful intercultural communication interactions.

The History of ICC

The origins of ICC can be traced back to the work of Hymes who coined the notion of “Communicative Competence (CC)” in 1972. He argued that acquiring Chomsky’s “linguistic competence” (i.e., knowing the grammar rules of the language) is insufficient if successful communication is desired. In addition to linguistic competency, which he defined as what is “formally possible”, Hymes (1972) maintained that learners should learn to generate

utterances that are acceptable for the context in which they are employed, practical, and probable or really used.

CC was explained by Hymes (1972) as knowing both the rules of grammar and the rules of language use that are appropriate for a specific situation. Hymes's development of the concept of CC was perceived as a counter to Chomsky's (1965) linguistic competence concept. CC emphasized the value of sociocultural knowledge, such as understanding when and how to talk, and with whom. Researchers such as Canale and Swain have expanded on Hymes' conceptualization of CC (1980).

Communication competence was defined by Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) as a synthesis of an underlying system of knowledge and skill required for communication. Understanding refers to an individual's (conscious or unconscious) knowledge of language and other aspects of language use in their idea of communicative competence.

They proposed a model of three components of CC: grammatical (i.e., knowledge of underlying grammatical principles), sociolinguistic (i.e., knowledge of how to use language in a social context to fulfill communicative functions), and strategic (i.e., knowledge of how to integrate utterances and communicative functions in terms of discourse principles). Furthermore, their definition of talent refers to an individual's ability to use information in actual communication. Canale (1983) asserted that competence necessitates a further separation between underlying ability and its presentation in real communication, i.e. performance.

However, because CC materials and models presuppose native speaker-like English competency, this is a dilemma, especially in today's global society, when English communication involves both native and non-native speakers. Despite the fact that the communicative approach is meant to assist learners in developing sociolinguistic ability,

teaching culture does not mirror actual life and is instead information-oriented (Byram et al, 1991). Moreover, despite the importance of using “Authentic Materials” in class to introduce students to the language's social role, the focus was on students' fluency and correctness, with little care for language use in relation to foreign culture and society (Byram et al, 1991).

Similarly, Byram et al. (2013) suggested that the focus on sociolinguistic appropriateness and civility is insufficient due to globalization, new technology, and mass economic and refugee mobility. As a result, the introduction of ICC may be seen as a threat to the “prevailing native speaker norm that was presumed in CC” (Kohler, 2015, p. 27). Today, English is used to negotiate meaning between persons of various linguistic and cultural backgrounds during conversation.

Byram (1997) argued that the integration of cultural factors in language teaching studies has been one of the most significant changes in recent decades. Researchers explained that traditional teaching, which has traditionally centered on the development of linguistic skills, has been modified to a large extent as a result of this. English has now established itself as the global language, dominating all aspects of global communication, including education, business, and technology. Because of its enormous number of non-native speakers, English has become the world's lingua franca, and it is utilized in a variety of cultural situations. As a result, developing ICC is essential for effective communication and relationships with individuals of other languages and cultures (Baker, 2012).

Byram et al. (2013) coined the phrase “the cultural turn” to describe how ELT has evolved since the 1970s' rise of communicative competence. The authors stated that the teaching of language, which emphasizes on native speaker norms of sociolinguistic appropriateness and politeness, is inappropriate for today's communication goals due to globalization processes and new technology. They considered that ICC had refined the

concept of competence in communicating with speakers of several languages and speakers of a lingua franca, such as English.)

Communication competence emphasizes that in order to be proficient in English; one must emulate the native speaker's communicative competence as closely as possible (Ciprianová & Vanco 2010). This is in line with Holliday (2009), who stated that English was taught with a concentration on British or American pronunciation, and that the language's culture was likewise linked to these two countries. CC concentrated on knowing specific cultures and countries, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, as well as the sociocultural norms that govern them (Baker, 2012).

According to Ciprianová and Vanco (2010) this “appropriateness” or “correctness” of language use positioned the native speaker as the norm in ELT, marginalizing non-native English speaking groups' sociolinguistic and pragmatic conversions. May (2011) further claimed that when the concept of a native speaker is viewed as the “typical”, learners with bi/multilingual repertoires are more likely to be overlooked or viewed “in explicitly deficient terms” (p. 233). As a result, the ICC criticizes the notion of utilizing native speaker English as a model, claiming that, given the intricacies of English today, choosing dominant models such as the United States and the United Kingdom is inappropriate (Alptekin, 2002; Baker, 2012; Holliday, 2005; Nault, 2006)

According to Alptekin (2002), people who speak English as a second language outweigh native speakers. He observed that much of today's communication involves interactions not only between non-native and native speakers but also non-native speakers and non-native speakers. As a result, Alptekin (2002) raised the following question:

How relevant, then, are the conventions of British politeness or American informality to the Japanese and Turks, say, when doing business in English? How relevant is the importance of Anglo-American eye contact, or the socially acceptable distance for

conversation as properties of meaningful communication to Finnish and Italian academicians exchanging ideas in a professional meeting?. (p. 61)

In this regard, Alptekin (2002) believed that the monopoly of English native monolingual communities is one of the difficulties CC is facing in addressing today's English learning and communication needs. A learner of English cannot be expected to be familiar with all of the different cultural contexts of communication they may encounter. Thus, English should be taught as an international language as a new pedagogical model, in which teaching materials should not be limited to the cultures of English speakers alone, but should also include students' local cultures and other cultures from around the world to enable students to communicate effectively and to critically analyze the similarities and differences between cultures. Hence, learners become successful bilinguals who are able to function in different environments.

Intercultural Communicative Competence

Despite the fact that ICC is used in many EFL classes all around the world, there is still no agreed-upon definition of ICC and its key elements. Mirzaei and Forouzandeh (2013) asserted that: "ICC definition, dimensions, and assessment have remained disputable and thorny" (p. 303); despite its recognition of having a great importance in the communication and interaction between individuals or groups of different areas and cultural backgrounds.

However, there are certain features, sets of rules and qualities of intercultural communication that are reflected in many of researchers' definitions. The most common ones are the description of ICC as a dynamic and continuous phenomenon that is constantly evolving and changing rather than being fixed or static; i.e. such development is about the gradual transition from being a monocultural to an intercultural individual. Defending this claim, Paige et al. (2003) argued that cultural learning is: "dynamic, developmental, and

ongoing process which engages the learner cognitively, behaviorally, and affectively” (p. 177).

Another component as Kramersch (1993) describes is the necessity of knowing one’s cultural values and views and not only the target culture; i.e. the awareness of one's own culture and being able to compare and contrast them. Fantini (2009) suggested that intercultural competence is formed of native competence or as he called CC1 along with the target’s intercultural communication as he referred to as CC2. In other words, he claims that IC recognizes CC1 presence, CC2 evolution and the understanding of comparing and contrasting the two. Hammer (2008) argues that IC is about the ability to switch cultural structures from their own to a foreign one. These perspectives show that in order to have a deep understanding of others, one must be self-aware and capable of analyzing one's own cultural background.

Finally, the last connection is about the multidimensional character of culture and IC. Intercultural development was considered by Bennett (1993) and Hammer (2008) as dynamic with numerous points representing the knowledge and abilities of learners. Paige et al (2003) contributes that culture learning is the collection of different components in a process of obtaining general and specific cultural knowledge, abilities and attitudes. This last component is also mentioned in Byram’s (1997) model of ICC.

The following section attempts to define this notion by defining it, separating it from other similar concepts, and offering an overview of some well-known models.

Definition of ICC

After being introduced to language instruction in the 1980s, intercultural competence has been actively debated for many years. ICC is multidisciplinary and not confined to language instruction. Before starting to define the concept, a list of different terms used instead of ICC is presented by Fantini and Tirmizi (2006) in the table 5 below. Even though,

many alternatives exist, researchers tend to use either intercultural communication or cross cultural communication.

Table 5

Alternative terms for Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)

Transcultural communication	Global competence	Intercultural interaction
Cross-cultural communication	Cross-cultural adaptation	Intercultural sensitivity
Cross-cultural communication	International competence	Effective inter-group communications
Cross-cultural awareness	International communication	Cultural sensitivity
Global competitive intelligence	Communicative competence	Intercultural cooperation
Cultural competence	Biculturalism	Multiculturalism
Ethnorelativity	Metaphoric competence	
Plurilingualism		

Note. From Fantini, A., & Tirmizi, A. (2006). Exploring and Assessing Intercultural Competence. *World Learning Publications*.

http://digitalcollections.sit.edu/worldlearning_publications/1

Although most ICC definitions talk about communication competence as the ability to successfully interact with others, Chen and Starosta (1996) argued that definitions given by the different scholars in the field of foreign language education are often not precise and ambiguous. Chen and Starosta (1996) defined it as: “the ability to negotiate cultural meanings and to execute appropriately effective communication behaviors that recognize the interactants’ multiple identities in a specific environment” (pp. 358–359).

Mirzaei & Forouzandeh (2013) viewed ICC as generally the ability to effectively communicate with other individuals from other cultures. Byram (1997) defines ICC as: “the ability to communicate and interact across cultural boundaries” (p.7). A more extended definition was presented by Byram et al (2002) as: “the ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities, and the ability to interact with people as complex human beings with multiple identities and their own individuality” (p. 10).

Byram and Fleming (1998) agreed that: “intercultural communicative competence is concerned with understanding differences in interactional norms between social groups, so as to reconcile or mediate between different modes present in any specific interaction” (p. 12).

Meyer (as cited in Buttjes & Byram, 1991) asserted that ICC is:

The ability of a person to behave adequately and in a flexible manner when confronted with actions, attitudes, and expectations of representatives of foreign cultures. Adequacy and adaptability imply an awareness of the cultural differences between one’s own and the foreign culture and the ability to handle cross-cultural problems. (p.137)

Wiseman (as cited in Gudykunst & Mody 2002) inspired by Byram’s definition said that ICC is the ability to communicate effectively with others through knowledge, skills and motivation. Another similar definition to this latter is provided by Bennett et al. (2003): “the general ability to transcend ethnocentrism, appreciate other cultures, and generate appropriate behaviour in one or more different cultures” (p. 237); i.e. the appreciation of others’ culture is needed in the process of interaction.

Intercultural communication, in its broadest definition, entails the use of various language codes to establish communication between people who do not share the same set of values. As a result, intercultural competence is a word that refers to a learner's ability to acquire intercultural abilities in order to communicate across cultures. Another general

definition by Sinicrope et al. (2007): “the ability to step beyond one’s own culture and function with other individuals from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds” (p. 1), this is vague and focuses only on limited abilities, rather than stating the important components to Intercultural competence.

However, a more in- depth definition was brought by Chen and Starosta (1996) in which they presented a new understanding. The interaction between different people from different cultural backgrounds requires the knowledge of their own cultural values and views. Hence, intercultural sensitivity is required to ensure understanding. Chen and Starosta (1996) introduced three interrelated notions to ICC: *intercultural sensitivity*, *intercultural awareness* and *intercultural adroitness*. Defining them as follow:

Intercultural sensitivity is the development of a readiness to understand and appreciate cultural differences in intercultural communication; intercultural awareness refers to the understanding of cultural conventions that affect how we think and behave; and intercultural adroitness refers to the skills needed for us to act effectively in intercultural relations. (p. 28)

Table 6

Summary of ICC Definitions by Scholars

Scholar	Definition of Intercultural Competence
<i>Belz</i> (2003)	“An awareness and/or understanding of foreign attitudes, beliefs, values, and (linguistic) practices” (p.68).
<i>Byram</i> (1997)	“the ability to interact in their own language with people from another country and culture, drawing upon their knowledge about intercultural communication, their attitudes of interest in otherness and their skills in interpreting, relating and discovering, i.e. of overcoming cultural difference and enjoying intercultural contact”

Scholar	Definition of Intercultural Competence
	(p.70) And the ability “to interact with people from another country and culture in a foreign language” (p.71).
<i>Camilleri</i> (2002)	“Intercultural competence requires the development of cognitive, affective, and behavioral traits, specifically it requires a) “developing cognitive complexity in responding to new environments”, b) “motivating affective co-orientation towards fresh encounters,” and c) “directing behavior to perform various interactions with additional social groups” (p.23)
<i>Chen and Starosta</i> (1996)	“The behavioral aspect of intercultural communication. It refers to the ability to behave effectively and appropriately in intercultural interactions” (p.407). Intercultural awareness “is the cognitive aspect of intercultural communication. It refers to the understanding of cultural conventions that affect how people think and behave” (p.408).
<i>Fantini</i> (2009)	“Complex abilities that are required to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself” (p.458).

Models of Intercultural Communicative Competence

Leung et al. (2005) defined culture as: “a complex multi-level construct that consists of various levels nested within each other” (p. 362), in general, culture is debated at several levels of society. Thus, numerous models have been created to demonstrate that culture is a multi-level construct. The Council of Europe established in The European Language Portfolio (2001) a set of abilities that constitute ICC:

Intercultural skills and knowledge include the ability to bring the culture of origin and the foreign culture in relation with each other; cultural sensitivity and the ability to identify and use a variety of strategies for contact with those from other cultures; the capacity to fulfill the role of cultural intermediary between one's own culture and the foreign culture and to deal effectively with intercultural misunderstanding and conflict situations; the ability to overcome stereotyped relationships. (pp. 104- 105)

Models are discussed in the present study to bring an in-depth understanding of what is ICC and its aspects. The models dealt with like Kramersch (1993), Bennett (1993), Byram (1997), Deardroff (2006), and Holmes and O'Neill (2012) differ in regards to their different approaching perspectives.

Byram's Model (1997)

Byram's (1997) model is one of the most frequently cited and used works among researchers in the different fields. It was designed specifically from a foreign language context. In this context, individuals have to learn certain competences to be an effective communicator: knowledge, skills and attitudes which are linked to five savors and are the basis of ICC to be understood as a complex. This point is further explained by Byram (1997) as follow:

Its role cannot be reduced to providing the contents of, and information or subject matters for, language learning processes or knowledge about the foreign language and culture, but has to be understood in a more comprehensive way: as a complex, but flexible structure (or network) of culturally specific knowledge, skills and attitudes which enables learners of a foreign language to begin (and continue) to communicate with native or other non-native speakers of that language, mediate and negotiate. (p.46)

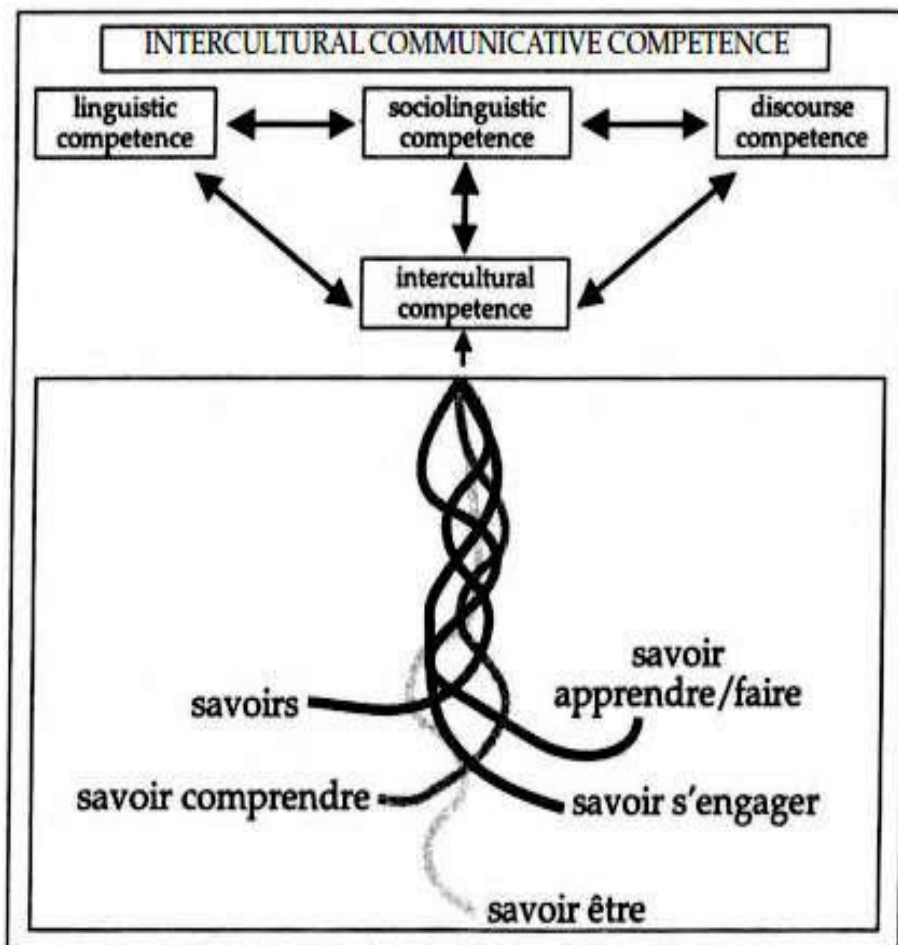
Byram's (1997) model is created of linguistic, sociolinguistics, discourse and intercultural competences in a foreign language (Figure). The focus of good communication is not on transferring information efficiently, but rather on developing and maintaining connections while communicating. As a result, in order to become effective intercultural speakers:

a learner with the ability to see and manage the relationships between themselves and their own cultural beliefs, behaviours and meanings, as expressed in a foreign language, and those of their interlocutors, expressed in the same language – or even a combination of languages – which may be the interlocutors' native language or not.

(p. 12)

Figure 6

Byram's Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence



Note. From *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence* (p. 73), by Byram, M, 1997, Clevedon, Multilingual Matters.

Byram (1997) definitions of the first three competences were based on Van Ek's model of "communicative ability" (1986) that consists of Linguistic, Sociolinguistic, Discourse, Strategic, Social, and Socio-cultural competences; however, they were formulated and adapted to fit his model by replacing native-speaker with intercultural speaker. The table below contains Byram's (1997) definitions:

Table 7

Byram's Definitions of Linguistic Competence, Sociolinguistic Competence, and Discourse Competence.

The Competence	Definition
Linguistic competence	“the ability to apply knowledge of the rules of a standard version of the language to produce and interpret spoken and written language”
Sociolinguistic competence	“the ability to give to the language produced by an interlocutor – whether native speaker or not – meanings which are taken for granted by the interlocutor or which are negotiated and made explicit by the interlocutor”
Discourse competence	“the ability to use, discover and negotiate strategies for the production and interpretation of monologue or dialogue texts which follow the conventions of the culture of an interlocutor or are negotiated as intercultural texts for particular purposes”

Note. From *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence* (p. 47), by Byram, M, 1997, Clevedon, Multilingual Matters

Thus, intercultural competence being one of the components of ICC; linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse competence in a foreign language are all required for intercultural communication. IC consists of a number of interconnected components referred to as *savoirs*.

1- Attitudes and values (savoir être):

Intercultural competence is built upon this foundation, “Attitudes of curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures, and belief about one’s own” (Byram, 1997, p.57). They reflect a cognitive ability to decentre, build, and sustain intercultural contacts, as well as an emotive capacity to transcend ethnocentric attitudes/perceptions of people and their cultures. This component is about relativizing one’s values, beliefs and actions, as well as others by acknowledging the cultural differences, accept them, and maintain a good attitude toward them.

2- Knowledge (savoirs):

Savoirs with plural ‘s’ consist of the knowledge about both the native and target cultures. Defined by Byram (1997) as: “knowledge about social groups and their cultures in one’s own country, and similar knowledge of the interlocutor’s country on the one hand, and similar knowledge of the processes and interaction at individual and societal levels, on the other hand” (p.35). Societal levels refer to the knowledge about how social identities are formed, how they affect individuals’ worldviews and how they interact in specific situations.

Besides learning cultural knowledge regarding the target culture, an intercultural competent individual must also acquire cultural-general knowledge that will enable him or her to interact with a wide range of foreign cultures. Knowledge is about subjective culture rather than objective culture which provides insights to different groups’ functioning, processes and practices. In other words it is about the knowledge of one’s self and others through the interaction. He believes that knowledge is not sufficient and must be enhanced through a set of skills.

3- Skills:

3-1- Skills of interpreting and relating (savoir comprendre): “ability to interpret a document or an event from another culture, to explain it and relate

it to documents from one's own" (Byram, 1997, p. 52); or the skill to interpret and relate to events from other cultures to one's own culture; involves the capacity to recognize ethnocentric attitudes and areas of misunderstanding, as well as the ability to explain them using cultural differences.

- 3-2- Skills of discovery and interaction (savoir apprendre/ faire):** in Byram's words (1997): "the ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes, and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction" (p. 61). In other words, the skill to discover new things about a culture and its customs as well as the ability to interact using the acquired knowledge and attitudes. He goes on to say that the interaction element encompasses a variety of communication methods, such as verbal and nonverbal modes, as well as the development of linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse abilities.
- 3-3- Critical cultural awareness (savoir s'engager):** Byram (1997) explained that: "ability to evaluate, critically, and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices, and products in one's own and other cultures and countries" (p.63); which he considers to be his model's centre. It is about cultural awareness of the native culture and the target culture and their impact. Including the ability to analyze behaviors, products, and practices critically. It helps individuals to spot explicit and implicit norms in documents and events from many cultures and assess them.

Overall, intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is a complex set of knowledge, abilities, and attitudes linked by critical cultural awareness of the learners' native and target cultures. Byram's (1997) five "savoirs" should be viewed as linked and entangled

with the many aspects of communication competence, rather than as separate components. A summary of the components are in the following figure:

Figure 7

Byram's (2008) Factors in Intercultural Communication

	Skills interpret and relate <i>(savoir comprendre)</i>	
Knowledge of self and other; of interaction: individual and societal <i>(savoirs)</i>	Education political education critical cultural awareness <i>(savoir s'engager)</i>	Attitudes relativising self valuing other <i>(savoir être)</i>
	Skills discover and/ or interact <i>(savoir apprendre/faire)</i>	

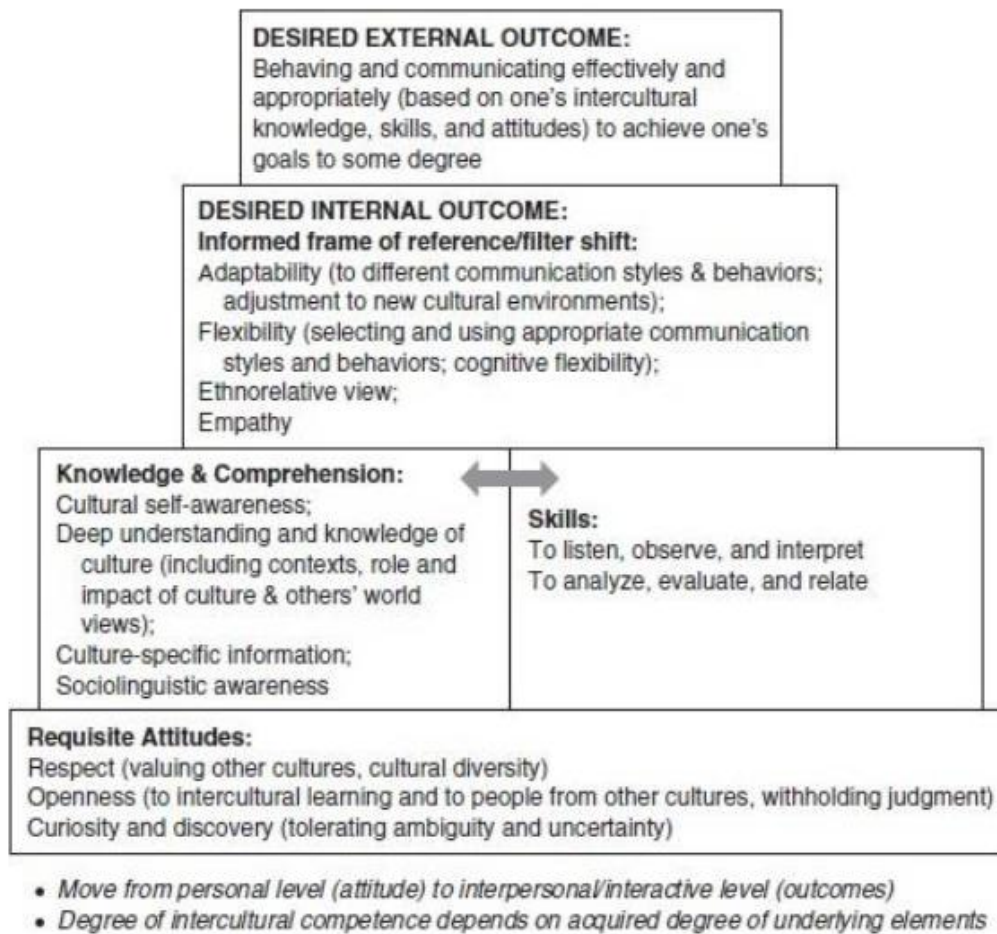
Note. From *foreign language education to education for intercultural citizenship* (p. 230), by M. Byram, 2008, Multilingual Matters Limited.

Deardorff's Model (2006)

Deardorff (2006) used the same components of ICC, yet provided different definitions and dimensions to them. He defined ICC as: “the ability to develop targeted knowledge, skills and attitudes that lead to visible behaviour and communication that are both effective and appropriate in intercultural interactions” (p. 241). He demonstrated the process of developing IC, starting from the individuals’ attitudes to the outcomes of interaction. In Deardorff’s model, the degree of IC is determined by the “degree of attitudes, knowledge/comprehension, and abilities” (p.480).

Figure 8

Deardorff's (2006) Pyramid Model of Intercultural Competence



Note. From “Identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization” by D. K. Deardorff, 2006, *Journal of Studies in International Education* 10(3), pp. 241–266.

As shown in the figure above, according to Deardorff (2006) ICC is constituted of:

1- Knowledge: consists of:

- **Cultural self- awareness:** the articulation of one's personal culture is depicted through his identity.

- **Culture specific knowledge:** gaining insights and information about others' cultures by analyzing and explaining them: values, practices, communication styles, values, and beliefs)
- **Sociolinguistic awareness:** learning fundamental language abilities, expressing the differences in verbal and nonverbal communication, and adapting one's speech for the accommodation.
- **Grasp of global issues and trends:** an in-depth understanding and explanation of globalization and global issues.

2- Skills: composed of:

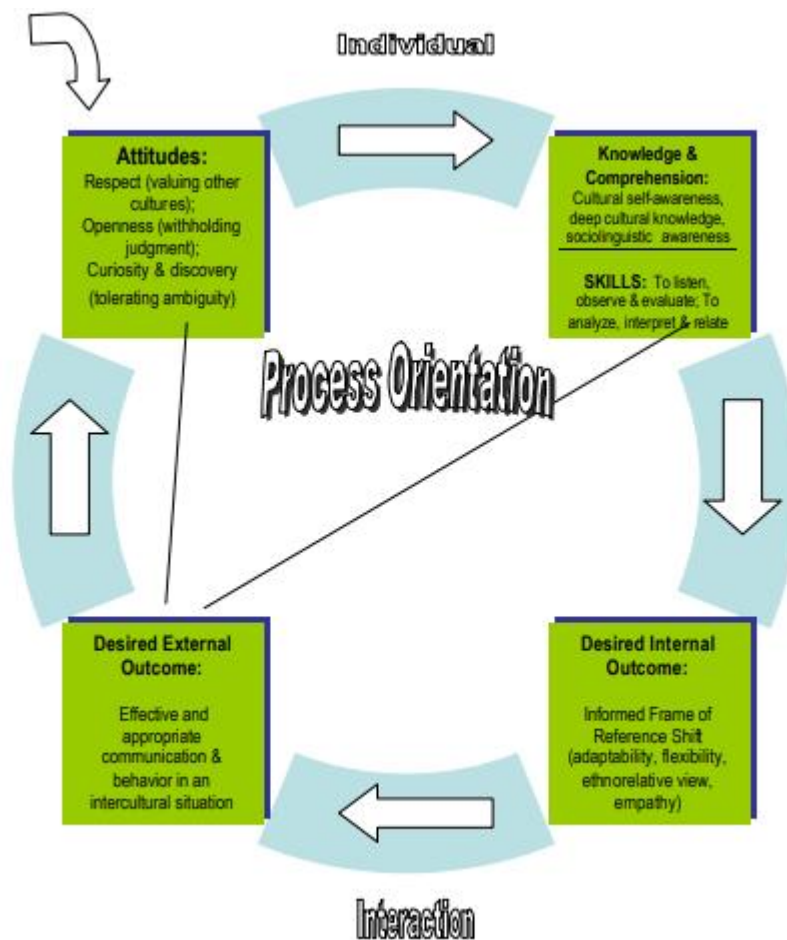
- **Listening, observing, and evaluating:** it refers to being patient and looking for cultural signs and meaning to reduce cultural ethnocentrism.
- **Analyzing, interpreting, and relating:** identifying relationships through the use of comparative tools.
- **Critical thinking:** looking at the world from different/ others' cultural point of view.

3- Attitudes: which according to Deardorff (2004): "serve as the basis for this model and affect all other aspects of intercultural competence" (p.479).

- **Respect:** appreciating other cultures' features and aspects without being judgmental and prejudicial.
- **Openness:** withholding criticism of others' cultures by being invested in the differences and accepting being incorrect about them.
- **Curiosity:** being aware of the differences and considering them an opportunity to learn, and being conscious of one's own ignorance.
- **Discovery:** embracing uncertainty and ambiguity rather as a pleasant experience, as well as being ready to step out of one's comfort zone.

Figure 9

Deardorff's (2006) Process Model of Intercultural Competence



Note. From “The Identification and Assessment of Intercultural Competence as a Student Outcome of Internationalization at Institutions of Higher Education in the United States” by D. K. Deardorff, 2006, *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 10, pp. 241-266

- 4- **Internal outcomes:** the knowledge, attitudes and skills stated above if acquired, would lead to internal outcomes like flexibility, empathy and adaptability. Hence, communication efficiency would be determined by the acquired knowledge and skills.
- 5- **External outcomes:** the knowledge, attitudes, skills, as well as internal outcomes would be reflected in external outcomes, referring to the individuals’ behaviors and communication. These qualities indicate intercultural communication effectiveness.

The skills referred to in the different definitions of IC are defined by Bennett (2008) as: “a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioural skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts” (p. 3). And that these cognitive skills consist of: “cultural self-awareness, culture-general knowledge, culture-specific knowledge, and interaction analysis. Affective skills comprise: curiosity, cognitive flexibility, motivation, and open-mindedness; while behavioural skills include: relationship building skills, behavioural skills (listening, problem solving), empathy, and information gathering skills” (p.3).

Bennett’s Model (1993)

The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, founded by Milton Bennett in 1986, is one of the most significant models of intercultural communication. The model, which is also known as the “Bennett Scale”, deals with the ways in which people acquire and develop IC, and thus to experience, interpret, and interact across cultural differences. According to Bennett (1986):

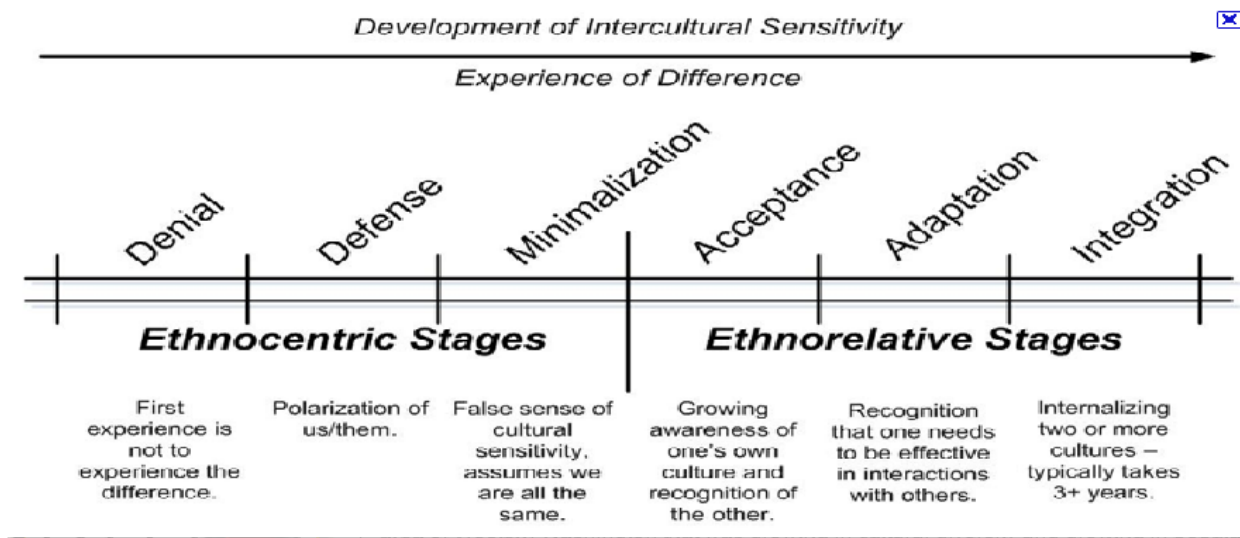
As one’s perceptual organization of cultural difference becomes more complex, one’s experience of culture becomes more sophisticated and the potential for exercising competence in intercultural relations increases. By recognizing how cultural difference is being experienced, predictions about the effectiveness of intercultural communication can be made and educational interventions can be tailored to facilitate development along the continuum. (p.9)

The continuum is depicted in this model through two different approaches: ethnocentrism and ethnorelativism, to the cultural differences through six stages of developmental intercultural sensitivity. In which Bennett (2004) explained the concepts as the follow:

As people became more interculturally competent it seemed that there was a major change in the quality of their experience, which I called the move from *ethnocentrism* to *ethnorelativism*. I used the term ‘ethnocentrism’ to refer to the experience of one’s own culture as ‘central to reality.’ By this I mean that the beliefs and behaviors that people receive in their primary socialization are unquestioned; they are experienced as ‘just the way things are.’ I coined the term ‘ethnorelativism’ to mean the opposite of ethnocentrism—the experience of one’s own beliefs and behaviors as just one organization of reality among many viable possibilities.... In general, the more ethnocentric orientations can be seen as ways of *avoiding cultural difference*, either by denying its existence, by raising defenses against it, or by minimizing its importance. The more ethnorelative worldviews are ways of *seeking cultural difference*, either by accepting its importance, by adapting perspective to take it into account, or by integrating the whole concept into a definition of identity. (pp. 9-10)

Figure 10

The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity.



Note. From “Toward Ethnorelativism: A Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity”, by J. M. Bennett, 1993, *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 10(2), 179-186.

1- Stages of Ethnocentrism

- Denial Stage

In the first stage which is referred to as *the denial of cultural differences* and considered the lowest point to openness. Individuals fail to believe the existence of cultural differences, consider them irrelevant and see one's own cultural experience as the only actual one to exist. Other cultures are either ignored entirely or understood in ambiguous ways. As a result, the other is either ignored or will be linked to homogenized categories like, “foreigner” or “immigrant”. They will stereotype, belittle, or dehumanize others by claiming that differences in cultural dispositions are the consequence of flaws in character, intelligence, physical ability, work ethic, or other intrinsic characteristics. This would create cultural isolation at the social or physical level.

- **Defense Stage**

In this stage, defense against cultural differences, people acknowledge the presence of cultural differences; yet, still challenge their reality and sense of self, which lead them to build defenses against those differences. Individuals perceive their own culture as the only true reality and the most “advanced” type of civilization. While the cultural differences seen by those with a Defense perspective are stereotyped, they appear real when compared to the Denial state. People in Defense are more publicly threatened by cultural differences than those in Denial are. The world is divided into “us” and “them”, with one's own culture superior and others inferior.

- **Minimization**

In the last stage of ethnocentrism, *the minimization of cultural differences*, individuals dismiss the importance of cultural differences, even though they acknowledge them, believing that similar principles drive values and actions and that communication is based on a common and universal set of laws and principles. It is more about the acceptance of trivial and insignificant differences; this is based on the notion that all humans are fundamentally similar. This stage is related with numerous melting pot theories, where absorption into the host culture may be prioritized.

2- Stages of Ethnorelativism

- **Acceptance**

In this stage of *Acceptance of cultural differences*, an individual shift from being ethnocentric to ethnorelative. This occurs when people acknowledge that culture shapes distinct views and values, and that various patterns of behavior occur across cultures that should be recognized and treasured without categorizing them into positive or negative. The acceptance stage may also be characterized by increased curiosity or interest in different

cultures, and people may begin to seek out cross-cultural connections and social encounters that they may have avoided previously.

- **Adaptation**

In this stage, *adaptation of cultural differences*, individuals are going to adapt to others' culture; they behave appropriately and authentically with their experience, thus, communicate effectively. It is people's ability to see the world "through different eyes", employing empathy and adjusting their frame of reference to match the target culture without assimilating. Bennett (1993) further explained:

Adaptation offers an alternative to assimilation. Adaptation involves the extension of your repertoire of beliefs and behavior, not a substitution of one set for another. So you don't need to lose your primary cultural identity to operate effectively in a different cultural context. (p.10)

- **Integration**

The integration of cultural differences, the highest level of ethnorelativism. At this stage, the perception of different cultural contexts is not only developed but people start establishing and defining their own identity and sense of self. Bennett (1993) clarified:

Integration of cultural difference is the state in which one's experience of self is expanded to include the movement in and out of different cultural worldviews.... people are able to experience themselves as multicultural beings who are constantly choosing the most appropriate cultural context for their behavior. (p.11)

Bennett (1993) claimed that each of the developmental stages above-mentioned has some concerns or milestones. The extensive research in this topic demonstrates that, while training is not the sole approach to build intercultural abilities, it is an effective technique.

Even though, '*intercultural sensitivity*' is the focal point in Bennett's model, it is an indicator that the more of it, the greater intercultural communication.

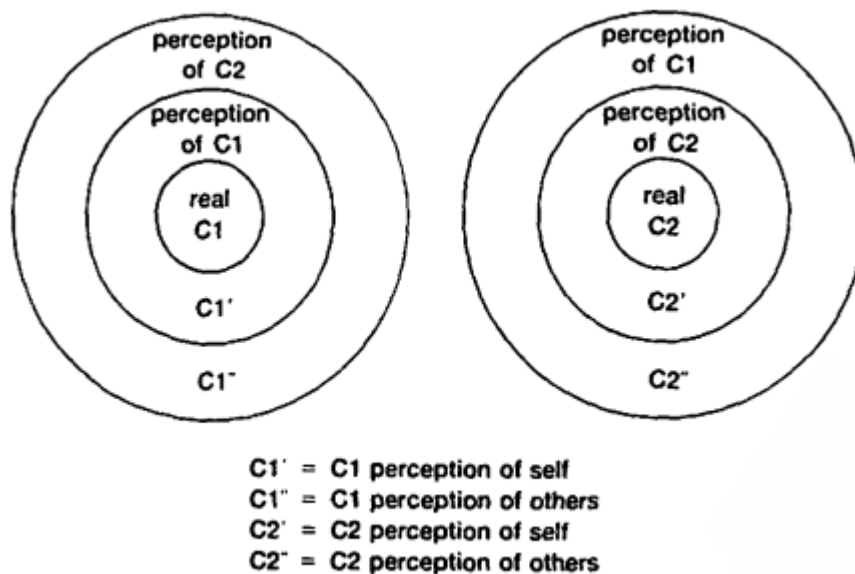
Kramersch Model (1993)

Intercultural competence, according to Kramersch (1993), entails the ability to place one's own culture in context with the target culture, a step that leads to a deeper knowledge of the target culture. She argued that in foreign language teaching, learning about the target culture is not enough; therefore, a process of reflections should be included in both cultures.

Rather than solely transferring factual knowledge from one culture to another, a reflection on both native and target cultures (C1 and C2) is entailed. As a result, an intercultural speaker, who understands the relationship between a language and its context, is capable of interacting across cultural boundaries, anticipating potential misunderstandings, and dealing with cognitive and social demands inherent in the relationship with the other. It is a struggle, since perceptions of reality are always filtered by cultural filters. The four reflections are depicted in the next figure 11:

Figure 11

Kramersch's (1993) Reflections of Culture



Note. From *Context and Culture in Language Teaching*, (p. 208), by C. Kramersch, 1993, Oxford: Oxford University Press

To deal with this shift in language teaching and culture and to create an intercultural sphere, Kramersch (1993) introduced four main steps; it marked the move from emphasizing on the transformation of cultural knowledge (Big C) to showcasing language and culture as social practice and constructs (emphasis on small “c” culture).

- 1- Establishing a ‘sphere of interculturality’:** Understanding a new culture necessitates reflection on both the target and the native culture, as the link between language forms and social structure is not given, but rather developed via interaction. As a result, venues for such thoughts must be promoted in intercultural education.
- 2- Teaching culture as an interpersonal process:** The social contact between learners and teachers should be emphasized as a means of building meaning and understanding one another because it appears that teaching fixed, normative criteria of language usage is futile. Kramersch (1993) explained that this would be achieved, teachers need

to: “replace the presentation/prescription of cultural facts and behaviors by the teaching of a process that applies itself to understanding foreignness or otherness” (p. 206).

- 3- **Teaching culture as difference:** Using national or regional traits to characterize a group of people's habits/behavior might lead to stereotypes that would ignore cultural aspects such as age, gender, ethnic origin, and socioeconomic status. Hence, multi-ethnicity and multi-culturality that exist within the culture as a whole should be taken into account.
- 4- **Crossing disciplinary boundaries:** Language instructors must widen their readings to include fields other than anthropology, sociology, and semiology, which are academically acknowledged for teaching culture.

Intercultural Communication and Language Teaching

Social interaction is more than just transferring information; it is an act that allows people to recognize one other's social identities and, as a result, to know what kind of language to use, how to use it, and what response to expect from the other. The concept of communicative competence in language training has placed a strong emphasis on the use of suitable language in communication.

The new meaning given to social interaction was accompanied by a significant shift in social interactions on a large scale. Globalization brought people closer together in never-before-seen ways, posing new difficulties and opening up new possibilities. The current problem is compounded by the fact that English, in a similar manner, has transcended its geographical limits and has come to dominate various types of interactions in this global globe (Fantini, 2009).

The demand for international language instruction has increased significantly in the age of globalization, since movement and immigration have expanded dramatically. As a

result, achieving language proficiency is no longer the goal of language teaching and learning (Moeller & Nugent, 2014). New goals have been defined in terms of the 5 C's: *Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities*; which aim to guide learners toward becoming active participants capable of engaging in culturally appropriate interaction based on mutual understanding and openness to the other (The Standards, 2006, as cited in Moeller & Nugent, 2014).

There has always been a desire in language education to develop learners who are similar to native speakers in terms of linguistic competence, understanding of suitable language, and knowledge of a nation and its culture. As a result, language educators must reexamine their goals in teaching English and rethink their roles in preparing students for more successful communication that necessitates a common manner of behaving and interacting.

As a result, it is clear that the central goal of an intercultural dimension in language teaching is to enable learners to become intercultural speakers capable of engaging with different identities without resorting to stereotypes in their perception of the other who is different from them and who needs to be discovered (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002).

Byram et al. (2002) argued that:

Developing intercultural competence in language teaching involves recognizing that the aims are: to prepare learners for interaction with people of other cultures; to enable them to understand and accept people from other cultures as individuals with other distinctive perspectives, values and behaviours; and to help them see that such interaction is an enriching experience. (p. 6)

Barriers to Intercultural Communication

People all over the world are born and raised according to a certain culture or subculture that instills norms, values, and standards for living into that society. Individuals

transmit and receive signals based on their culture's communication norms and in an intercultural exchange a positive and a negative attitude could occur. In other words, situations differ and would not always result in mutual understanding. Miscommunications could be avoided by raising learners' motivation and awareness.

Miscommunication can start a conflict or exacerbate an existing one. In reality, it is all too easy to slip into the traps set up by *intercultural communication barriers* (Jandt, 2007). They're difficult to detect, and the only way to prevent them is to learn to recognize them and avoid committing the mistakes that come with them. According to Jandt (2010) barriers are: “a rejection of the richness of knowledge of other cultures impedes communication and blocks the exchange of ideas and skill among people” (p.86). Among these barriers: anxiety, stereotyping, prejudice, racism, withdrawal, ethnocentrism, language differences, and nonverbal misinterpretations (Gibson, 2000; Ilie, 2019; Samovar et al. 2007).

Barna (as cited in Samovar et al, 1997) was the first to investigate and introduce intercultural communication barriers in the field of education. Bennett (2013) stated that her concept is one of the first and finest findings of what prevents people from engaging in more effective intercultural communication and forming intercultural relationships. Some of the barriers are presented in this study.

Anxiety

High anxiety or stress is considered to be a very common barrier in intercultural communication. It is manifested by some factors like uncertainties, not knowing what others think or being unsure of what to expect to do. As a result, individuals may get so preoccupied with their own feelings that they lose sight of the message. It may be the less evident barrier to intercultural communication, but it has the capacity to stifle conversation and cause individuals to react defensively, which will lead to misunderstandings. Other impediments to

communication may emerge during an intercultural contact if people feel anxious, making the meeting catastrophic and leading to unsuccessful intercultural communication.

Stereotype

In 1922, journalist Walter Lippmann used the word “stereotyping” to describe a selection process used to organize and simplify other people's views. Stereotypes are generalizations about a certain group of individuals. When people stereotype others, they make generalizations about the qualities of everyone in a certain group. Gibson (2000) defined stereotypes as:

A fixed idea or image that many people have of a particular type of person or thing, but which is not true in reality. The word comes from printing, where it was used to describe the printing plate used to produce the same image over and over again. (p. 21)

Stereotyping is one of the most difficult challenges to overcome when foreign language teachers try to promote and facilitate cross-cultural communication in a globalized environment. Barna (as cited in Samovar et al., 1997) asserted that they are: “second hand beliefs that provide conceptual bases from which we ‘make sense’ out of what goes on around us, whether or not they are accurate or fit the circumstance” (p. 341). In other words, they are fixed views about a certain group. They're frequently used to justify prejudice and discrimination by debating superficial characteristics of the stereotyped group (Jandt, 2007).

On the same note, GudyKunst (2004) explains furthermore about stereotypes justifying prejudice, discrimination and ethnocentrism in the following quote:

Create expectations that often lead us to misinterpret messages we receive from people who are different and lead people who are different to misinterpret the messages they receive from us. Our expectations regarding how people from other groups will behave are based on how we categorize them. (p.4)

In language learning contexts, stereotypes should be overcome; O'Rourke and Tuleja (2008) suggested that rather than providing a thorough checklist of cultural “do's and don'ts”, one alternative strategy to eliminate stereotypes is to expose learners to diverse aspects of the target culture in order to increase insight and foster knowledge of intercultural communication and interaction. In order to ensure a good engagement in the intercultural process, students should be aware of stereotypes from their own group as well as stereotypes from the target culture.

Prejudice

Stereotypes and prejudice are used interchangeably, until recently where scholars differentiated between the two concepts. Jandt (2010) elaborated on the difference between the concepts as:

The term stereotype is the broader term and is commonly used to refer to negative or positive judgments made about individuals based on any observable or believed group membership. Prejudice refers to the irrational suspicion or hatred of a particular group, race, religion, or sexual orientation. The terms are related in that they both refer to making judgments about individuals based on group membership. (p.86)

Prejudice is a term that describes negative attitudes toward other individuals that are founded on preconceptions or stereotypes that are inaccurate and rigid; irrational feelings of hate and even hatred for particular groups, distorted opinions and ideas about members of a group. Shaules (2007) described prejudice as: “it functions primarily out of conscious awareness and often result from judging behaviour based on criteria that the sojourner assumes is neutral and absolute, but which is actually based in hidden cultural assumptions” (p. 66).

Prejudices are not based on direct experiences and personal knowledge. Prejudiced individuals disregard information that contradicts their biased position and distort facts to

meet their preconceptions. Positive and reasonable depictions of foreign cultures, as well as computer-mediated contact amongst individuals, can help to lessen prejudice. Furthermore, in order to give the other side a fair chance and guarantee that their messages are effective, learners must be nonjudgmental.

Assumption of Similarities instead of Differences

Assumption of similarities is when individuals assume that others are just like them or that they are in similar circumstances, where it is not the case. Regardless of how similar two diverse cultures appear to be, they are in fact vastly dissimilar to varying degrees. People might presume that basic human needs bind us all together in some way ignoring the fact that cultures all over the world find various methods to adapt to the same necessities, resulting in the norms and regulations that distinguish each culture. On this note, Barna (as cited in Samovar et al., 1997) further explained that individuals assuming similarities between different cultures and behaving like in their home culture might be natural since they have no information about the other, hence, this would lead them to lack awareness of essential differences. Cultures are different and each one is unique to some extent.

Because of students' lack of knowledge and study about the target culture, they can believe that a foreign culture is similar to their own. As a consequence, people expect that native behaviors and attitudes established in their home culture would automatically apply to the target culture, despite the fact that uniqueness is one of the fundamental characteristics of all cultures, regardless of any similarities. The inverse can also be a hindrance. Assuming difference rather than similarity might lead to you overlooking crucial cultural similarities. It is preferable to make no assumptions.

Ethnocentrism

Another barrier to intercultural communication is ethnocentrism. According to Barna (as cited in Samovar et al., 1997) it is: "each person's culture or way of life always seems

right, proper, and natural. This bias prevents the open-minded attention needed to look at the attitudes and behaviour patterns from the other's point of view" (p.342). It entails assessing the undesirable characteristics and behaviors of another culture through the prism of one's own culture.

To be an effective intercultural communicator, one must recognize that they normally assess and interpret the conduct of others who are culturally different from you using the categories of your own culture. Bennett (1993) developed DMIS to maintain intercultural awareness through different stages; from being ethnocentric which is the state of bias to being ethnorelative which is the acceptance of one's differences by sharing and exchanging.

When speaking with individuals from various cultures, they must also be conscious of their own emotional reactions to the sights, sounds, scents, and differences in messaging systems they experience. Negative sentiments are not always suppressed by a skilled intercultural communicator; rather, they are acknowledged and sought to minimize their impact on communication.

Language

Language is one of the most obvious barriers to intercultural communication; nonetheless, it is unlikely to be the most essential. It may be incredibly difficult to communicate verbally when people do not speak the same language or those who believe they have a poor command of another's language. Even if there is a common language, communication might be hampered by differences in terminology, accents, or slang. Even people who speak the same language do not always have the same idea of what words imply. Every person's cultural background will impact how communication patterns emerge, which might vary greatly among cultures, as well as their worldview (Ilie, 2019).

Conclusion

Intercultural communicative competence which was examined in this chapter in order to define it and differentiate it from similar notions, is a relatively recent notion in the field of foreign language teaching that has attracted researchers from different fields, and has been much discussed and explained. It improves on the shortcomings of language and communicative competence by including the necessary knowledge skills, attitudes, and cultural critical awareness to ensure the success of dialogue with interlocutors from various cultural backgrounds.

The shift from native speakers toward intercultural speakers is manifested through intercultural communication due to the different models that helped interlocutors or learners mainly into interacting in a variety of cultural contexts and bridge the gap between the different groups, while maintaining one's own cultural identity and values. In the context of foreign language learning and teaching, this competence needs to be built by teachers through motivations and promoting positive attitudes in order to overcome the intercultural barriers that learners most of the times tend to encounter like stereotypes and ethnocentrism.

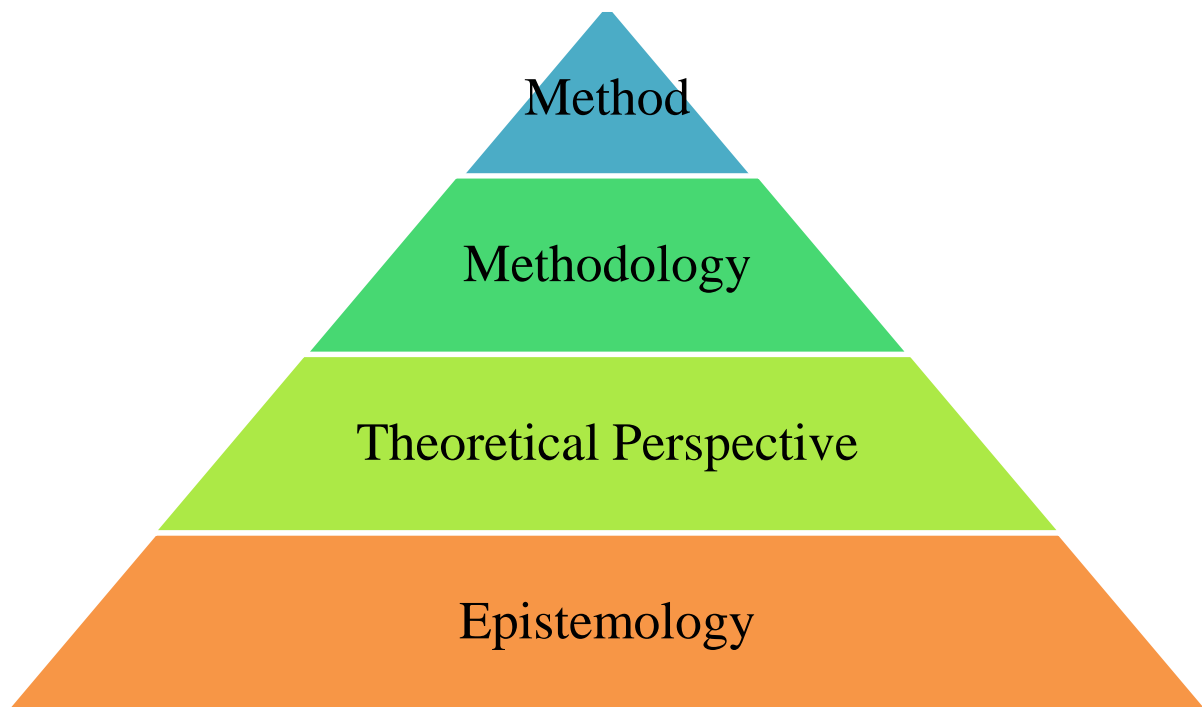
CHAPTER FOUR

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

Part one of the present study reviewed the literature concerning the notions of discussion; chapter four presents the overview of the methodological aspects of the present action research study. It deals with the interconnectedness of epistemology, theoretical perspectives, and method through a scaffolding research process, with an emphasis on the research cyclic process. It also provides the contextual background of the telecollaboration project as well as the description of both quantitative and qualitative data collection tools and data analysis procedures.

Methodological Approach

Since this study is concerned with the telecollaborative perspectives and exchanges between EFL teachers and students from different horizons, their participating relationships are very likely to be positive. They are related to each other through their shared experiences during the whole exchange process. For Crotty (1998), any given methodology design relies upon chosen research questions. He suggested a scaffolding framework based on four main elements as shown in figure 12.

Figure 12*Scaffolding Research Framework*

Note. From *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*, (p.4), by M. J. Crotty, 1998, Sage Publications Ltd.

It is quite obvious that there are several research methodologies made available to any researcher. Each methodology draws upon the support of a philosophy and a theory.

Epistemology

By epistemology, we mean a philosophy of knowledge, understanding and evidenced belief. Epistemologists study the nature, sources, structure as well as the limits of knowledge of propositions and how it is determined as a true belief. When we do not believe in a given proposition, we will be unable to justify it as true. Hence, truth, belief, and justification are the three main and necessary conditions for knowledge.

In this context, the perspective of this study addresses a non-positivist socio-constructivist view of the world where students and teachers, thanks to social contact with each other, construct their knowledge and meaning. As a facilitator, the teacher stresses on

cooperation and collaboration rather than being an imparter of knowledge. The present research places itself into a socio-constructivist learning theory. By constructivism, it is meant that students take responsibility for their own knowledge.

It completely differs from the old-fashioned and traditional instructional model based upon transmission that considers knowledge as something external that is passed from one person to another. Through the socio-constructivist view, learners rely upon the encountered experiences in order to construct their knowledge. In this research, students are given opportunities to appeal for their own real world experiences, through telecollaborative and intercultural exchanges. These opportunities are social, active and creative as well.

A basic and inherent characteristic of a socio-constructivist model in relation to knowledge is reality. According to Von Glasersfeld (1995), reality is “made up of the network of things and relationships that we rely on our living, and on which, we believe, others rely on too” (p. 7). Therefore, people construct their knowledge and meaning according to their experiences within a given social context. They have to know that one absolute truth from a socio-constructivist view does not exist. Von Glasersfeld (1995) believed that since an individual’s perception of the world is influenced by their experiences, one correct way to solve a problem does exist. Rather, the author suggests the notion of viability. A solution to a problem is said to be viable when it draws upon the individual’s own experiences in a given social context, has a meaning and is well justified.

When the above theory is applied to FL instruction, it is believed that learners, when finding a solution to a given issue, will consider it as viable and will not opt for any changes. This is supported by the fact that in essence, people are not ready to renounce their ideas. However, for von Glasersfeld (1995), when convinced by others that their views are not true, incorrect or inappropriate, students will be more inclined to make changes. Similarly, Glasser (1994) deemed that: “You cannot make anyone do what he or she does not want to do. You

can only teach him a better way and encourage him to try it; if it works there is a good chance he will continue” (p. 50).

Another inherent facet of social constructivism is social constructionism. As a theory of knowledge and communication in sociology, constructionism aims to study and develop the world in which we live through people’s efforts and attempts. Its major assumption is that reality is constructed by humans through language as a whole system. The results of their choices lead to understanding the reality. Learning, henceforth, becomes a social activity that focuses a mental process of cooperation, collaboration and creativity. A socio-constructionist is more interested in human relationships, a core aspect of the present research study.

A third and last learning philosophy that is adopted in this research is enactivism. The latter considers knowledge as an essential component of a more complex system that covers all what a learner is concerned with. All what takes place in an instructional environment including all different aspects of tasks and activities has a direct influence on students’ learning and teachers’ as well (Davies, Sumara & Kieren, 1996).

According to the enactivist theory, the world is interconnected; learner’s cognitive system generates and transforms meaning rather than passively receive information. The term “enactivism” is derived from “enaction” explained as “the manner in which a subject of perception creatively matches its actions to the requirements of its situation” (Protevi, 2006. p. 169). In that way, knowledge is co-constructed by and between individuals through socio-linguistic interactions. The same authors contend that an individual is part of a web or a highly complex holistic environment consisting of interrelated aspects. The notion of connectedness corresponds to the school environment where all facets of the learner’s life are taken into account.

It is important to mention that the enactivist theory is well examined in education and more particularly in curriculum design and development. According to Davies et al. (1996),

as a complex philosophy of learning, enactivism is totally different from behaviourism which views learning as complicated, mechanical and most importantly controlled. Behaviourism still exists in the “commonsense of schooling practices” (Davies et al., 1996. p. 58); though it has always been contested by constructivist theories. The mentalist view, for the same authors, deals with learning as a mental process through which knowledge is internalized. This latter is said to be objective as the brain processes information much like a computer does.

Contrary to the mentalist perspective, the enactivist theory is ecological who sees learning as “a participation in the world, a co-evolution of knower and known that transforms both” (p. 64). So, any curriculum design has to take into account learners’ experiences, and aspects of life. Learning must not be based on the assumption that all learners are able to learn the same thing at the same time.

The present research study which deals with telecollaboration in EFL instruction supports the enactivist model of learning that is always dynamic and in which students take part in conceiving the world. The teacher has a major role to play through interaction and shared learning, two predominant concepts of this research work. As noted by Gunn (2003), a teacher has to induce changes in learners by creating opportunities for knowing and setting great store on their experiences of the world.

Theoretical Perspective

Theoretical perspective is the second component of Crotty’s (1998) scaffolding research process, he referred to it as: “the philosophical stance informing the methodology and thus providing a context for the process and grounding its logic and criteria” (p.3). One of the main theoretical perspectives that coincide with the enactivist model as an epistemological vision of knowledge is phenomenology which studies the way people consciously experience the world. This notion was developed in the early 20th century, by the

German philosopher, Edmund Husserl who asserted that this philosophical study does not have one and unique definition: “It is not a doctrine, nor a philosophical school but rather a style of thought, a method, an open and ever-renewed experience having different results” (p. 1). Consciousness is an inherent part of people’s lived experiences and through which they experience phenomena.

Begg (2000) worked on hermeneutic phenomenology relying on interpretation in contrast to Husserl’s descriptive phenomenology. Hermeneutic phenomenology is interested in studying the way people construct the world from their experiences. Their most fundamental experience of the world is full of meaning (van Manen, 1990). The world in which people are involved consists of other people, histories, cultures, and events. The centrality of language as a means of communication and through which meaning is made and then transmitted is another major characteristic of hermeneutic phenomenology. Crotty (1998) explained that: “it is the way we speak that is considered to shape what things we see and how we see them, and it is these things shaped for us by language that constitute reality for us” (pp. 87-88).

Hence, a researcher aims at understanding, interpreting, and reflecting on these experiences (lived meanings) that are depicted via language. It is worthy to note that human meanings are mediated not only through language, but art, religion and myth as well. van Manen (1990) believes that experiences will render people more thoughtful and resourceful. Such belief reinforces the claim of the present study in improving practice through reflection.

Pedagogy and hermeneutic phenomenology are brought together through van Manen’s approach. We may understand and interpret learners’ needs and lived experiences through hermeneutic phenomenology. Reflections are always retrospective, i.e. relating to already lived experiences. Teachers, students and even researchers reflect on these experiences in order to comprehend their meaning. The outcomes are presented in the form of

a phenomenological text which tries to “capture life experience (action or event) in anecdote or story because the logic of story is precisely that story and retrieves what is unique, particular and irreplaceable” (van Manen, 1990, p. 152). Meeting and sharing the participants’ lived experiences through our research study is of great importance.

Methodology

As the third aspect of Crotty’s research model, methodology refers to the research design including the strategy or the action plan chosen by the researcher. It is the rationale on which this latter uses specific methods and links them to the final results (Crotty, 1998). In 1946, the German-American psychologist Kurt Lewin coined the term action research in a research paper entitled ‘Action Research and Minority Problems’. Being the founder of social and applied psychology, Lewin (1946, 1952, as cited in Mc Taggart, 1997) studied organizational development through group dynamics and defined action research as “proceeding in a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of planning, action and the evaluation of the result of action” (p. 27).

Lewin’s model was introduced in education in the United States of America in the early 50s by Stephen Corey. However, in the 70s and 80s, according to Stenhouse, action research appeared with the Humanities Curriculum Project in the United Kingdom. Later on, several researchers (Adelman, 1993; Elliott, 1991; Grundy, 1982; Kemmis & Mc Taggart, 1988; McNiff, 2002; Sumara & Carson, 1997; Whitehead, 1982) made notable contributions and suggested many valuable approaches.

There is no doubt that action researchers’ vision differs from the positivistic vision which considers the validity and reliability of research relies upon its objectivity and value-freedom whereas, through action research, knowledge and meaning are generated in order to promote social, democratic change and well-being of individuals and groups. Action research

is a living educational theory; its characteristics coincide with those of the lived experiences of individuals that are adopted by hermeneutic phenomenology and the enactivist theory.

Action researchers attempt to improve their practice. They are able to detect the gap existing between actual teaching situations and the ideal ones. It behoves them to identify the problematic situations; by problematic, it does not mean that a teacher's practice inside the classroom is ineffective or that they lack competence. Rather, to the whole cluster of questions and doubts about practice. Problematic situations require deliberate interventions aiming at bringing about some changes and improvements. Such interventions rely upon a systematic collection of data and information rather than mere presuppositions and inklings.

Nevertheless, before dealing with action research as a valid methodology for the present research study, it is necessary to define it discusses its main features. In education, action research is a process through which a teacher researcher investigates both their practice and students' learning. For Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1988) action research is a: "self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in order to improve the rationality of justice of their own social and educational practices as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out" (p. 1).

In action research it is firmly believed that participants i.e. teachers and students are members of the research community. Teachers are researchers and reflect on their practice and explore the whole context through systematic and critical approach and investigation. Then, new ideas, and alternatives are developed. The ownership of change, according to Burns (2010) is invested in those who conduct the research. However, the goal of action research cannot be very simple or based on a well-identified pattern in order to solve a problem inside a classroom; its contributions and possibilities are rather manifold. Edge (2001) summed up its aims and aspects as follows:

Table 8*Action Research Aims*

Aim	Aspect
Means-oriented	How can I improve the ways I am doing things?
Ends-oriented	How important are teaching ways for students?
Theory-oriented	How can my teaching contribute to the theory?
Institution-oriented	How can my practice help my institution?
Society-oriented	How can my practice promote societal values?
Teacher-oriented	How can my teaching promote my personal and professional development?

Note. From *Action Research (Case Studies in Tesol Practice Series)*, (p. 5), by J. Edge, TESOL Publications.

It is well-known that, in general, teaching is a long and difficult undertaking and for most teachers, it is a real pain. Many would argue that doing research in addition to teaching is far from being a simple duty. It takes time and is effort demanding. Research is not their business at all as they are snowed under with full teaching loads and refuse to brood over theorizing, questioning, collecting and analyzing data. They believe that most of the time, classroom reality does not match teaching theories.

Actually, teachers are doing action research when they plan their lessons differently; when they constantly assess their students; when they discuss their utter despondency in staff meetings vis-à-vis learners' misbehavior and look for alternative teaching strategies and techniques. They can be interested in their personal and professional development and then formalize action research in order to: "reach their own solutions and conclusions and this is

far more attractive and has more impact than being presented with ideals which cannot be attained” (Burns, 2010. p. 7).

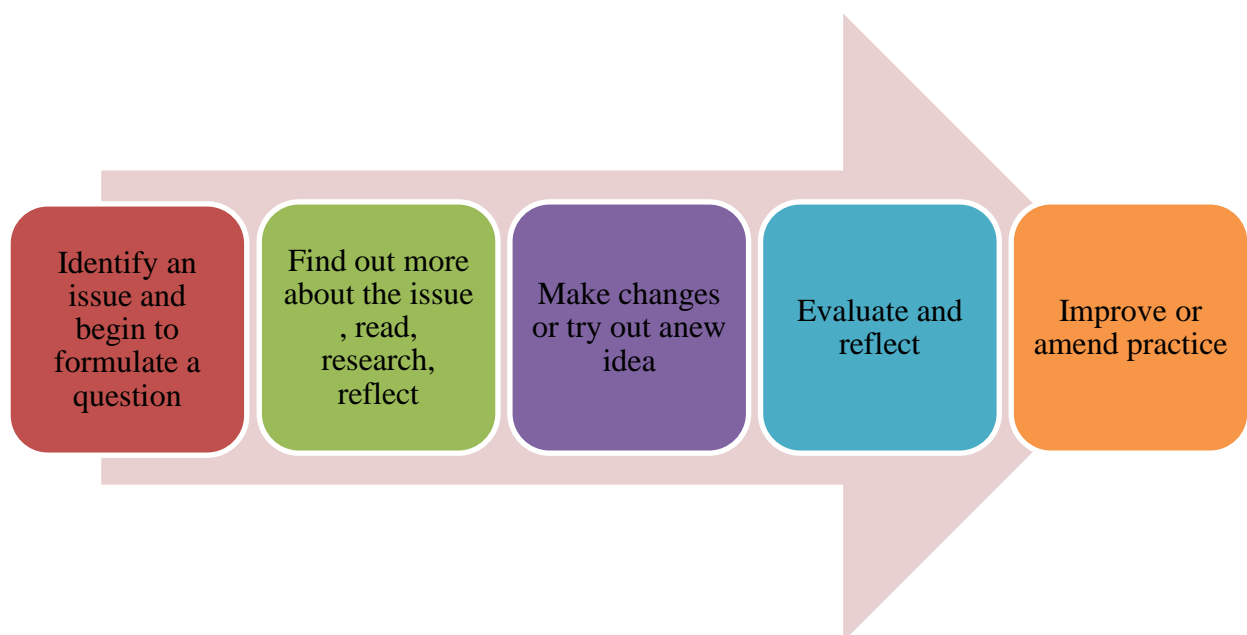
A whole action research process goes through three main steps: planning, acting, and evaluating. The researcher tries out various ways of doing things until the most appropriate and efficacious instructional situations are found. Formalizing an action research implies that:

- Action researchers apply it for only one teaching situation and not for all the others.
- Participants, whether they are teachers, students, or administrators, all collaborate and get involved in what is done.
- Participants evaluate and reflect upon the action in order to improve the situation.
- Action researchers find in this process an opportunity to develop their professional knowledge, take control and then make changes.

A typical action research process involves a set of cycles that recur until a satisfactory outcome is attained as shown in figure 13 below:

Figure 13

A Typical Action Research Process



During the process of these recurring cycles, the classroom is considered as a dynamic and interactive environment where knowledge and meaning are shared by all participants (Davis et al., 1996). This process helps them question existing practices and then try to modify them in order to find out viable ways of improving such practices. The first step is concerned with planning through which a question is formulated, an issue is identified, and a plan of action is elaborated. Then comes action as a second stage including a set of well-developed and systematic interventions over a given period of time. During the third stage, the outcomes of the action are observed by the action researcher who also collects data using appropriate tools.

The task of the researcher is not only to make the study credible and systematic but provide evidence to all what has been done as well. The last phase deals with reflection and evaluation of the results. It is an empowering phase for it brings out noticeable changes in teaching and relationships with others as well as improves the teacher's personal and professional development. The findings and reflections will guide the researcher to make right decisions on further cycles in order to better classroom practice.

Nevertheless, such a model was criticized by many researchers (Burns, 2010; Ebutt, 1985; Mc Niff, 1988) for being inflexible, and very prescriptive. They argue that being flexible; an action research approach relies upon the researcher's personal ideas and beliefs, spontaneity, and creativity. According to Burns (2010) an action research process consists of several aspects and is not necessarily oriented towards one direction only. Rather, the researcher identifies the problem, plans, collects data, analyzes, reflects, hypothesizes, speculates, intervenes, and observes reports, writes and finally presents.

As a methodology, action research relates to the concepts of telecollaboration and intercultural communication through which teachers and students are actively involved in a context that favors inclusion, participation, and collaboration rather than being non-

participating observers. They learn from lived classroom experiences and reflect upon the results. Elliott (1991) observed that action research allows those: “who sincerely want to improve their practice...to reflect continuously about them in situ” (p. 50).

Hence, an action researcher explores various ways of teaching and constantly changes the teaching situations in accordance with collected outcomes. They focus on immediate practical and personal concerns relating to practice in the classroom and make attempts to collect and analyze data in a more flexible way using theory for practice rather than theory of practice (Burns, 2010).

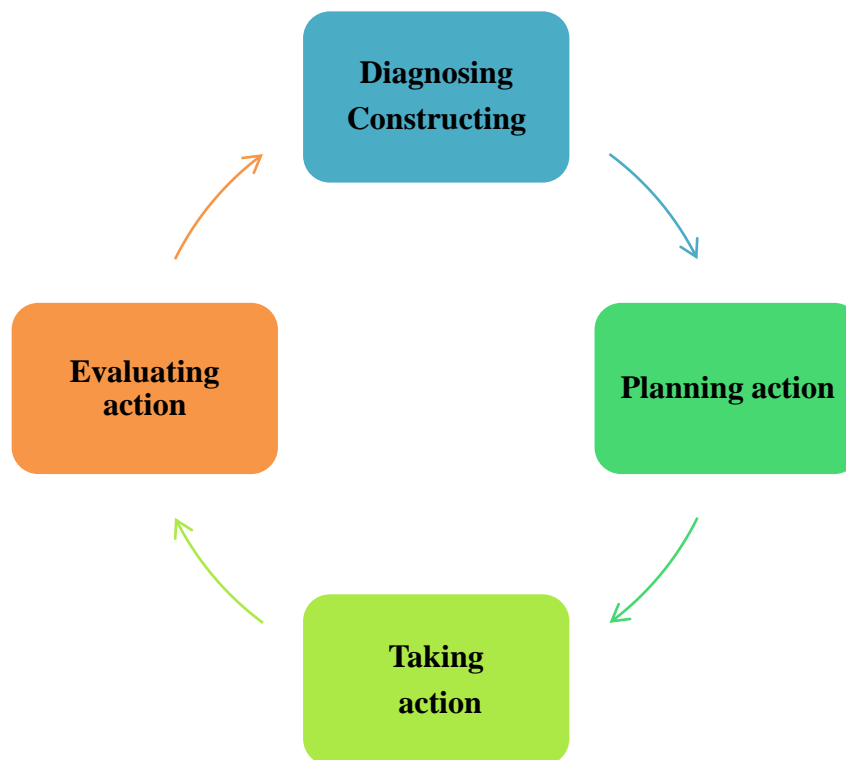
Schon (1983) contends that reflection on teaching is either reflection-in-action or reflection-on-action. Reflection-in-action is: “reflection on one’s spontaneous ways of thinking and acting, undertaken in the midst of action to guide further action” (p. 22). Reflection-on-action, however, comes after what happened in the classroom. Reflective teachers operate differently from routine teachers who: “narrowly construe the nature of the problems confronting them and merely carry out what others, removed from the classroom, want them to do” (Zeichner & Liston, 1996, p. 4). However, reflective teachers are more inclined to find answers to three main questions: What do I do? How do I do it? What does it mean for me and for those I work with (Burton, 2009). A wide range of strategies such as collaborative action research investigations, journals, portfolios, narratives, dialogues and discussion groups can be used.

In the same vein, the “exploratory teaching” made up of eight steps and more closely related to the idea of practice was suggested by Allwright (1993):

- **Step 1:** identify a puzzle area.
- **Step 2:** refine your thinking about the puzzle area.
- **Step 3:** select a particular topic to focus upon.
- **Step 4:** find appropriate classroom procedures to explore it.

- **Step 5:** adapt them to the particular puzzle you want to explore.
- **Step 6:** use them in class.
- **Step 7:** interpret the outcomes.
- **Step 8:** decide on their implications and plan accordingly.

Reason and Torbert (2001, as cited in Coghlan & Brannick, 2010) observed that: “action researchers work on the epistemological assumption that the purpose of academic research and discourse is not just to describe, understand and explain the world but also to change it” (p. 7). Henceforth, the nature and goal of the present study prompted us to choose among a myriad of existing approaches, Coghlan and Brannick’s spiral model made up of four related phases (figure 14) The whole research process will develop when successive cycles of planning, data gathering, acting and reviewing take place in accordance with four factors: context, quality of relationships, quality of the action research process itself, and the outcomes.

Figure 14*Coghlan and Brannick's Action Research Cycle*

Note. From *Doing action research in your own organization*, (p. 10), by D. Coghlan., & T. Brannick, 2010, London, UK: Sage Publications Ltd.

The context includes the shared collaborative goals of the project as well as the organizational and environmental factors. The relationship quality between participants (teacher researchers and students) relies upon equity, mutual trust, commitment, concern, awareness, and influence. The quality of the action research process stresses upon its cyclical characteristics. The last factor is concerned with the changes and improvements of the classroom practice as well as the action researcher's personal and professional development in terms of competencies and knowledge.

It is important to mention that the four major steps of the action research model cited above are articulated in the same way as Lewin's (1946) original form. They emphasize on democratic dialogue, actionable knowledge and emancipatory social relationships.

- **Pre-step:** it consists of understanding the context as well as identifying the internal and external goals of the research whether educational, cultural, social, political or economic. Another main component of this pre-step is engaging collaborative relationships between participants (teacher researcher, other teachers, students, administrators).
- **Planning:** it takes place when the context and goal(s) are well identified and diagnosed. The researcher observes that something is not as it should be and/or could be improved (Norton, 2009). Then an action plan is put forward taking into account the realities, the constraints and the potential improvements (Burns, 2010). Collaboration is essential at this stage as discussions with other colleagues and students will certainly help the action researcher.
- **Action:** it encompasses the various ways of carrying out the plan and intervening deliberately over a period of time. The interventions are critically informed i.e. the action researcher questions their "assumptions about the current situation and plan, new and alternative ways of doing things" (Burns, 2010, p. 8) There is no doubt that things do not always go precisely as expected and the teacher researcher has to work actively and makes certain deviations from the original plan if necessary.
- **Evaluation:** is the last stage. Critical reflections on both intended and unintended outcomes of the action are made. The researcher can do it in isolation but in small groups is more beneficial and or preferable. Participants share ideas, findings and impressions in order to decide upon future changes and improvements.

With the benefit of hindsight, the pre-action (pre-step) phase of the model applied in this study relies on setting goals voluntarily. Rather than dictating and assigning tasks and learning goals on students, teachers comply with their wishes, and eventually make them more committed in order to manage and energize the action plan.

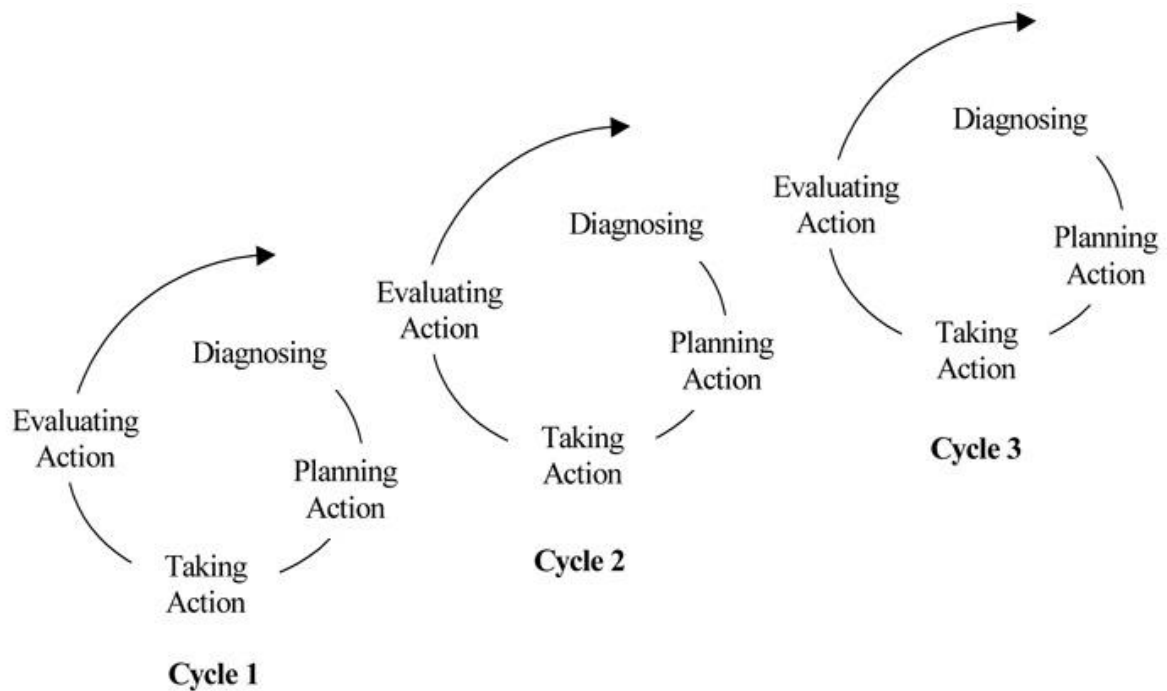
The actional phase comprises three major processes. The first one concerns the way activities are generated and according to the action plan. The second process is appraisal. The action researcher makes links between students' participation in tasks, their effective learning and various environmental stimuli. Action control is the third and last process. Dornyei and Otto (1998) argued that it includes self-regulatory strategies that "protect concentration and directed effort in the face of personal and / or environmental distractions, and so aid learning and performance" (p. 16).

The post-actional phase evaluates the action outcomes whether the action is terminated or interrupted or whether the goals are achieved or not. Inferences are made for future actions on the basis of collected information. It is a retrospective critical phase through which the teacher, researcher and students evaluate their experiences, develop further strategies in order to start a new cycle with new wishes, goals, and intentions.

It is worthy to note that the action researcher: "may decide to do further cycles of AR to improve the situation even more or to share the story of...research with others as part of...ongoing professional development" (Kemmis & Mc Taggart, 1988, p. 14). Moreover, Coghlan and Brannik's model shows that several cycles can concurrently take place (figure 15). Some are short term and contribute to the medium and long term cycles.

Figure 15

Coghlan and Brannick's Spiral of Action Research Cycles



Note. From *Doing action research in your own organization*, (p. 10), by D. Coghlan., & T. Brannick, 2010, London, UK: Sage Publications Ltd.

Method

The fourth and last interdependent constituent of Crotty's (1998) scaffolding research framework is method. He referred to it as "the techniques or procedures used to gather and analyze data related to some research questions or hypothesis" (p. 3). For him, identifying or choosing a given method related to an appropriate methodology, theoretical perspective, and epistemology does not suffice. Conducting an interview, participant observation, or any other methods requires some kind of justification. Table 9 sums up the data gathering techniques used in the present study.

Table 9*The Data Gathering Techniques Used in the Present Study.*

Data Gathering Method	Aim
Teachers	The impact of telecollaboration perspectives in EFL instruction. The importance of intercultural communication.
Students in-depth pre- and post-questionnaires	Telecollaboration project expectations The impact of telecollaboration project in the development of EFL and intercultural awareness.
Group interviews and meetings	Discussing goals, topics, tasks and activities

In order to find out responses to the research questions, the above data gathering methods were triangulated which is critical in establishing data trustworthiness.

Description of the Action Research Landscape

Firstly, it has been already explained that the present study is a telecollaborative action research. It relied upon the personal experiences and responsible practices of the teacher researcher and the other participants. Hence, the first person narrative approach was chosen; it was based on the teacher-students relationships and who were actively involved rather than being simply participant observers (Bryant, 1996). It was a personal story enriched with lived experiences of all participants.

As it was pointed out in the general introduction, although I have been teaching English as a part-time lecturer at Souk-Ahras University for only three years, I still remember being well determined to take up the challenge and conduct my first EFL telecollaborative teaching experience. The goal is that every participant and young person will be given adequate skills and experiences needed to live and prosper in an increasingly interconnected

world. As a strategic and central pillar, technology will be used to a great extent in order to connect these young people to learn, share information, perspectives and resources and work together.

The Telecollaborative Project Framework

It is well-known that the concept of telecollaboration is not as recent as many would believe. Since the 1980s, academicians, researchers and educators all over the world have made valuable attempts to connect engaged and committed young people from diverse places using updated information and communication technologies in order to learn collaboratively. Thanks to high-speed internet, social media, applications and programs, these young people must be able to work together to find solutions to problems despite their differences.

The telecollaborative project framework adopted in the present research study consists of the following inherent components:

- 1. Project Name:** “On the Other Side of the World” Project: Algeria- Brazil.
- 2. Partnership Type:** The journey to find telecollaborative partners was quite challenging as many platforms were used by the researcher, like: Unicollaboration, Researchgate, and LinkedIn. Announcements were posted describing the project, dates, potential tools, classes, learners’ language level and the aim of the project. A traditional way for potential collaboration was through sending cold emails to professors and researchers working on the topic. Figures 16 and 17 below present the project description uploaded:

Figure 16

Unicollaboration Virtual Exchange Proposal



UNICollaboration

Home News Training Research Publications Conferences Projects Resources UNICollaboration Join

Virtual exchange for English students

8 January 2021 Abir Ben Abdallah

Partner(s) linked to proposal
University of Mohamed Ben Ahmed, Oran2

Description
My name is Abir Ben Abdallah and I am a doctoral student at Mohamed Ben Ahmed University, Oran2 – Algeria, in the field of Language Sciences and Didactics. I would like to invite you and your students to participate in a telecollaborative project. This project is part of their Oral Expression course in their third year of a Bachelor's program in English Language. The (VE) will run from April 2020 for 08 weeks, in the second semester of the academic year in Algeria. I am looking for (5 to 10) students in a partner institution to connect with my students in Souk Ahras University in the form of tasks. My group of students has B1 – C1 language learner profile, but can connect with student of B1 – C2 level.

Learning outcomes
Language skills
Intercultural competences
Other

Latest

- Discover the advantages of virtual exchange: a free webinar
- ANNOUNCING AUTUMN ITERATIONS OF OUR "OPEN TO ALL" TRAININGS
- Message from the President of EuroCALL
- VAMOS project: Teaching and Learning in Wicked Times
- Virtual Exchange Partnering Fair

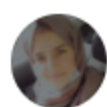
Sign up for our newsletter

First name

Last name

Figure 17

Researchgate's Telecollaboration Proposal



Abir Ben Abdallah
started a discussion in Algeria

Nov 9, 2019

I am looking for partners to work on a Telecollaborative Project

Discussion 11 replies

I am a doctoral student at Mohamed Ben Ahmed University, Oran2 - Algeria, at the English department. I am looking for partners to do a telecollaborative project with.

The objectives are:

- Promote students' ICC.
- Improve their English language learning.
- Bridge the gap.

Algeria Language Learning English Language Bridges

Reply

117 Reads

In January 2021, Professor Ana Cristina B. Salomao at Universidade Estadual Paulista, Araraquara- Brazil was contacted by the researcher through email for a potential telecollaboration with a detailed project description. Eventually, she suggested her doctoral student Tamiris Destro Costa at UNESP for partnership.

The exchange through emails with the partners lasted for around 4 months, from early January to mid- April 2021. The first two months, the interaction was based only on emails, but in the following up months the exchange seemed easier using WhatsApp. Also, video-based discussions were needed. The first Google meet was on March 5th where researchers discussed more the details of the project along with the goals and aims that are to be achieved at the end of the interaction. The second meeting was on April 13th to create and design the Padlet of the project, discuss the topics, syllabus and first week's activity.

Every Monday, the researchers had a Google-meet to suggest and discuss the next week's topic. Create questions for students to direct them if feeling lost about the topic. Finally, post the activity on the platform in the grid specified for activities.

3. Learning Content or Topics:

Table 10*Topics and questions dealt with in the Padlet project*

Week	Topic	Possible questions to consider
1	Short video introducing yourself (3-5 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Who are you? -Where are you from? -What do you study? -What is your cultural background? -What are your interests?
3	Accents	<p>Students are supposed to listen to different accents of English then answer these questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How do you react to the accents presented in the archive? - Share the English accents you know with your peers. - Do you think it's possible to adopt just one of those accents? If yes, which one? If no, why not? - In your opinion, should we have an American or British English accent? Why? Why not? - Do you accept your English accent? Why? Why not? - Do you think your native language/ mother tongue has influenced your English accent? If yes, how? If no, why not?

6	Celebrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What do you celebrate in your country/ region? - When, how, and why do you celebrate them? - What do you usually do on this holiday? - Does religion play a role in these celebrations? - Are there special foods connected with the holiday? - How important are traditional celebrations in keeping the culture alive? - Are there special songs associated with the holiday?
<hr/>		
7	Free time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -What is your favorite free-time activity? - Do you think your activities are typical of most other-aged people in your community? - What new activities would you like to learn? - Do you have a hobby?
<hr/>		
9	Interpersonal communicati on etiquette	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -What are some major dos and don'ts in communicating with other people? - How do you greet your friends/family/professors? -How do you approach new people? -What are some things a foreigner should be aware of? -Are there certain gestures or body language that has a significant meaning?

4. Task or Activity Type:

In this telecollaboration project the tasks were not designed as individual or isolated units but rather complementary. They can be divided into three categories (Kohn & Hoffstaedter, 2014, p. 3): *preparatory, main and follow-up activities*. Preparatory tasks

usually lay the ground for the project, including activities for the participants getting to know one another, expanding one's knowledge, or being familiarized with telecollaboration tools.

The preparatory phase can take different forms: face-to-face, online, synchronous, or asynchronous. The main phase is about the tasks designed by the partners/ teachers depending on the goals set for the telecollaborative project. Throughout the follow-up phase students participate in subtasks designed to ensure learning outcomes, and these tasks can be the same as the preparatory phase.

The activities for the present telecollaboration project were created and agreed upon by both researchers from the different universities every two weeks, a total of six (06) activities. The tasks ranged between video and text-based. The first week's activity, students were asked to create a video introducing themselves, in the following weeks, they were asked to share text posts. They also had the choice to either discuss the week's topic using a personal video or a text with pictures or links.

For each activity posted every other week, the researchers explained the task for the participants and provided them with some questions to guide and help them in answering or discussing the topic. Though the questions were put only as a help, they were not obliged to follow or answer them all. The goal was for learners to be autonomous by pursuing their own interest, and to have spontaneous and authentic responses. After each activity week, students had a week to comment on their peers' posts.

5. Project Duration:

The telecollaboration project was carried out with 3rd year students from the Letters and English Language department at Mohamed Cherif Messaadia University, Souk-Ahras and students enrolled in --- at Universidade Estadual Paulista, Araraquara- Brazil, using Padlet as their main platform of interaction. The project took place during the academic year 2020- 2021 and lasted for 14 weeks, from mid- April to mid- July.

Table 11*The Timeline of the Telecollaboration Project*

Week	Data collection
Week 01 -03	-Teachers were given a questionnaire -Students were given a pre- telecollaboration project questionnaire. -Preparing the Padlet for the project
Week 04 to week 13	-The actual interaction between the two groups. -Class discussion
Week 14	-Students were given a post- telecollaboration project questionnaire.

Students were given a folder of a project description and a set of pedagogical goals to achieve in each task every week:

- a- Use formal or informal English as their main interaction language in an authentic context.
- b- Learn about the Brazilian culture; and,
- c- Explain their culture to their partners.

Students enrolled in the project were selected individually according to their willingness to participate in this study, and this was going to be a part of their final mark. Many students were interested but ended up not participating in the tasks.

6. Number of participants:

The focus of the present telecollaboration project is on the experiences of the Algerian students. Participants are 3rd year EFL students at Mohamed Cherif Messaadia University, Souk Ahras- Algeria. They were selected by the researcher based on their willingness to participate in the project as part of their ‘Written Expression’ course. The present telecollaboration project was a combination of different discussions. Face-to-face,

synchronous and asynchronous interaction took place between the teacher and students to discuss the potential exchange.

At the beginning of the second academic semester the researcher met with the students and invited them to participate. The teacher explained the dissertation project, created a video explaining the project in detail along with the use of the platform. Also, she made a Google meet session for the participants to ask and discuss their inquiries. It was explained to them that they were not obliged to participate.

Participants were asked for their permission to use their names, videos, posts, discussions and comments in the dissertation of the researcher. They were also asked to answer a pre- and a post- telecollaborative project questionnaire. The present study's population consists of 3rd year students for a few reasons. One reason is that I was teaching them the "Written Expression" module, which has made it easier to interact with them. Furthermore, it is assumed that the 3rd year students have a higher level of English proficiency compared to students in other years. Additionally, they have demonstrated cognitive maturity by effectively analyzing, evaluating, and reflecting on various cultural topics.

7. Technology Used:

The main SNS communication tool chosen for the exchange was *Padlet*. Many interaction tools can be used for this type of project, mainly: facebook, emails, videoconferencing and skype. However, Padlet was agreed on by both researchers because of its different features that would help in the execution of telecollaborative projects. It is also more of an educational, formal and organized networking. A video explaining how to use Padlet was created for Algerian students since it was not a typical platform that they would use on an everyday basis. They faced no problem using it since it has an easy and simple format.

Padlet is an online tool that presents in the form of a bulletin board where you can upload images, videos, share links, documents and audio files in notice board likes easily. One can create different walls according to the layout chosen. It helps teachers and students in creating a digitized classroom, as it is an educational tool used to collaborate, share and reflect on posts.

The Padlet could be public or private according to the teacher's preference. For this project, a specific Padlet was created solely for the participants from the two groups that were accessible through a link shared with members by moderators named "*Telecollaboration Project: Algeria and Brazil*". Basically, anyone who has a link could enter and post using their identity or anonymously. A grid as a layout was chosen so that it is organized.

Participants were encouraged to create an account on Padlet, but they were also allowed to write their names at each week's activity. The project was part of their course but we did not want students to approach it as a homework that they were obliged to do, but feel like an everyday activity they would regularly do when scrolling through social media. Participants post, share views and comment on the different topics each week ranging from lingua-franca and linguistics to cultural topics, to holidays and celebrations.

Figure 18

The Padlet of the Telecollaboration Project

The screenshot shows a Padlet interface with a grid layout. The title is "Telecollaboration Project: Algeria and Brazil." Below the title, it says "In this padlet we've used a grid view with separate columns for each week. You can add comments or heart posts." The grid consists of five columns:

- Column 1:** "WEEK ONE - The students - Who are you? - DEADLINE - April, 30th". Below it is a post: "Unfortunately I was never good at gardening, but my mother is amazing with flowers. And your city is amazing." It has 0 hearts and an "Add comment" button. Below that is an "Introduction." post: "Hi everyone!! Sorry for posting".
- Column 2:** "WEEK SIX: THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH FOR YOU (do it inside your group's columns) - DEADLINE - July, 13th". Below it is "Instructions for week 06":
 - In terms of objectives, goals and opportunities, and bearing in mind the role of English in the international setting, why do you want to learn/improve your English?
 - Do you consider English as a
- Column 3:** "GROUP 01: Hocine Imen, Alloui Hiba + Ana Laura, Ana Carolina, Jorge and Giovana L.". Below it is "Week 6 - Ana Carolina Prado Faria Jorge":
 - I want to learn and improve my English because it is a language that I like very much, I believe it has many interesting aspects and it is also extremely important to communicate with people from different places, this encourages me even more to learn English.
- Column 4:** "GROUP 02: Dhikra, Ouala + Meriem Regainia + Ana Flávia, Bruna, Juliano and Stella". Below it is "Week 6 - Stella":
 - Improving my English is important to me not only for my future job, but for my personal advancement. Talking to people from other countries and understand them, reading my favorite books in their original language, watching tv shows without subs and last but not
- Column 5:** "GROUP 03: Nayla, Malek + Felipe, Giovana B., Leticia and Mariana". Below it is "Week 6 - Mariana":
 - When I decided to learn English properly, my objective was to be able to communicate in a level good enough to travel abroad, not only to speak to native speakers, but with people in general around the world. I end up enjoying the process of learning a new language and wanted to improve, to learn more and more.

Students were given a list of Do's and Don'ts to be respected while interacting with others:

- Use English language to interact.
- Treat others with respect.
- Comment on at least two posts.
- Discuss different points of view.
- Avoid using disrespectful language.
- Avoid judging others.
- Avoid making assumptions and stereotyping.

8. Project outcome:

The teacher's goal from this telecollaboration project is to develop students':

- EFL competence,
- Intercultural communication competence,
- Technological use,
- Communication proficiency,
- Effective and acceptable behavior towards intercultural situations.

Questionnaires

This study employed three online surveys to obtain data related to the research questions, as this is a standard method for collecting data in second language research. This sort of instrument appealed to me because of its several benefits "simple to create, incredibly adaptable, and uniquely capable of capturing a great quantity of data fast in a manner that is readily processable" (Dornyei, 2003; p.1). The first questionnaire administered was for teachers, as well as, a pre- and post- project questionnaire for study participants.

Description of Teachers' Questionnaire

The purpose of the questionnaire was to find out how Algerian University English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers felt about ICTs in general, as well as the policy of their integration, availability and use in teaching and learning. Its specific goal was to determine the feasibility of employing telecollaboration as a helpful instructional tool to improve teaching and learning in the same department.

The online questionnaire (see Appendix A) was administered in English using *Google Forms* survey software. It was delivered to different English as foreign language university teachers from different Algerian universities through receiving a link to *Google forms* in their emails. Thirty seven (N 37) university educators responded to the survey, from 15 institutions.

The questionnaire was made up of 39 questions divided into four sections. Three question types were used: closed-ended questions, open-ended questions about their experiences and opinions, Likert scale questions according to their level of agreement or disagreement, and rating scale questions. The initial section was a standard background information survey with an emphasis on factual data; teachers' personal and professional information (see Appendix A). Participants were asked to disclose information about their gender, age, qualifications, and professional teaching experience.

In the next section, entitled 'ICT in general', six questions were provided where the focus was on Algeria teachers' use of ICT in general, since teachers' attitudes about ICTs determines its use and implementation in education.

- ***Question 5: Do you have a computer?***

With technological developments, owning a computer nowadays is an important factor in keeping up with the fast paced world; it combines Internet capability with Web 2.0 features,

to make education/ classrooms more easy and flexible. Teachers, for this close- ended question, were asked to choose either ‘yes’ or ‘no’.

- ***Question 6: How often do you use your computer each day?***

The purpose of this inquiry was to find out how much time instructors spent on their computers. They were asked to choose between quantitative values.

- ***Question 7: Do you have internet access at home?***

The aim of this question was to know whether or not teachers have internet access at home, since it is very important. Internet access at home gives instant access to information, knowledge and educational resources, which would enhance education quality and help teachers using these online materials.

- ***Question 8: Do you use your internet to prepare your lessons?***

This question was related to the previous one in order to see whether or not teachers having internet access at home are using it in preparing their lessons; whether they are using online materials or they are planning lessons using the traditional format. Preparing lessons using the internet would facilitate the search for information; it provides several educational resources, as well as gaining time.

- ***Question 9: What is your proficiency level as a technology user, please select which of the following categories best describes you?***

The reason behind this question is to know teachers’ level of technological proficiency. They were provided with a list of levels to choose from based on which description best represents their proficiency. Learning and teaching in the 21st century requires the development of digital skills, as it is proved to facilitate the process.

Section three named “ICT and EFL teaching” where the focus is more on the teaching practices using technology.

- ***Question 10: Does your institution promote ICT innovations?***

One of the most common problems that face teachers in using ICTs inside the classrooms is the lack of equipment at the level of institutions. This question would answer whether Algerian universities facilitate the availability of technological materials in their premises.

- ***Question 11: Is your classroom environment connected to internet?***

The incorporation of the Internet as an instructional tool received tremendous focus lately. However, computer availability in institutions or more specifically classrooms does not necessarily suggest the integration of Internet which can bring new opportunities to the educational process. The focus of this question is to have an idea on how the Algerian university classrooms work.

- ***Question 12: Do you integrate technology in your teaching activities?***

Technology is becoming an integral part of our life, we use our mobiles and computers everyday on a regular basis in all aspects of life; thus, figuring out if teachers use it in their teaching activities, is the aim of this question.

- ***If you do, please describe how you have used any technologies in your teaching***

The integration of ICTs in teaching practices differs from one teacher to another. Therefore, the purpose of this follow up open-ended question was to know how it is done among teachers; by providing their different ways.

- ***Question 13: If circumstances were different or more favourable, would you use it in your classroom?***

Connected to the previous question; this inquiry dealt with teachers' preferences in using ICTs in their classrooms if they were to choose.

- ***Question 14: What are the challenges that faced you in using ICT inside the classroom?***

The potential of implementing new educational strategies using technological materials may not be easily realized. Also, with changes arise problems, challenges and uncertainties. Respondents were provided with a list that contains the most common challenges, in which they had to choose from what they think is the most significant issue.

- ***Question 15: Do you think that technology increases students' academic achievement?***

The objective of this closed-ended question is to know whether teachers believe that with a more appropriate use of technologies from students, it would contribute in increasing their learning gains; thus, academic achievement.

- ***Question 16: According to you, is technology helpful in the classroom?***

This closed-ended question focuses on research participants' belief on the application of ICTs in the classroom; if it is being perceived as helpful or not.

- ***Question 17: Does technology change the role of the teacher?***

ICTs can be used by students in their learning process and complement teachers' pedagogical philosophies in integrating it in their teaching practices. However, this question aims at knowing if participants think technologies are going to change their role through a yes/no response.

- ***Question 18: Does technology enhance lifelong learning?***

The objective of this question is to review whether there is a connection between the use of technologies and lifelong learning. ICTs can impact students' content and processes of learning, which can be achieved through acquiring all sets of abilities, skills and knowledge virtually, anytime and anywhere.

- ***Question 19: Does technology improve students' communication skills?***

Nowadays, in the rise of the digital information age, communication is a key factor in technology; thus, the purpose of this question for this section is investigating teachers' opinion on the effect of ICTs on students' oral and written communication skills.

Section Four entitled "Telecollaboration in EFL", focuses on the integration of Telecollaboration in EFL learning and teaching practices. A definition of 'Telecollaboration' was provided in this section to help participants who are unaware of the term in answering the following questions.

- ***Question 20: Are you familiar with one of these terms "telecollaboration", "Virtual Exchange" or "Online Intercultural Exchange"?***

As a starter for the last section, the researcher should be aware of respondents' familiarity with one of these terms: 'Telecollaboration', 'Virtual Exchange' or 'Online Intercultural Exchange' before analyzing the following questions, since it is a crucial part.

- ***Question 21: Do you have any experience with telecollaboration in language teaching and/or teacher development?***

Being familiar with 'telecollaboration' and having a 'telecollaborative' experience are two different things, since the last one is going to provide a more in-depth understanding of the term. Therefore, this question examines the experience of teachers

- ***If you do please describe your experience:***

Linked to the previous closed-ended question, participants who are familiar with the above terms and had been taking part of a telecollaborative project were asked to describe their experiences in a long paragraph space. This follow-up question intends to investigate to what extent they are familiar with 'Telecollaboration' and to have an idea on their virtual interactions.

- ***Question 22: Do you have any experience with collaborative learning to develop your teacher professional experience?***

For this question the researcher asked about teachers' experience but whether they participated in a collaborative learning about developing their teaching practices with other fellow teachers and not in general virtual exchange experiences. This can develop a different set of skills and promote a range of telecollaborative competences.

- ***If you do please describe your experience:***

A follow-up question is needed for teachers to describe their experiences by participating in a collaborative learning to better understand the different projects, approaches and perceptions. They were asked to answer through a long paragraph, so they can describe in detail.

- ***Question 23: Do you think developing students' intercultural communicative competence is important?***

Another term that is deeply connected to 'Telecollaboration' is 'Intercultural Communicative Competence'. Hence, in this increasingly globalised society, where interactions with individuals from different places and cultures are more likely to happen, intercultural communicative competence is necessary.

- ***Question 24: Do you think that the integration of telecollaboration would develop students' intercultural communicative competence?***

Linked to the previous question and as it is stated before, there is an undeniable relation between both terms. Therefore, this question investigates teachers' perception on the relationship between telecollaboration and ICC development through a yes/no option.

- ***Question 25: How would you describe intercultural communicative competence and why do you think it is important for language teaching?***

Respondents were asked to provide their own definition of the term ‘intercultural communication competence’ and to comment on its importance in foreign language teaching, through an open-ended question.

- ***Question 26: Please rate the order of importance (with 1 as most important) of possible pedagogic aims of a telecollaboration project. Add any additional aims that you believe should be included.***

A set of pedagogical aims of integrating telecollaboration in learning and teaching practices was provided for teachers’ through a rate scale, from the most important to the least important. In addition, they were given the ability to add up on these aims with their own ones.

- ***Question 27: What are the challenges that would prevent you from integrating telecollaboration in teaching EFL?***

Despite the widely positive attitudes towards integrating or engaging in a telecollaboration project, some challenges and barriers are faced by Algerian university teachers. These difficulties are presented by participants in an open-ended form.

- ***Question 28: What would you believe the results of telecollaboration integration?***

This question focuses on the results of integrating telecollaboration by teachers. Respondents were presented with a total of five potential results in the form of a likert scale, where they agreed or disagreed with each one of them.

- ***Question 29: Do you think telecollaboration could reinforce stereotypes?***

The present question explores teachers’ belief on the possibility of reinforcing stereotypes through telecollaboration between groups from different cultural backgrounds.

- *Please, elaborate more:*

Whether they agree or not on the assumption that virtual exchange can potentially reinforce stereotyping amongst learners, they were requested to provide an explanation to their answer through a long paragraph.

Description of Students' Questionnaire

Pre-Project Questionnaire. (See Appendix B) The purpose of the pre-project questionnaire was to find out how participants at Mohamed Cherif Messaadia University felt about this project, what they expect and its potential outcomes. The online questionnaire was administered in English using *Google Forms* survey software. It was delivered to the Algerian participants in the telecollaborative project through sharing the link to *Google forms* in their project Messenger group. Twenty six (N 26) university students responded to the survey

The questionnaire was made up of 13 questions divided into two sections. The types of questions used were: closed-ended questions, open-ended questions about their experiences and opinions, Likert scale questions according to their level of agreement or disagreement, and rating scale questions. Participants were asked to disclose standard background information about their names, age, previous experiences in interacting with individuals from distant locations or different countries and the frequency of them interacting. In addition, their experiences in traveling or studying abroad.

In the next section, entitled 'Pre-Project Expectations', nine questions were provided where the focus was on participants' attitudes towards the project and their expectations.

- *Question 05: What is your reaction to the Padlet project?*

Participants were asked to choose from one of the four reactions presented in a Likert scale, in order to have their initial feedback to the idea of participating and willingness to take part in the project.

- ***Question 06: What do you expect to learn in this project?***

In this open-ended question, students were requested to share their learning expectations from participating in this telecollaborative project, in a paragraph form. The reason behind this is to have an idea about their goals of what to learn in this type of project.

- ***Question 07: How do you feel about the project?***

The goal of this question is to know participants' perception about this Padlet project, whether they feel like it is an obligation or they perceive it as a fun activity. They were asked to choose one of the three options: "It's just another homework assignment", "It will probably be fun sometimes" or "I think it will be a fun way to practice English".

- ***Question 08: Do you think you will learn anything from it?***

This project is made for students to learn from; thus, this closed-ended question is to investigate students' beliefs in learning anything from it.

- ***If yes, what?***

For those who have chosen 'yes' for an answer in the previous question, were asked to elaborate on what they think they would learn from it, this follow-up question is in the form of an open-ended inquiry.

- ***Question 09: Do you think it would be interesting to participate in this kind of project, in terms of your development as a student and a future teacher? Why?***

In this digital enhanced age, the use or integration of technologies in the learning processes is inevitable and Telecollaboration is one of the many ways. Participants here had to state whether participating in this kind of project would be beneficial in their development as students and future teachers or not. Also, explain why and how.

- ***Question 10: Do you think learning about other cultures is important in general?***

With the globalised world, we are exposed to many different cultures, and we can learn about them easily using technologies. However, whether it is necessary to learn them in general is up to debate. Hence, students were asked to say if it is important or not.

- ***Why (not)?***

For this follow-up question, they had to explain in a paragraph form if acquiring knowledge about the different cultures is necessary or not.

- ***Question 11: Do you think it is important for language learners to also learn about the culture or is it just about the language?***

One of the many goals of implementing virtual exchange in learning a foreign language is to get in touch with other individuals from different cultures and learn about them. This question is similar to the previous one, even though the context differs. In learning a foreign language, is it about culture learning or only about the language, this was the question.

- ***Could you please explain?***

In stating that language learning is either about the culture or just the language itself, students were asked to explain their point of view.

- ***Question 12: In your opinion, what is culture?***

In speaking about culture, this question aims at presenting students' own definition of the term. This question intends to have an idea about their perception of the concept before participating in the project.

- ***Question 13: In terms of topics to be approached during our project, what suggestions do you have? It could be anything that is part of your daily routine, life, preferences or any curiosity you have concerning the other countries' participants.***

This question is for participants' suggestions in terms of topics discussed in the Padlet project. The purpose is to see the different aspects students want to know about the others.

Post-Project Questionnaire. (See Appendix C) This post-project questionnaire aims at getting participants' feedback and reaction on the project. *The Google Forms* questionnaire was shared with them through a link in the project's Messenger group. Twenty six (N 26) Algerian university students responded to the survey. The questionnaire was made up of 14 questions presented in one section. The types of questions used were: closed-ended questions, open-ended questions about their experiences and opinions, Likert scale questions according to their level of agreement or disagreement, and rating scale questions.

Participants were asked to disclose standard background information about their names as a first question, so a comparison between the pre-project and post-project questionnaires can be made.

- ***Question 02: My telecollaboration experience was***

As a first question in relation to the project, participants were asked to choose from a list of adjectives to better describe their experience and telecollaborative journey.

- ***Question 03: This project helped me improve my:***

A set of skills is provided for students to select from, in which they think improved because of them participating in the Padlet telecollaboration project. The objective of this question is to know the improvement virtual exchange projects have on students.

- ***Question 04: Choose whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:***

In a Likert scale type of a question, students had to agree or disagree with different statements concerning their feedback on the telecollaborative project, to see whether it was of a positive or negative impact on them. An example of these statements is: "I have enjoyed this project", "the project was relevant to real life English language use" and "this project brought me closer to a new culture".

- ***Question 05: Would you like to participate in a similar telecollaborative project in the future?***

Students in this closed-ended question were asked whether they would participate in a similar telecollaboration project, after participating for the first time in the present telecollaboration project.

- ***Question 06: If you had to participate in a telecollaborative project again, what changes would you like to see and why?***

The purpose of this question is to know limitations students thought of in participating in the telecollaborative project. The suggested changes would be helpful in doing other projects in the future.

- ***Question 07: Did you like using Padlet for the online exchange with your Brazilian peers? Why (not)?***

Participants were asked about their experience in using Padlet in the virtual exchange, whether they liked it or not and explained why or why not. The reason behind this question is to know if the platform is easy to use like other social media they use on a regular basis or not.

- ***Question 08: Tell about one instance when you felt that you could not explain something well to your Brazilian partners. Why did it happen?***

Speaking about culture differences presented in the telecollaboration project between Algerian and Brazilian participants, sometimes some cultural aspects are hard for students to describe and explain; thus, this open-ended question is for the students who had issues explaining these aspects and why it happened.

- ***Question 09: Tell me about one instance when you thought that one of the Brazilian traditions was hard to understand.***

Cultures of the other group can be different but sometimes hard to understand. The purpose of this question is to know which cultural differences students found hard to understand.

- ***Question 10: Do you think that your culture is the only right one?***

People tend to feel comfortable in practicing their own culture and sometimes will not accept other cultures which would lead to cultural superiority. This question aims at knowing students' cultural bias and to which ethnocentrism or ethnorelativism stage they embraced.

- ***Question 11: Do you appreciate the richness of others' culture?***

Cultural appreciation is when people want to learn about cultures that are different than yours, in order to broaden their horizons in cross-cultural interactions. This closed-ended question is linked to an extent with the previous one, as the purpose is to know whether students appreciate Brazilian cultural diversity or not in addition to other cultures.

- ***Question 12: How would you define "culture" after your experience in this project?***

This question was asked in the pre-project questionnaire and repeated in this post-project questionnaire to notice any changes in their definitions after participating in the virtual exchange.

- ***Question 13: What did you learn from this project?***

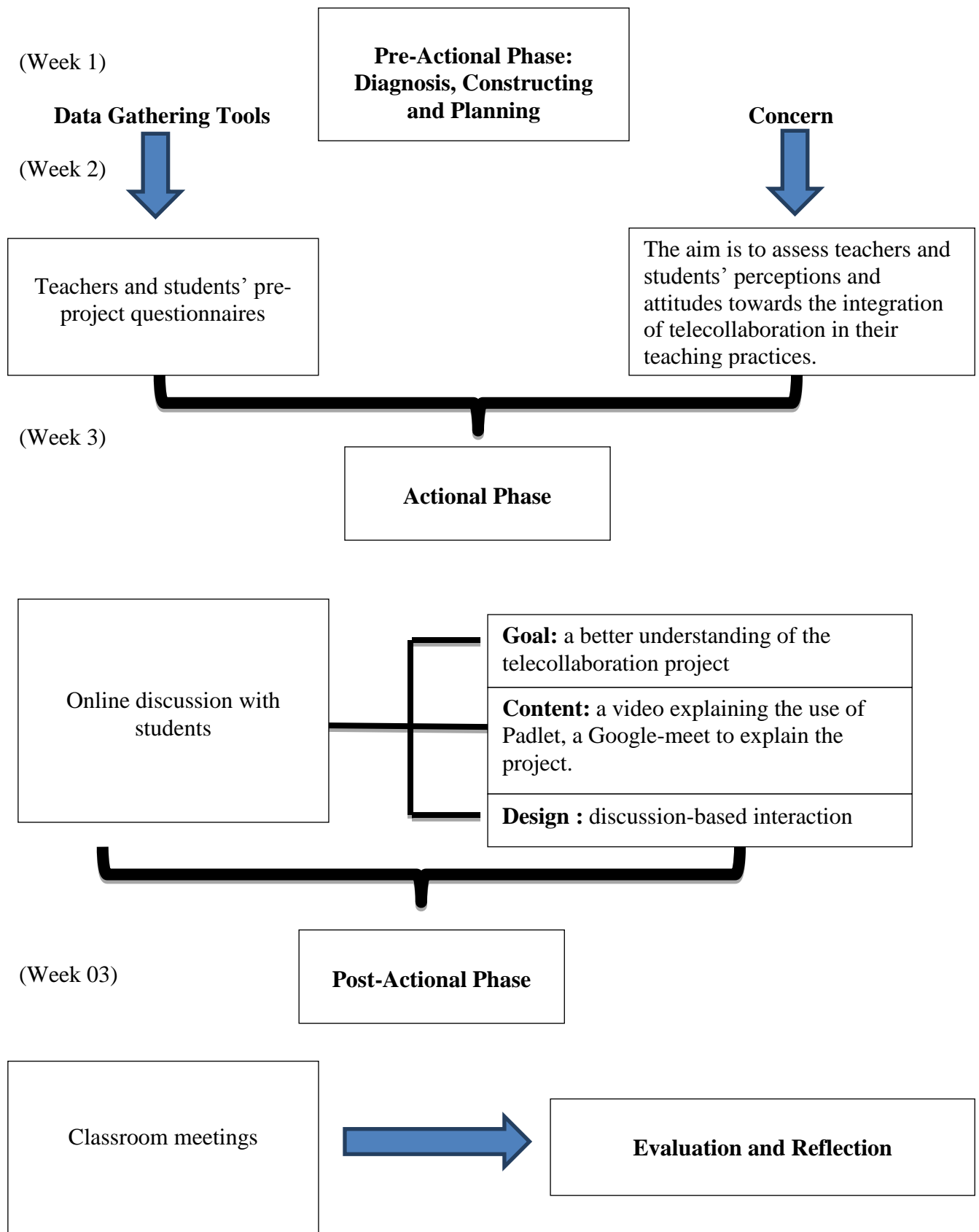
Participants were asked in an open-ended question to describe what they have learned from this telecollaboration project.

- ***Question 14: What is your overall impression on your experience?***

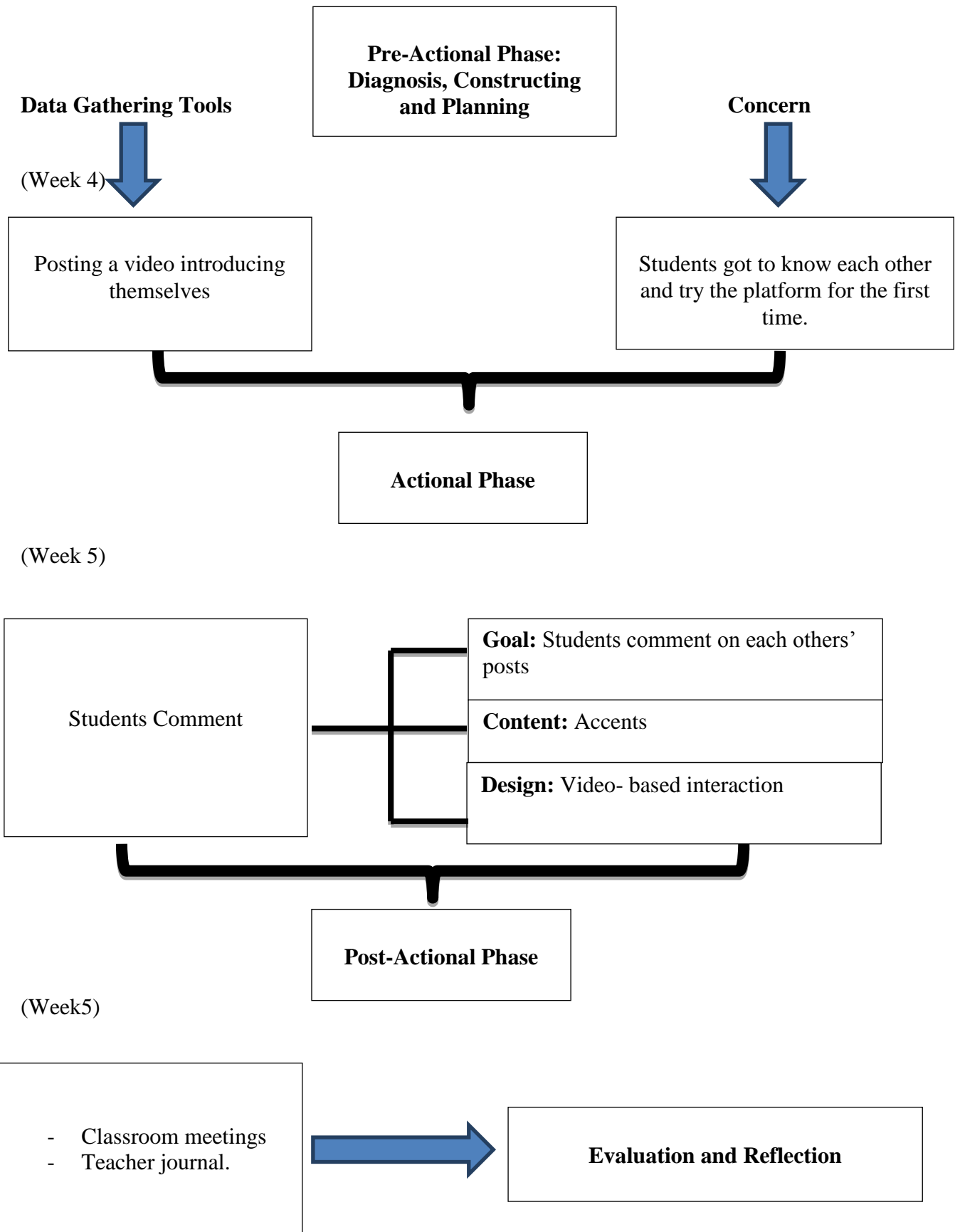
Finally, an overall impression on the telecollaboration project was requested from students to report.

The Action Research Cyclic Process

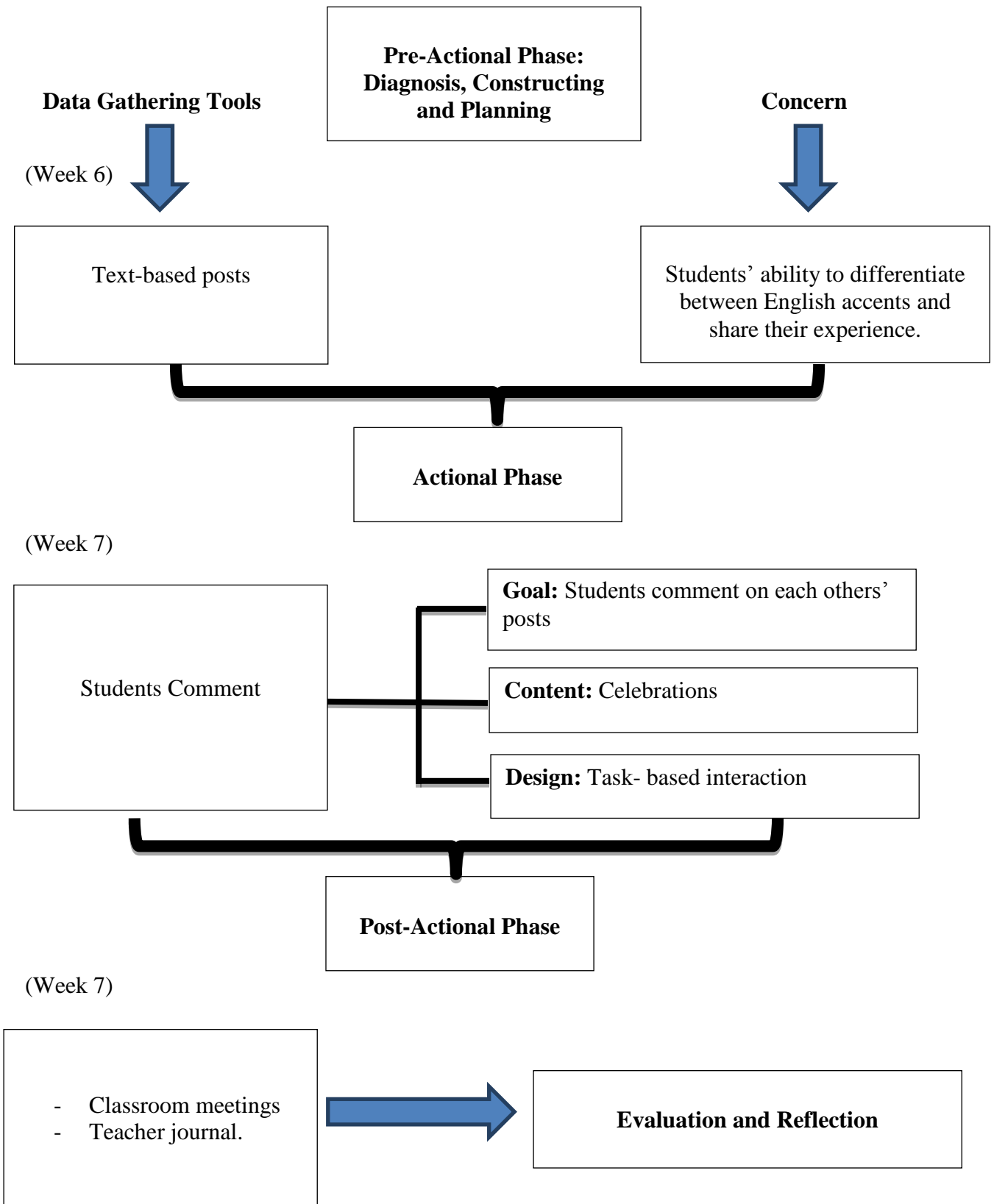
Action Research Cycle 1 (Week 1-3)



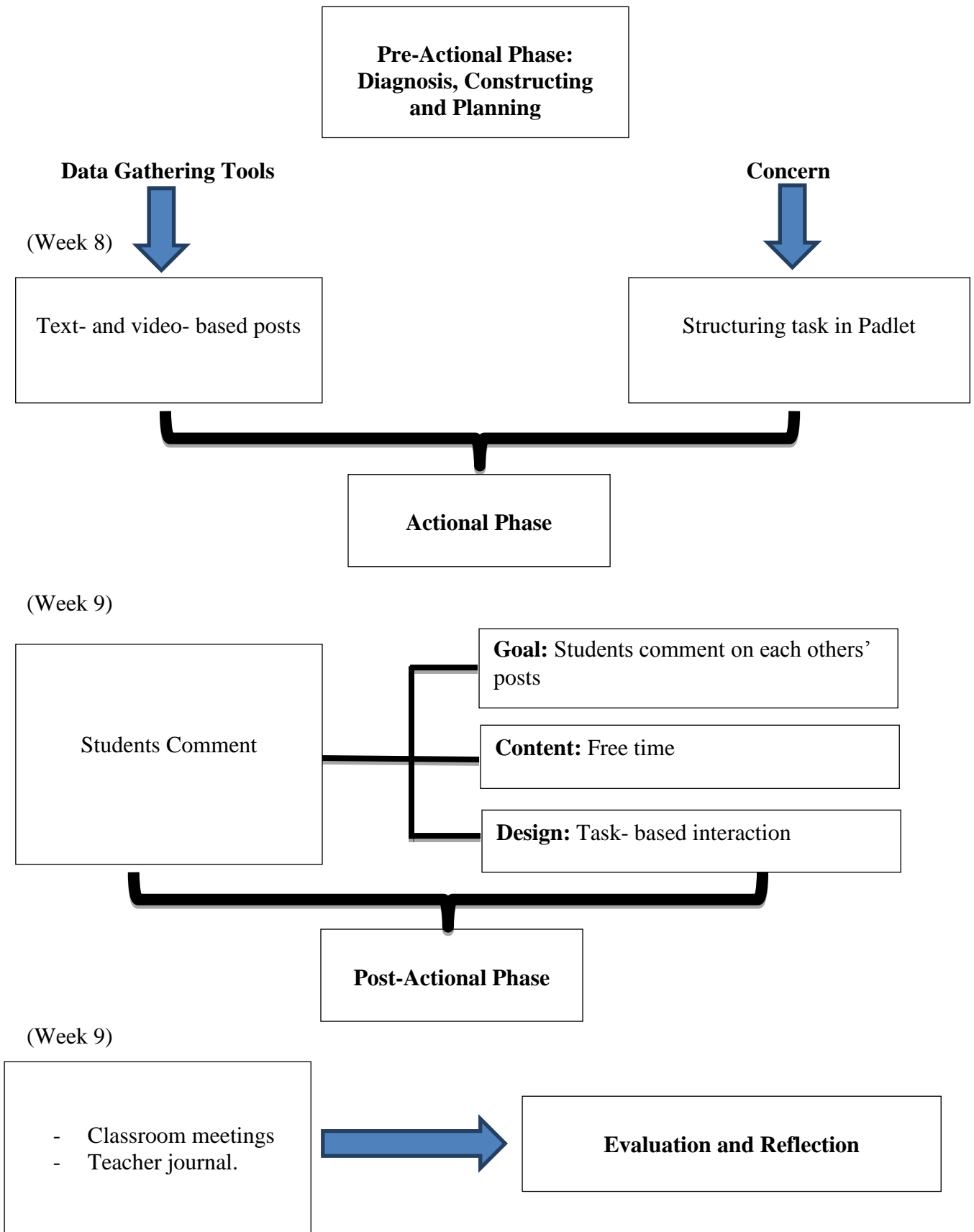
Action Research Cycle 2 (Week 4-5)



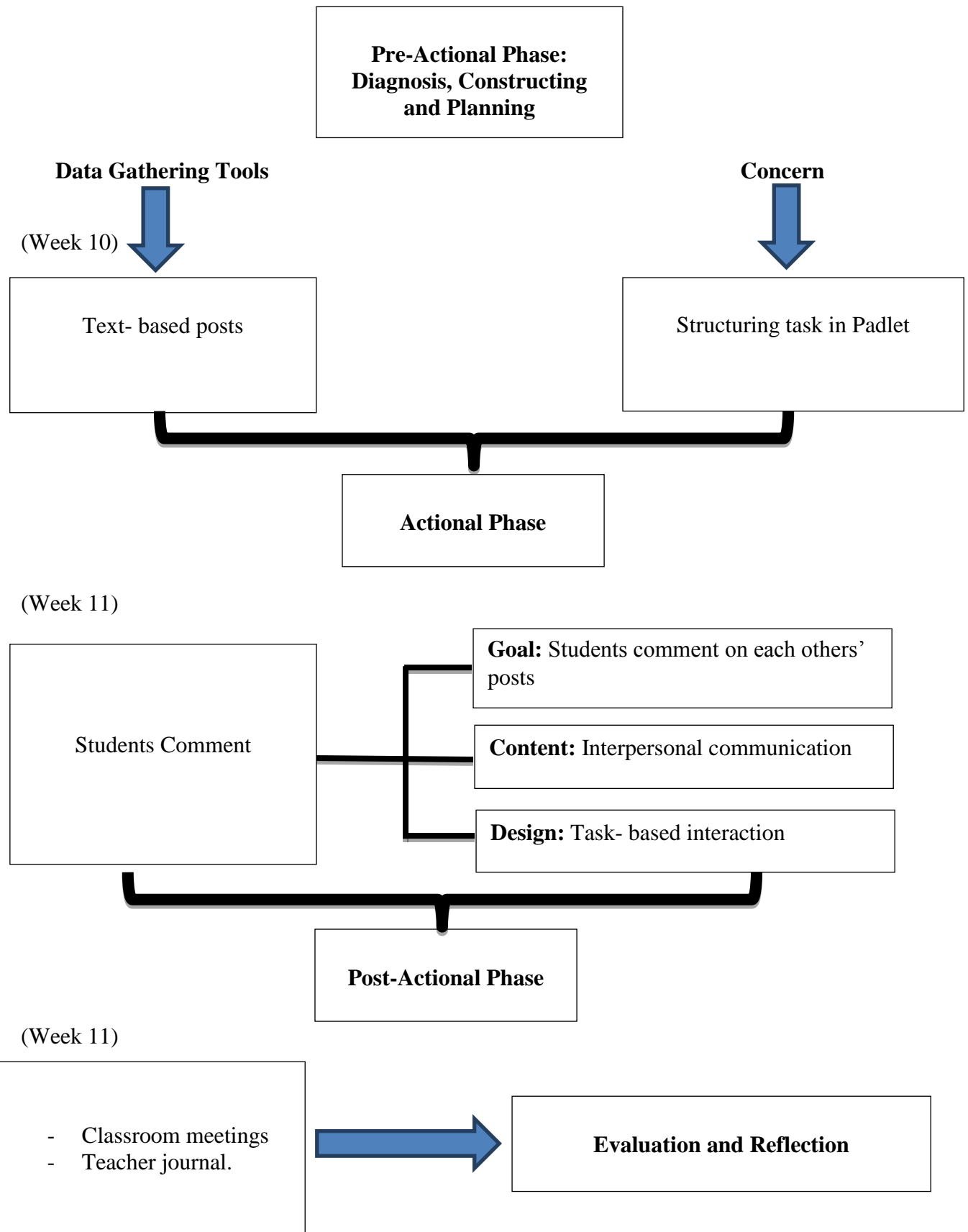
Action Research Cycle 2 (Week 6-7)



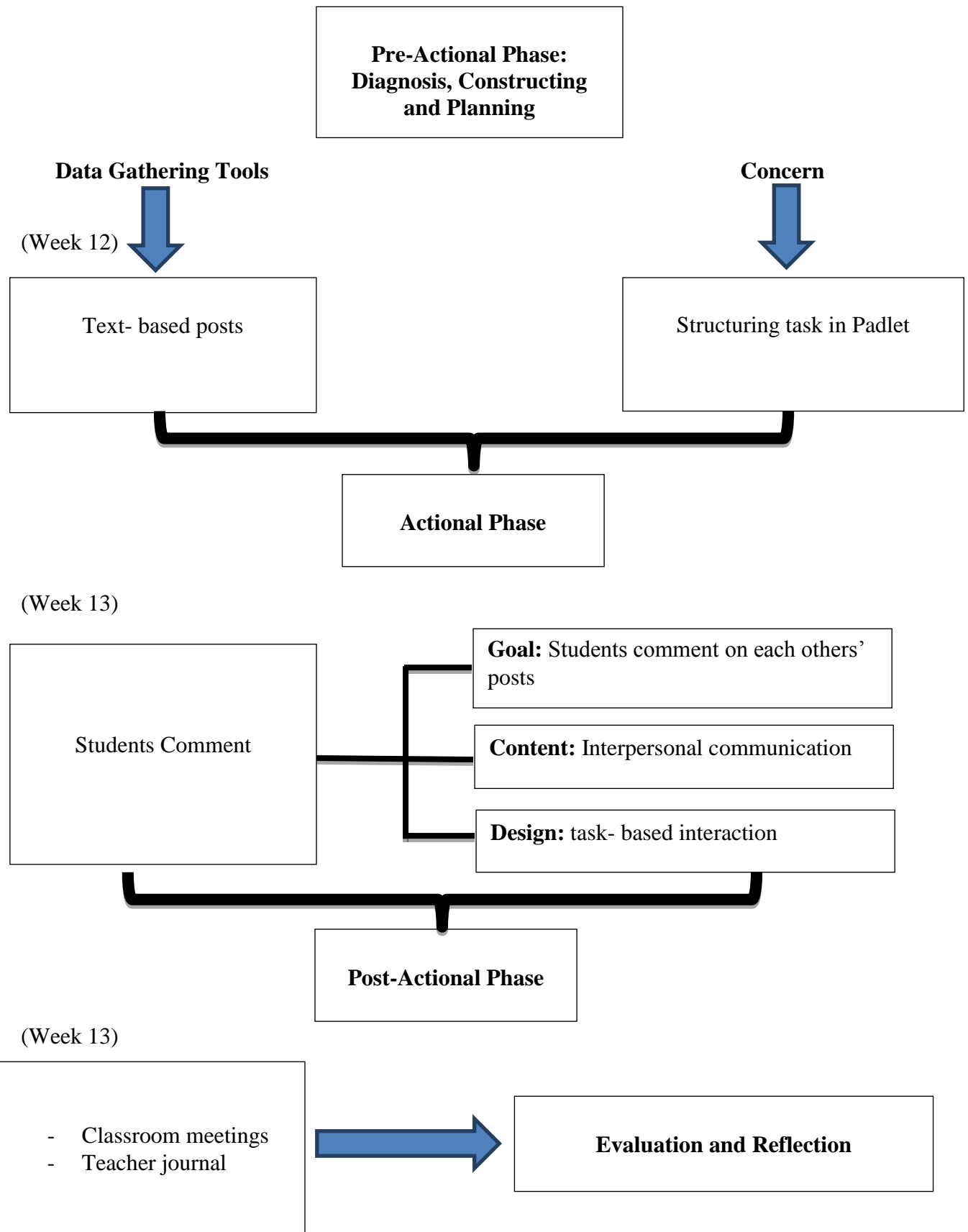
Action Research Cycle 2 (Week 8-9)



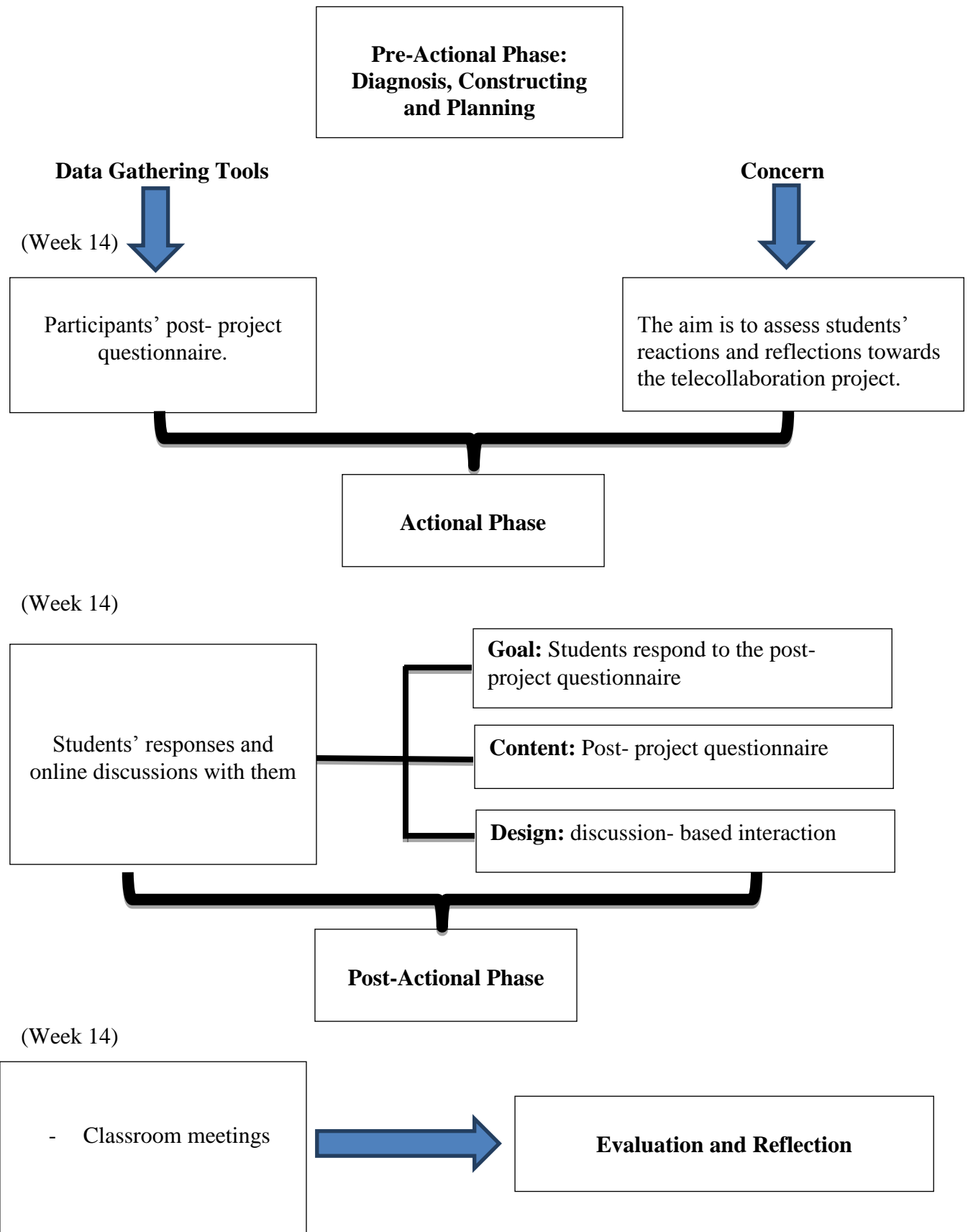
Action Research Cycle 2 (Week 10-11)



Action Research Cycle 2 (Week 12-13)



Action Research Cycle 3 (Week 14)



Conclusion

In this chapter, the primary goal was to provide a comprehensive overview of the framework of the Algeria- Brazil telecollaboration project. To achieve this, the chapter included an in-depth description of the participants involved, the context in which the project was undertaken, and the data collection and analysis procedures that were employed. In the next chapter, the focus shifted to the analysis of the findings and included the discussion of the research questions.

CHAPTER FIVE

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS REGARDING TELECOLLABORATION

Chapter five presents my analysis and interpretation to the collected data on the basis of the study's research questions. I describe the quantitative analysis based upon statistical, measurable and verifiable examination of results obtained from teachers and students' questionnaires and interviews. The findings were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 23, a software package for the data presentation, manipulation and statistical analysis. I also focused on the findings of the action research process that was based on qualitative data. This included teachers' questionnaire, participants' pre- and post- project questionnaires and interviews.

The research cycles dealt with the notion of telecollaboration in foreign language teaching and learning as a valid, complex and mature field that is concerned with using new technologies to connect teachers and students from different educational institutions in the same country or different countries. Its major goal is to help them improve their abilities, skills and knowledge. It also focused on the relation between language, culture and intercultural communicative competence.

Action Research Lived Experience Analysis

The analysis of the three action research cycles was both quantitative and qualitative. The data gathering was based on teachers, pre- and post- students' questionnaires, group meetings, interviews, and the performed tasks each week. The description of the telecollaborative project during the period of 10 weeks was based on a descriptive-interpretive approach, which is "based on the assumption that social reality is not singular or objective, but is rather shaped by human experiences and social contexts, and is therefore best studied within its socio-historic context by reconciling the subjective interpretations of its various participants" (Bhattacharjee, 2012, p. 103). To ensure qualitative rigor in the present

research, a triangulation of data was required and multiple resources of data were implemented.

Concerning the data analysis, it was done concurrently with data collection, as is customary in qualitative research, making the process cyclic and dynamic (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009). I started analysing the data once teachers and students had completed the pre- telecollaboration questionnaires and interviews. I went through each questionnaire and highlighted the most significant and relevant information in regards to the research questions by providing frequency tables to quantitative data, and by reading and looking for recursive themes for qualitative data. I went through each participant's questionnaire and highlighted the key ideas which helped later in the analysis of the pre- project data. The same method was applied in collecting data from the post- project questionnaire and classroom meetings. While analyzing, I connected all findings together, rather than treating them as separate cases in order to support the research questions.

In addition, I read the posts and conversations held in the comments in the Padlet after every week of interaction. Because qualitative research necessitates continuous reiteration, I went over the data several times, which helped in the creation of potential codes to use in the analysis. Regarding the coding process, it was made through both a traditional method, the use of pen and paper, and computer software, NVivo 12, where I uploaded all of the qualitative data from questionnaires and interviews/ group meetings. Categories were created inductively to help in the comparison of pre- and post- project responses, also, to enable sample-wide generalizations.

A descriptive and structural approach of coding was adopted due to the research's nature; hence, coding methods should match the research questions (Saldaña, 2016). I first read through the data highlighted by me in papers and by NVivo 12 software in order to

create specific categories applying the coding methods. Afterwards, I focused on each research question individually, in relation to the codes.

Action Research Cycle 1

The current study used Coghlan and Brannick's (2010) action research paradigm, consisting of a series of recursive cycles, as outlined in the previous chapter. Each cycle is divided into three parts: planning, acting, and assessing. The action researcher must first grasp the context, determine the goal(s), and establish a connection with instructors and students before moving on to the planning or pre-actional phase, and that's precisely what I did.

The Pre- Actional Phase

Cycle 1, lasted two weeks, where the first week was devoted to the pre-actional phase in which I invited students during their in-class *Written Expression* sessions with me to participate in the “*Algeria- Brazil Telecollaboration Project*”. I started off by elucidating for them my dissertation work and what virtual exchange is in general, as I did not venture into explaining to them the whole project yet, in order to avoid any confusion or apprehension. I introduced them the partners they will be interacting with; i.e. Brazilian university students, the duration of the project so they can schedule it in advance and be prepared, and how it is going to work in terms of weeks; i.e. one week for the task and another for the comments. At the end of the first week, students who wanted to take part of this project confirmed their participation and I had the final list of participants.

Along with the interactions with participants in the first week, several meetings through *Google meet* occurred with the Brazilian partner. During these meetings, the researchers created the Padlet for the project named “*Telecollaboration Project: Algeria and Brazil*” and after having the final number of participants from both parties, they were divided

into fourteen groups, that contain from four to eight members each, in order to better organize and control their communications.

The Actional Phase

The following week, for the actional phase, a questionnaire for Algerian EFL university teachers and a pre-project questionnaire for participants were administered. Instructors received a link to the survey through their emails. However, the link for students was shared through their *Messenger* group and they were asked to complete it before the beginning of the project. The reason behind administering these questionnaires is to assess teachers' perspective on integrating such Online Intercultural Exchange projects into their teaching practices and to have an idea about students' thoughts and pre-knowledge on VE.

The Post- Actional Phase

In the post-actional phase, the third week, an in-class meeting took place with participants to further explain the project in detail the *Padlet* platform, activities, and, also, discuss any inquiries. An additional *Google meet* was required, to help students acquire technical competence when using the facilities of *Padlet* through screen sharing. Furthermore, a video was created to demonstrate how the platform works and shared it on a *Messenger* group "*Telecollaborative Project*" that was made to facilitate the interactions with them and reply easily to any question they had at any time.

A classroom meeting was held with the participants at the end of Week 3 where we discussed their feelings, comments and reactions about the project. This class was based on an informal relaxed-based interview, in which I brought students up in open-ended conversations. The goal was essentially about reflecting upon their expectations and impressions on the project.

During the interview, all research questions from the present study were addressed and it was semi-structured, in other words, it was based on a list of questions but they were

flexible and without a pre-determined order. Some questions were the same as in the questionnaire to ensure checking of data.

Descriptive Analysis of the Tests

The descriptive statistical analysis of the questionnaires was conducted using SPSS 26 software because of its wide range of procedures that helped me interpret and analyze the findings. Frequency tables used in this analysis display counts and percentages for each categorical value, *Frequency* of the corresponding value is represented through the number of occurrences; *Percent* refers to the division of the frequency by the total number of observations; *Valid Percent* is the same as the previous proportion when no value is missing, which is the case in this study since there were no missing values for each variable; *Cumulative Percent* is calculated when each category is added to the preceding one.

Teachers' Questionnaire Analysis

Frequencies

The first section *Background Information* consists of four questions, in which three of the elements: gender, qualification and teaching experience were presented as only introductory components of the questionnaire with no relation to the research questions, unlike question 2.

Table 12*The Age Range of Respondents*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
20- 29	2	5,4	5,4	5,4
30- 39	14	37,8	37,8	43,2
40- 50	13	35,1	35,1	78,4
Over 50	8	21,6	21,6	100,0
Total	37	100,0	100,0	

The results shown in the table indicated that the vast majority of teachers belong to two different age ranges, from 30 to 39 years old (37.8%) and from 40 to 50 years old (35.1%). The first two generations are generally known for having a high affinity for technology and social media use. Meanwhile, the other age ranges are older than the others and can be less interested in ICTs and social media in general, hence using them in education.

In the second section *ICT in General*, the goal was to determine the availability of technologies and teachers' technical competence in terms of handling and manipulating devices. It was dealt with through five questions, all of them about ICTs, their accessibility in the respondents' houses as well as the way they were assimilated and handled.

Table 13*Respondents' Ownership of Computers*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	37	100,0	100,0	100,0

As the first question in the second section "*Do you have a computer?*" It showed that 100% of respondents owned one, which is considered as a commonplace for university teachers because it helps to create, add, modify and communicate pedagogical data. Thus,

investigating having a laptop helps in understanding teachers' practices when it comes to EFL teaching.

Table 14

Teachers' Time of Computer Use

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than one hour a day	1	2,7	2,7	2,7
	1 to 3 hours per day	15	40,5	40,5	43,2
	4 to 6 hours per day	12	32,4	32,4	75,7
	More than 6 hours a day	9	24,3	24,3	100,0
Total		37	100,0	100,0	

This question aimed at measuring the time spent by teachers in using computers. The results showed that (40.5%) utilize laptops from 1 to 3 hours, while (32.4%) spend from 4 to 6 hours per day. Despite the daily routines, respondents often found enough time to work on their computers.

Table 15

Respondents' Internet Accessibility at Home

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	37	100,0	100,0	100,0

Nowadays, technology paved the way for the use of devices like computers and phones, along with the internet which plays a crucial role and impact on every aspect of our lives. Linked to the previous question, this item was meant to check whether teachers have internet at home or not, in which the results indicated that all of them (100%) do have access to the internet.

Table 16*Teachers' Internet Use in Preparing Lessons*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always	20	54,1	54,1	54,1
	Often	11	29,7	29,7	83,8
	Sometimes	4	10,8	10,8	94,6
	Never	2	5,4	5,4	100,0
	Total	37	100,0	100,0	

The use of internet differs from one person to another, and its availability for teachers does not necessarily mean they make use of it in preparing their lessons. Even though, more than half of the respondents (54.1%) always do and (29.7%) often did. However, (5.4%) of teachers never utilize the internet in the preparation of their courses.

Table 17*Teachers' Level of Proficiency as a Technology User*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Beginner - I am able to perform basic functions in a limited number of computer applications	2	5,4	5,4	5,4
Average - I demonstrate a general competency in a number of computer applications	18	48,6	48,6	54,1
Advanced - I have acquired the ability to competently use a broad spectrum of computer technologies	15	40,5	40,5	94,6
Expert - I am extremely proficient in using a wide variety of computer technologies	2	5,4	5,4	100,0
Total	37	100,0	100,0	

The last question in the second section focused on the respondents' level of proficiency as technology users, to see whether this would affect their performances in using ICTs in language teaching in general or not. The answers showed that out of the four levels (48.6%) of the teachers considered themselves as *Average users* which mean that they demonstrate a general competency in a number of computer applications. Another (40.5%) chose *Advanced*, i.e. have acquired the ability to competently use a broad spectrum of computer technologies. Except for two respondents who believed they were *Beginners*,

performing basic functions in a limited number of computer applications and the other two as *Experts* in manipulating a wide variety of computer technologies.

Section three “*ICT and EFL Teaching*” aimed at investigating teaching practices with the help of technologies through the nine questions; as it has been discussed in the literature review, learning and teaching changes constantly with the development of pedagogical methods and technology- assisted equipment. This would help in finding out whether the respondents grasped the overall meaning of the concept of ICTs and identify their willingness to use them.

Table 18

Algeria Institution promotion of ICTs

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	17	45,9	45,9	45,9
	No	20	54,1	54,1	100,0
Total		37	100,0	100,0	

After examining teachers’ technological competence and knowledge at the level of their personal use, the first question in the third section focused on the availability of ICTs at the level of their institutions. The results revealed that the vast majority (54.1%) of Algerian universities do not promote them. On the contrary, (45.9%) argued that they do.

Table 19

Classroom Connection to Internet

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	4	10,8	10,8	10,8
	No	33	89,2	89,2	100,0
Total		37	100,0	100,0	

Another question in relation to the promotion of ICTs by institutions is the classroom connection to the internet. The results indicated that the largest majority of respondents (89.2%) do not have access to the internet inside their classes except for (10.8%) who argued the opposite, which is a very low percentage.

Table 20

Frequency of Using ICTs in Teaching Activities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always	3	8,1	8,1	8,1
	Frequently	10	27,0	27,0	35,1
	Occasionally	12	32,4	32,4	67,6
	Rarely	7	18,9	18,9	86,5
	Not at all	5	13,5	13,5	100,0
Total		37	100,0	100,0	

Teachers' responses regarding the frequency of their technology use in teaching activities revealed that 12 teachers (32.4%) integrate it occasionally, while 10 (27%) declared implementing it frequently. However, 5 of them (13.5%) said that they do not integrate the internet in their teaching activities at all. When asked to describe how they used technologies in their teaching practices, all teachers mentioned bringing their PCs and projectors into classrooms so they can present their lessons using PowerPoint, videos and audios. They also stated using apps like dictionaries to facilitate learning. Besides that, outside the classroom, they used emails and some of them chose Google Classroom as an alternative to share the materials and also connect with students.

In question 13, *"If circumstances were different or more favorable, would you use it in your classroom?"* I wanted to investigate whether teachers are in favor of using internet in different circumstances, and the wide majority (91.9%) agreed, especially that they argued it

was beneficial and would facilitate the teaching and learning processes. However, 3 teachers (8.1%) did not agree on the statement.

Table 21

Challenges in Using ICTs in the Classrooms

	Responses			
	N	Percent	Percent of Cases	
Challenges in using Technology access	30	50,8%	83,3%	
ICT inside the class	Language technology training	7	11,9%	19,4%
	Time	11	18,6%	30,6%
	Language curriculum and/or texts used at my teaching institution	5	8,5%	13,9%
	Student interests	6	10,2%	16,7%
	Total	59	100,0%	163,9%

In this multiple response question, teachers chose the most common challenges they face in using technologies inside their classrooms. Respondents' answers showed that *Technology access* (50.8%) was the main problem faced; this further demonstrates that the real issue for teachers is the lack of technological tools provided by their institutions which prevent them from integrating ICTs. Moreover, 11 teachers (18.6%) declared it was *Time*; 7 argued that they lack the *Language technology training* (11.9%), where they believed a training concerning the use of ICTs is necessary for them to implement it in their teaching practices. 6 teachers (10.2%) thought that students are not interested, however, 5 of the

respondents (8.5%) said their *Language curriculum and/or texts used at my teaching institution* do not encourage the use of ICTs inside their classrooms.

According to teachers' responses to the first questions in section three, Algerian educational institutions are affected by GDD; It appears that universities have no access to materials to facilitate teaching and learning, in other words, "no possession of computers and network connections" (Van Djik, 1999). This limitation of access is going to make the integration and implementation of telecollaboration difficult through the use of institutional tools. Thus, these types of projects are usually conducted through personal computer/phone and internet access.

As for teachers' opinion on whether technology increases students' achievement or not and if it enhances lifelong learning, 30 teachers (81.1%) said yes and the other 7 (18.9%) answered no. On the same note, 33 of them (89.2%) agreed that the use of ICTs in their teaching practices is helpful and would definitely improve students' communication skills as opposed to 4 (10.8%). This proves that technologies have a positive impact on learners' pedagogical achievements.

Table 22

Technology and Teachers' Role

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	21	56,8	56,8	56,8
	No	16	43,2	43,2	100,0
Total		37	100,0	100,0	

With the advancement of technologies, challenges around traditional methods of teaching started to be discussed and were replaced with the different technologically enhanced teaching and learning approaches instead. Technology is believed to also change the role of teachers as well. Results showed that 21 of the respondents (56.8%) agreed on the

statement, on the contrary to 16 (43.2%) who opposed. This can indicate that with the increased access to information online, teachers' role shifted from being the primary source of information to more of a guide and a mentor. Meanwhile, those who disagreed, it could be because they see it as a facilitator to the learning process, and that teachers cannot be replaced.

Section four, and the last, entitled "*Telecollaboration in EFL*" dealt with teachers' perspective on the integration of virtual exchange and intercultural communication competence in their Foreign Language teaching processes. The first question for this section was to know if teachers were familiar with one of the terms '*Telecollaboration*', '*Virtual Exchange*' or '*Online Inetrultural Exchnage*'

Table 23

Teachers' Familiarity with the Term Telecollaboration

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	30	81,1	81,1	81,1
	No	7	18,9	18,9	100,0
Total		37	100,0	100,0	

The responses declared that the wide majority (81.1%) were familiar with the terms, as opposed to 7 of them (18.9%); which rather indicate that it is a relatively new approach. For that reason I provided a definition so they can answer the upcoming questions **Note: Telecollaboration according to O'Dowd is: "the application of online communication tools to bring together classes of language learners in geographically distant locations to develop their foreign language skills and intercultural competence through collaborative tasks and project work."*

Concerning respondents' experience with telecollaboration in language teaching and/or teacher development in question 21 and 22, 25 teachers (67.6%) declared that they

never experienced collaborative learning to develop their professional teaching. However, 12 of them (32.4%) did participate previously in a virtual exchange. This proves that it is a fairly new approach to Algerian university instructors.

Teachers who had previous experiences in telecollaboration with their students were asked to further describe it, in which the responses varied as follow:

- “I have been a member of the GVC global visual classroom with North Carolina and Moldova universities and this was within the programme of intercultural speaker and cultural studies.”
- “In the Sanako virtual class which is intended for EFL learners, you can create your class, share documents, lessons, deliver exercises and evaluate each student. It also enables you to share links and videos.”
- “I used to employ this sort of tools with my online students from different parts of the world who decided to complete their degree via distance learning (Teleconference). We used to have more online students than on campus students. Students discussed their final projects via teleconference digital media and they benefit from a constant online supervision.”
- “In fact, it was a short-lived experience with university students due to weak internet connections and students’ unreadiness. I have to add that this was done for delivering lectures online.”
- “I once took part in a Cultural joint-program between the University of Batna and the University of Washington DC (subvention by the US Embassy in Algeria), in which students exchanged information for about 6 or seven sessions.”
- “At the secondary school telecollaboration have been applied on students of English to exchange with American native speakers as a new innovation in applying ICT.”

- “Given the present situation and since I teach oral expression, I managed to contact my students via what's up. Also, I had the opportunity to be part of a meeting held on Zoom with my colleagues to discuss Master2 dissertation titles.”
- “Through the Sanako platform.”
- “I am teaching Civilisation and TEFL online to Brazilian and Mexican learners (businessman and politicians), it is very interesting and learners are very motivated.”

As discussed in the literature review, one of the goals of telecollaboration is the assessment and development of cultural awareness; Intercultural Communication Competence. Teachers when asked “*Do you think developing students' intercultural communicative competence is important?*” 35 of them (94.6%) agreed on its importance, as it allows individuals to overcome prejudices and misunderstandings. Yet, 2 respondents (5.4%) did not think developing ICC was essential. On the same note, regarding teachers' opinion on the relationship between the integration of telecollaboration and the development of students' ICC, it is presented in the table below:

Table 24

The Development of Students' ICC through the Integration of Telecollaboration.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	12	32,4	32,4	32,4
	Agree	11	29,7	29,7	62,2
	Neutral	5	13,5	13,5	75,7
	Disagree	3	8,1	8,1	83,8
	Strongly disagree	6	16,2	16,2	100,0
Total		37	100,0	100,0	

The responses obtained from this Likert scale question showed that more than half of teachers were in favor to the idea that virtual exchange develops learners' ICC, believing that it helps students move from being ethnocentric to being ethnorelativist (Bennett, 2001), while only 9 teachers, divided in 3 (8.1%) who disagreed and 6 (16.2) who strongly disagreed. Moreover, the findings revealed that 5 of them (13.5%) decided to be neutral.

Table 25

The Development of Intercultural Awareness and Communication Skills

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very important	24	64,9	64,9	64,9
	Fairly important	7	18,9	18,9	83,8
	Important	3	8,1	8,1	91,9
	Slightly important	1	2,7	2,7	94,6
	Not at all important	2	5,4	5,4	100,0
Total		37	100,0	100,0	

Table 26

The Development of Foreign Language Competence

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very important	21	56,8	56,8	56,8
	Fairly important	6	16,2	16,2	73,0
	Important	6	16,2	16,2	89,2
	Not at all important	4	10,8	10,8	100,0
Total		37	100,0	100,0	

Table 27*The Development of Online Communication and Collaboration Skills (Digital Literacy)*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very important	10	27,0	27,0	27,0
	Fairly important	9	24,3	24,3	51,4
	Important	8	21,6	21,6	73,0
	Slightly important	5	13,5	13,5	86,5
	Not at all important	5	13,5	13,5	100,0
	Total	37	100,0	100,0	

Table 28*More Learning about the Subject from a Foreign Perspective*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very important	9	24,3	24,3	24,3
	Fairly important	10	27,0	27,0	51,4
	Important	11	29,7	29,7	81,1
	Slightly important	4	10,8	10,8	91,9
	Not at all important	3	8,1	8,1	100,0
	Total	37	100,0	100,0	

Table 29*Providing an Authentic Communication Scenarios in a Foreign Language*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very important	17	45,9	45,9	45,9
	Fairly important	11	29,7	29,7	75,7
	Important	3	8,1	8,1	83,8
	Slightly important	3	8,1	8,1	91,9
	Not at all important	3	8,1	8,1	100,0
	Total	37	100,0	100,0	

In the present Likert scale question, I provided five statements for teachers to rate from the very to the least important possible pedagogic aims of a telecollaboration project. Findings for the first statement “*Develop intercultural awareness and communication skills*” declared that the vast majority consider it as important, divided into three rates 24 (64.9%) chose *very important*, 7 (18.9%) *fairly important*, and 3(8.1%) *important*. Moreover, concerning the next statement which is to “*Develop foreign language competence*” only 4 (10.8%) stated that *it is not at all important*, while the rest ranged from *important* to *very important*. Another statement “*Develop online communication and collaboration skills (digital literacy)*” were respondents agreed on to be more likely important rather than *slightly* 5 (13.5%) or *not at all important* 5 (13.5%). Concerning the next telecollaboration aim “*Learn more about their subject from a foreign perspective*” 9 (24.3%) said it was *very important*, 10 (27%) *fairly important* and 11 (29.7%) *important*, however the other 7 teachers did not feel like it. Finally, the last aim was to “*Provide authentic communication scenarios in a foreign language*” in which a wide range of respondents agreed that it is important for students interact authentically, as opposed to 3 (8.1%) who stated that it was *slightly*

important and the other 3 (8.1%) said it was *not at all important*. Therefore, we can say that all the presented aims are equally important to develop in telecollaboration projects.

For the next question, Teachers were asked to Likert scale what they believe the results of telecollaboration integration would be. I presented them five outcomes to rate from being very likely to happen to being Very unlikely to happen:

Table 30

Telecollaboration improving students' intercultural awareness

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very likely	32	86,5	86,5	86,5
	Very unlikely	3	8,1	8,1	94,6
	Undecided	2	5,4	5,4	100,0
	Total	37	100,0	100,0	

Table 31

Telecollaboration affecting students' attitudes towards intercultural learning

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very likely	27	73,0	73,0	73,0
	Very unlikely	5	13,5	13,5	86,5
	Undecided	5	13,5	13,5	100,0
	Total	37	100,0	100,0	

Table 32*Students would improve their foreign language skills*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very likely	30	81,1	81,1	81,1
	Very unlikely	4	10,8	10,8	91,9
	Undecided	3	8,1	8,1	100,0
	Total	37	100,0	100,0	

Table 33*Telecollaboration would affect students' attitudes and perspectives towards EFL learning*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very likely	26	70,3	70,3	70,3
	Very unlikely	6	16,2	16,2	86,5
	Undecided	5	13,5	13,5	100,0
	Total	37	100,0	100,0	

Table 34*Students Willingness to Improve their Online Communication and Digital Literacy Skills*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very likely	33	89,2	89,2	89,2
	Very unlikely	2	5,4	5,4	94,6
	Undecided	2	5,4	5,4	100,0
	Total	37	100,0	100,0	

As a first outcome “*Students would improve their intercultural awareness*”, the findings showed that 32 respondents (86.5%) believed it was very likely to happen, while 3

(8.1%) said that it was very unlikely to happen; the last 2 (5.4%) were undecided. Another potential effect is *“Telecollaboration would affect students' attitudes and perspectives towards intercultural learning”* in which 27 teachers (73%) agreed that it was highly achievable, as opposed to 5 of them (13.5%) who disagreed. Moreover, *“Students would improve their foreign language skills”* 30 (81.1%) said that it was very likely to result through telecollaboration and 4 (10.8%) said that it was very unlikely, whereas, the rest were undecided. The next outcome that 26 participants (70.3%) declared to be most likely happening was that *“Telecollaboration would affect students' attitudes and perspectives towards EFL learning”*, however, 6 (16.2%) were against. As a last consequence, *“Students would improve their online communication and digital literacy skills”* the vast majority 33 (89.2%) declared it was very likely to occur, while 2 (5.4%) declared it was very unlikely.

Table 35

Telecollaboration and Stereotypes

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	12	32,4	32,4	32,4
	No	25	67,6	67,6	100,0
Total		37	100,0	100,0	

In the last close-ended question, participants were asked whether they believe that telecollaboration could reinforce stereotypes. As discussed in the literature review, that is believed to happen in the case of cross-cultural misunderstandings. As for the responses, presented in Table 35, more than half of the teachers 25 (67.6%) disagreed on the statement, although 12 (32.4%) agreed.

Students' Pre- Project Questionnaire Analysis

Frequencies

The first section *Background Information* consists of four questions, in which the first two introductory components were about participants' names and ages, with no relation to the research questions. Nevertheless, the aim behind asking for their names is to use them in the forthcoming cycles. Concerning the next question, the answers revealed that students' age ranged from 19 years old to 23; therefore, all participants belonged to the same generation. They are considered digital natives and certainly have no problems in using new technologies.

Table 36

Students' Travel/ Studying Abroad Experience

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	9	30,0	30,0	30,0
	No	21	70,0	70,0	100,0
Total		30	100,0	100,0	

Table 37

Students' Experience with People from Foreign Countries

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	26	86,7	86,7	86,7
	No	4	13,3	13,3	100,0
Total		30	100,0	100,0	

Regarding students' travels and studies abroad, more than half 21 (70%) answered no to both, however, nine (30%) said yes. Nevertheless, the vast majority 26 (86.7%) said they have friends or family members from other countries, unlike (13.3%) who said no. These

questions are related, where the purpose is to know whether participants have had a live experience with people from foreign countries, hence, different cultural backgrounds.

The second section, “*Pre-Project Expectations*” focused on students’ first reaction in taking part in the telecollaborative project. The objective of this section is to investigate their knowledge of pre-cross-cultural interaction and to know what they expect from it. The results will be compared to the post- questionnaire answers.

Table 38

Students’ Reaction to the Padlet Project

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid It sounds interesting. I'm looking forward to it!	25	83,3	83,3	83,3
It's interesting, but I feel a little bit intimidated	4	13,3	13,3	96,7
It doesn't sound like a good idea	1	3,3	3,3	100,0
Total	30	100,0	100,0	

Concerning respondents’ reaction to the Padlet project, I opted first for a Likert scale question, where most of them 25 (83.3%) thought it sounded interesting, and looked forward to it. However, four (13.3%) assumed that it was interesting but felt a bit intimidated, apart from one student (3.3%) who did not think it was a good idea. This shows that almost every participant really looks forward to starting the exchange.

Table 39*Students' Perception on the Project*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	It's just another homework assignment	0	0	0	0
	It will probably be fun sometimes	2	6,7	6,7	6,7
	I think it will be a fun way to practice English	28	93,3	93,3	100,0
Total		30	100,0	100,0	

In this Likert scale, linked to the previous question, students were asked to state how they feel about the project in general; nearly everyone 28 (93.3%) declared that it would be a fun way to practice English, 2 (6.7%) stated that it would probably be fun at times. Yet, no one felt it was another homework assignment. This indicates that as well as being interested and eager to partake in the exchange, their impression was that it would be fun, especially in learning English.

Table 40*Students' Learning Expectation*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	30	100,0	100,0	100,0

Concerning the outcomes from participating in the Padlet project, the aim of this closed-ended question was to investigate if participants expect to learn anything at the end of this exchange, in which the whole group 30 (100%) said that they would definitely learn

something. This shows that students do expect to acquire certain knowledge from this type of project, which is the goal.

Table 41

The Importance of Learning about Cultures

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	29	96,7	96,7	96,7
	No	1	3,3	3,3	100,0
Total		30	100,0	100,0	

The second part of this section was directed to participants' perception of culture and its relationship to the telecollaboration project. Concerning this closed-ended question, the focus was on exploring the importance of learning culture in general, where almost all students 29 (96.7%) said yes, except for one (3.3%) who said no.

Table 42

The Importance of Language Learning and Culture

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes, it is important	29	96,7	96,7	96,7
	It is just about the language	1	3,3	3,3	100,0
Total		30	100,0	100,0	

Regarding the importance of learning language alongside culture, all students 29 (96.7%) besides one (3.3%) agreed that it was important and it was not just about the language. This shows that participants believe that culture is a socially acquired knowledge

which is developed within the language (Alptekin, 1993). In other words, language and culture are deeply connected and inseparable (Alptekin, 1993; Byram, 2000; Kramsch, 2013; Purba, 2011)

- **My Reflections on Cycle 1:**

The whole cycle 1 was based on pre-project data gathering and planning. The objective was to introduce L3 students to the field of virtual exchange, oversimplify the *Padlet* and make it more accessible or easy to use. At the end of the cycle they were intended to know how to use and manipulate the facilities and components of the platform. After gathering the data from the questionnaires and the group meetings, I outlined my reflections as follows:

- My behavior within the introduction to the project was illustrated by my willingness to take up the challenge to make things change at the department of Foreign Languages. Even though the content was new to students, it had a motivational effect on them. I attempted to inculcate in them the same level of enthusiasm and commitment that I had and hoped interest and attitudes about the subject matter would be compelling to them. By commitment, I mean that I made them aware of my presence and willingness to assist them in their learning.
- After the first week, I noticed that students were a bit perplexed but thrilled to start the interaction. Later on, following the full description of the project and the platform use, they were very motivated and eager to the idea of taking part in the VE. In order to maintain their motivation, I kept encouraging them to believe in their abilities, and their determination to learn about the project and platform was depicted through their questions in the pre- and post- actional phase.

ICC Development through Telecollaboration

Scholars (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006; Fantini, 2009; Kramsch, 1993; Kramsch, 2011) state that ICC is about the understanding of one's own culture along with other cultures; arguing that it would increase the ability to adjust one's perspective on home and target cultures. As discussed in the previous chapters, it is believed that multicultural-based interactions enable individuals to learn about the target culture through its people and compare it to their own; thus, helps in acquiring intercultural competence. For this research, one of its goals depicted in the research question is to see how telecollaboration develops learners' intercultural competence. This is reflected in four aspects that are based in every model of conceptualization of intercultural competence:

- Teachers' definition of ICC and its relation to language teaching,
- Participants' definition of culture,
- Participants' awareness of their culture, and;
- Participants' understanding of the target culture; i.e., Brazilian culture.

This research question is investigated using data from the pre-questionnaire and group meetings.

Understanding the Concept of Culture and Intercultural Communication

Both teachers and participants' comprehension of the general conception of culture and its significance was examined through the pre- telecollaboration project questionnaires and interviews with qualitative questions. The focus behind asking teachers to define ICC was to understand their perspective and its use in language teaching. However, telecollaboration participants' focus was on their perspectives on intercultural encounters, in addition to their understanding of culture and attitudes towards culture learning. For this reason I address research question number two: *Does telecollaboration develop learners' intercultural communicative competence?* I start by analyzing teachers' data, and then I

discuss students' views on the importance of culture and its relationship to learning a foreign language. Afterwards, I present participants' definitions of culture before and after the cross-cultural interaction. Concerning students' understanding of intercultural communication, pre-project questions were delivered through interviews that focused on their previous knowledge and experiences. In addition, I discuss their learning expectations from the telecollaboration project.

Teachers and ICC

As previously mentioned, in the context of EFL, it is regarded insufficient to focus just on students' language ability, as it is necessary to help them acquire intercultural competence (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006; Hofstede, 1984). Teachers were asked to define Intercultural communication and state whether it is important to language learning or not. They viewed ICC as the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with people from different cultures; which is in Deardorff's ICC model (2006) referred to as 'desired external outcomes'. In addition, they perceived it as the ability to be conscious of cultural variety 'requisite attitudes' (Deardorff's ICC Model, 2006). Teachers have traditionally focused on the desired external objective, skills, knowledge, and required attitude toward cultural differences as parts of ICC, i.e., skills (Deardorff, 2006). However, considering his model as a reference in data analysis, only few teachers referred to ICC as the 'desired internal outcomes' which is the ability to be flexible, ethnorelative and have empathy.

In spite of that, teachers provided diverse perspectives on culture, and as a result, their understandings of ICC varied slightly; as shown in the following extracts of some of their responses:

- "ICC is the ability to understand and to tolerate other world views and cultures. It fosters acceptance, respect and mutual understanding. I think it is important since

language and culture are closely tied, and since our attitudes vis-a-vis a language may affect our ability to use it and to understand it efficiently.”

- “Intercultural communicative competence is the ability to understand and communicate with other culture.”
- “Tolerating ambiguity or lack of understanding due to cultural issues when conversing with foreigners is highly advised to keep going the conversation or the interaction and attempting to compensate for this lack by questioning once more or through various communicative strategies.”
- “Well intercultural communicative competences are directly affected by the use of different types of technology at different levels. They are reflected in the student’s ability to communicate about a foreign culture in a foreign language to score more in learning English as a foreign language.”
- “Intercultural communication competence, or ICC, refers to the ability to understand cultures, including your own, and use this understanding to communicate with people from other cultures. It is important in teaching, and as a teacher of translation it is important to know to develop this competence through using various media to give to students an image about the different aspects of the target culture.”
- “Intercultural communicative competence is a network of skills and abilities. Promoting ICC is paving the way to language teaching efficiency. In language communication, gaps are backed up with effectual strategies and rational methods.”
- “It is the development of one's ability to correspond and communicate through and despite language barriers.”
- “Having the ability & potential to understand/sympathize with the others' culture & to interpret their own culture to the others.”

- “Intercultural communicative competence is the ability of learners to communicate with students who belong to a different environment and have unsimilar traditions and values. This competence helps learners interact with the other side of the world, it also paves the way for new way of thinking.”
- “I guess it is communication between people from different cultures who speak different language and still are able to reach mutual intelligibility thanks to their ICC. It is essential for language learning since the latter is basically a matter of knowing about the other and understanding the other. We are usually afraid of the unknown, and possessing ICC lowers our filter and makes it enjoyable for us as language learners to discover the other's culture and share with him our own culture.”
- “ICC refers to the ability to understand cultures, including your own, and use this understanding to communicate with people from other cultures successfully.”
- “It is importance to decrease misunderstanding and increase empathy.”
- In my view, language is also a carrier of cultural norms and heritage. So effective communication then entails grasping cultural norms and conventions. Well, I see intercultural communicative competence as the ability to engage and communicate successfully with a foreigner without having the challenge of decoding culturally charged speech acts, falling into misunderstanding, or sounding rude.”
- “The pedagogical aim of telecollaboration is the best way of promoting intercultural communicative competence, students’ awareness. It can develop linguistic skills and enlarge students’ ways of learning a foreign language.”
- “Intercultural communication is the representation of the self and the other in verbal or non verbal interaction.”
- “ICC is the ability to know about others' cultures.”

The second part of the question dealt with the importance of language and ICC, and based on their definitions, the majority of the teachers consider language and ICC as inseparable, interrelated, and one cannot exist without the other. The second argument, as presented in the examples below, was that language and culture is required to bridge the gap between intercultural different groups:

- “Language and culture are inseparable in the processes of teaching and learning a foreign language. It follows that communicating in a given language presupposes a level of skill and mastery of its cultural component which facilitates communication between the different parties.”
- “ICC is crucial especially for EFL learners because they will study a language, literature and civilization of another culture. Moreover, sooner or later, they will have to communicate with native speakers. Therefore, this competence is important.”
- “Learning a foreign language means the learner should be acquainted with its culture, that is the language with its idiomatic expressions beside structure in order not to clash with native speakers. Most of our learners do not use the language in its cultural bath but a translated form of it either from their mother tongue Arabic or French one as a second language.”
- “ICC is crucial for language teaching since it allows learners to communicate smoothly with foreigners. Knowing the other's culture helps learners to understand better and evade culture sensitive topics with their interlocutors.”
- “I believe it is important because in a world of globalization and close-circuit understanding of common global concepts, this competence is not only needed and sought-after, but rather a must!”

- “Ige & culture are two pieces of the same coin; the body & soul; the day & night. ONE CANNOT EXIST PERFECTLY WITHOUT THE OTHER.”
- “Yes, absolutely. It engages students/learners in dialogue with their peers in different parts of the world. It develops students' intercultural competence and increases their awareness and sensitiveness of cultural diversity. It develops their positive attitudes towards others by accepting differences. For teachers, it develops international networks for collaborators.”
- “Developing intercultural communicative competence is one of the criteria we can use to decide about the effectiveness of foreign language learning.”

Participants and ICC

Participants' previous intercultural communication experiences were investigated through questions asked in both pre-project questionnaire and interviews. As previously discussed, the majority of participants had little to no experience of other cultures, in terms of travelling and having families or friends from other countries and cultural backgrounds. Only a few of them stated they mainly have family members living abroad, however, they did not tend to frequently be in contact with them.

Lacking intercultural experiences did not prevent students from acknowledging the relationship between language and culture. This was observed in their responses when asked about whether culture is important in general, in which all respondents agreed upon and supported their answers by saying that it was necessary nowadays to “understand others”.

Here are some of their arguments:

- “The most u learn more cultures the most u get more cultured and can discuss in any topic could be suggested cause those cultural information will make u improve yourself”

- “Learning about other cultures in general helps with gaining more vocabulary which helps understand are there people language that they use in your daily life every culture has its own idioms that we cannot understand only if we already have learned about it.”
- “We tend to classify people depending on stereotypes, with learning about cultures we won't believe everything we hear and to understand people better u must know their culture + it will open our minds on many things.”
- “It is good to know because will facilitate your communication and your understanding”
- “Learning about others culture gives the person a change to know more about them as human, where do these countries come from and how they began, the same for us in here if anyone could ask or want to learn more about our language, I would definitely ask him to start learning about our culture first, it just makes it easier.”
- “To know about other people and stop living in a bubble”

Regardless of students’ backgrounds, the vast majority expressed their understanding about the importance of learning a language and its culture, rather than depending only on the language. They agreed on its necessity for a better communication with others and to further understand the language in the different contexts. Students' attitudes about the cultural component of language programs may change as a result of instruction and learning experiences (Chavez, 2002). The following statements are some of what they had to say:

- “To further enhance your learning and to understand further contexts.”
- “Knowing about others culture and customs also facilitate the communication”
- “So let’s be far away from classical answer *yes its good* not only that y should apply this culture in your life in many positions also sharing a discussion about a

cultural topic will help you to gain more new information through the exchange of this oral conversation.”

- “To know the language you need to know the culture of that language and go deep to understand it.”
- “When you travel to other countries and you know their culture it helps you to communicate with them and you appear that you're interested in their culture.”
- “As I said before each culture has its own idioms, expressions... That you can only understand it if you have an idea about it.”
- “Of course, learning about culture makes learning the language easier, maybe one day you'll end up living with those people and academic learning alone won't help one must be exposed to the cultural background and even slang words, idioms, and their holidays, customs and how people act with each other for example do not shake hands with someone from Japan..”
- “Basically language reflects its speakers culture and we need to know the culture in order to master the language”
- “Understanding culture allows you to give the right meaning to each word, in the larger context, because you'll be able to think in the foreign language. ... By understanding cultural differences while learning a language, you'll find new ways to express these things. Culture is essential when studying languages.”
- “Culture and language are related, you can't learn one without the other”
- “You can't practice a language without knowing its culture, because by understanding a culture it allows you to give the right meaning to each word, also you will get to think in the foreign language...”

These examples clearly show students' awareness towards the need to understand the culture of the language they are learning, even though they had little to no experience with

'the other'. This indicates that participants have developed Byram's (1997) *savoirs* or as referred to by knowledge (ICC Model, 1997). Furthermore, taking into consideration other Intercultural models, the present study and findings demonstrate that students had a rather ethnorelative approach on culture which would place them in the acceptance stage of the intercultural sensitivity model (Bennett, 1993). This implies that they recognize and are curious to other cultures, while still being respectful towards them. This does not necessarily mean they approve of its values.

Pre- Telecollaboration Expectations

Students' perceptions were collected from the pre- project questionnaire and the classroom group meetings, guided by the following questions:

- *What is your impression on participating in the project?*

All students were very excited to start the project and interact with other individuals having a different culture from their own. They expressed a very strong opinion on how the project was unconventional from the norms, when it comes to teaching or learning English.

The most common responses were:

- "Taking part in this project sounds so fun and educational at the same time. Can't wait"
- "I am excited to talk with Brazilians and know about their culture"
- "It's a nice thing to take your language abilities and practice them in the real life"
- "I don't know that much about culture and traditions in Brazil, I expect to know more, and overcome my fear of talking to strangers if I find that we're not that different or I'll learn to embrace diversity, Because at the end of the day we're all HUMANS ✨"
- "I am looking forward to getting to know new people more, use of English and having interesting discussions"

- “It sounds fun, I want to practice my English and make new friends”

The vast majority of participants agreed on the same points they think will be learning in the project. This was depicted through the following question: “*What do you think you will learn from the project?*” The most recurrent themes in their responses were about practicing English, learning new vocabularies and developing their grammar. Another perspective to the second most expected outcome from participating in such a project was learning about the Brazilian culture, as they were too eager to know their partners more.

Yet, students could not fully grasp the relation between language and culture in this context. They do not know to what extent intercultural interaction plays a major role in language learning; this shows the unbalanced degree of language and intercultural competence in their minds (Bennett, 1993; Byram, 1997). In previous studies (Bennett, 1993; Byram, 1997, Kramsch, 2011) this is found to be a common problem.

- “Communication and develop my oral skills and also be familiar with public speaking”
- “It will boost my confidence in speaking English in front of other people.”
- “Practicing English, improving our speaking, new vocabularies, expressions, know more about their culture and discover new attitudes.”
- “To not judge people by their ethnicity”
- “Effective communication also collaboration with others and so on, learning information about different culture”
- “I think I will get to learn about different cultures which will help me create a new way of thinking and the way I view and accept new things.”
- “How to deal with other people from different culture and country”

Action Research Cycle 2

The telecollaborative design of this research is based on Kramsch's (2013) theory that individuals learn about their own culture by explaining and comparing it to foreign cultures. Furthermore, participants were purposefully asked to discuss the weekly topics by providing their own explanations of their particular practices rather than to evaluate conventional cultural behaviors. The goal was to show how culture is subjective and is shaped by personal experiences. I identified participants' intercultural competence growth in the data analysis; I looked for examples of participants adopting an outsider's perspective on their own culture in particular.

As previously mentioned, it is in research cycle 2 that the discussion-based project began between the Algerian and Brazilian participants. After I had introduced and explained the telecollaborative exchange and how the platform is used to students, I started Cycle 2 following Henning's (2008) framework on the types of discussion: framing, conceptual, and application; this model also applies to the next interaction-based cycles. It is worth mentioning that in the analysis of students' posts and comments, I stated their names used on the *Padlet*.

Week 4- 5: The Pre- Actional Phase

The pre- actional phase started with the researchers meeting through Google Meet to discuss the first task. The purpose was to agree on:

- The week's topic: since it was the first week's task of the project, students were asked to introduce themselves to the others. This would help them get to know each other and break the ice, thus, have an idea or an image of the 'other' from both perspectives.
- The method used by participants to present: for this specific task, participants had to create and share videos of them telling who they are.

- Instructions: participants were provided with the necessary instructions that would help them in sharing their videos.

“WEEK 01: The purpose of this activity is to allow you to introduce yourself to the other participants.

Please, post your video here by adding it through the + signal above this column.

Your presentation should include:

1) A salutation: say hello to your project partner(s);

2) Write your name and pronounce it slowly (enunciate), so that your partners can try to pronounce it the way it is;

3) Now, introduce yourself in a way that you answer the following questions:

Who are you? Where are you from? What do you study? What is your cultural background?

What are your interests?

--> Also, Try to engage your project partners with content that they can appreciate. Try to be creative and original.

IMPORTANT: Your video must be from 3 to 5 minutes.”

The objectives of the first two weeks’ task were:

- To familiarize participants with the use of *Padlet*,
- To get students to know each other,
- To raise their motivation to participate and watch others’ videos.

Concerning the time frame of the virtual exchange cycle, it was for 10 weeks. A new task was provided each two weeks; the first being a task- based and the second being a comment- based as shown in table 43 below. We chose the beginning of the week to post the topics that are going to be discussed on the *Padlet* for participants with deadlines for each task; in which they usually had the whole week to participate. The same was for the second week, where students were told they had the whole week to comment on each

others' posts, however, they were not limited to solely interact with their own groups, but also with others.

In the *Telecollaborative Project: Algeria and Brazil Padlet*, we decided to adopt a column type design, in which the first column was devoted only for the first week's task. This was only applied for the "introductions", as a different approach was followed for the next topics. It would help students to watch any video whenever they wanted during the upcoming weeks without scrolling down the different weeks to find them.

Regarding my students, they were informed about the first task on their Messenger group. I shared with them the link to the *Padlet*, where the instructions were provided. I further explained to them what they had to do in the group, and asked them to not hesitate in sending their inquiries or if they needed help dealing with the platform.

Table 43

Timeframe of the Project's Cycle

Topic 1	Week 4: Task- based
	Week 5: Comment- based
Topic 2	Week 6: Task- based
	Week 7: Comment- based
Topic 3	Week 8: Task- based
	Week 9: Comment- based
Topic 4	Week 10: Task- based
	Week 11: Comment- based
Topic 5	Week 12: Task- based
	Week 13: Comment- based

The Actional Phase

During the first week, participants from both universities shared their videos, presenting themselves following the instructions we provided them with in the *Padlet*. The aim of instructions was to guide and help them if they had a problem not knowing what to discuss exactly, however, they were not restricted, as they had the freedom to express or talk about anything within the topic. The videos in this part of the study were transcribed using *Sonix*; an automated transcription service that transcribes audios and videos. In this section, I provided only five of the video transcriptions because the number of participants was big.

Transcript 01: Romaiissa

Speaker1: [00:00:00] Hi, guys. Well, my name is Romaiissa. We pronounce it, or we spell it like R O M A I S S A, Romaiissa. If you find it.... If you find it a bit difficult to pronounce, you can easily call me Ramoussa, it's much easier. I am a third year English student in... at my university that is called Mohamed Cherif Messadia it is located or situated in my town or my city Souk- Ahras, in the north of..... north of Algeria. Algeria is a country located in the north of Africa.

Well, as I said, I am an English student and I am a nurse at the same time, so I work and study at the same time. I work in a hospital called Ibn Rushd and it's a bit difficult to study and work at the same time, especially these days with... with the pandemic of Coronavirus and the huge number of patients. But I'm doing well. And so I'm a student of English language. Then I am a nurse. Third, I am an author of two published books. I will show you. This is my first book, this one is called "Be a Ferrari with No Brakes", and the second one is called "Dance with Your Dreams". As you see, I am a writer in the self development or self improvement field, motivational field. And so yeah, I'm a writer and a blogger on certain, certain websites.

Speaker1: [00:01:25] *What else? Yes, I am a content creator. You can find my videos on my YouTube channel or my Instagram account or sometimes on my Facebook account too. I would put you the link if you are interested. You can go and take... take a look. What else? I love cooking. About my interests, I write and I create... I write and I create content, I cook, I LOVE cooking and I learn languages. I consider myself a polyglot. I speak four languages, actually, Arabic, obviously, and French, English and Italian. These days I'm trying to improve my English and my Italian language, though I consider myself fluent in Italian. What else is? And my new two interests are violin. I'm trying to learn how to play violin. It is a really difficult instrument... musical instrument to learn how to play with. But I'm doing my best. And the number two is yoga. I'm trying to practice yoga, though I am busy these days working on my third new book, but I'm doing my best. And what else? Yeah, basically that's me. feel free to contact me whether to get advice on your health issues or writing or cooking, whatever, and I'm really happy to be here, part of this program of telecollaboration. Yeah. See you in the next video.*

Transcript 02: Ouala

Speaker1: [00:00:00] *So hello. My name is Ouala Hibat Allah. I know it's a pretty long name, but I usually go with just one that in my daily life it spells into O U A L A, 'Ouala' or simply W A L A, 'Wala'. But I prefer the first one. It means loyalty in Arabic to be specific. I am 20 years old, turning 21 this year, hopefully. I have been studying English for three years now at university. I have always been fond of English since the middle school. That's why I chose it.*

I live in Algeria, of course, the biggest country in Africa. You may know this and I live exactly in the east part of Algeria, near the Tunisian borders, in a small city called Souk-Ahras. A fun fact, it is translated to 'the Lyon Market' because it always gathered a Lyon market that all people from the entire continent came to sell or buy from it. So yeah, I live there. Then it was

called the 'Eastern Bay' during the Algerian Revolution in the period of French colonization, of course, and it is also called Taghast in the language of Tamazight; the native people of Algeria before Islam. Uh, yes. And also in Algeria, we don't only have one language which is Arabic. We have many languages to be.... to let you know about that. We also have different dialects and accents, they change from one city to another or from one part like the east, than the west, you know.

Yes. And I like to draw, but it's been a long time since I drew, because of university, you know, the struggle of being a university student. I know you know that. Yes. I am looking forward to work in this project with you to know more about the culture, to know about the Brazilian culture, because it seems so interesting and I like it. And to come over the stereotypes that the world has created for us and learn more about that.... that because sharing is caring. I don't know why I say that, but yes. So I hope you're doing well. And good bye.

Transcript 03: Dhikra

***Speaker1:** [00:00:00] Olà guys. My name is Dhikra, D H I K R A. In Arabic, it means 'a memory'. I am 20 years old, Algerian. I live in a place called Souk- Ahras. In fact, it means the market of lions. Yes. Um, I'm a third year English student. I don't work. I've never worked before, actually.*

Um, I'm interested in psychology and astronomy. I love to read about humans in general, and I love everything related to the sky and the stars. And I even believe in aliens. And I believe that we're not the only ones in this universe. Um, what else! If you guys didn't know, we're now in a month called Ramadan, where Muslims fast. We do not eat nor drink for from sunrise to sunset for a whole month. Yes. Um, I'm so excited to work with you guys. I think that's all. I'll see you in the next activity. Good bye!

Transcript 04: Wail

Speaker1: [00:00:00] Hi, guys. My name is Wail, pleasure to meet you all. My name is pronounced or spelled as W A I L in English. Like a war cry or a big white whale. Remember that, It could be helpful, but in my native tongue it's more like, wail, it could be hard, so just stick with wail like in whale.

I'm a member of the Algerian team on this project and I study at the University of Mohamed Cherif Messaadia, like most of my colleagues. I'm in my third year. This is my graduation year. Hopefully I'll make it okay. About my cultural background, I've been in Algeria pretty much my entire life. I have no like foreign influence on my former years. So yeah, I'd say I'm pretty much Algerian. With languages, I've been a student of languages back in high school, so I know some Italian, French, Arabic and English. My major now in college is English, so yeah. Okay. Fun fact about my hometown, it's called 'Mdaourouch', it's in Souk- Ahras. The name is inspired by the ancient Romans. It was 'Madaure'. The most popular thing about this city is that it was the first African University since 220 B.C. And also it was the home town of the first novel in the world: The Golden Ass by Lucius Apuleius. Okay. That's a quick... that's a quick check up on my back story.

What else? What else? My interests are music, movies and books. I like to read very much. Oh, I like Japanese animation, too, very much. Yeah. I'm pretty excited to do this project with you all, and hopefully we get to know each other even better and see how we all do it there. Brazuca style, right. Okay, Obrigado.

Transcript 05: Naila

[00:00:01] Attempt number 29 haha.

Hi, guys. Hope you're doing well. My name is Naila Nafissa, but people normally call me Naila. Just Naila. My name has five letters, which are N A I L A. Twenty years old, soon to be 21. I'm a Leo which makes me the most stubborn person you would ever meet in your whole

entire life. I really don't know what to say about myself. Like, if we were talking about books, I would talk non-stop for hours. But since I'm introducing myself, I'm having difficulties. So excuse me. I am from Algeria, exactly from a city called Souk-Ahras. It is a city in the east of Algeria, closer to the Tunisian borders. Algeria is not only the biggest country in Africa. But also what makes it more unique and special is the fact that here you learn for free. Yes, we have free education, like starting from primary school till university. You don't pay a thing. Algeria also cares about languages like kids here in third grade, they start learning French and in sixth grade they start learning English. By the time they reach high school. Like most of them would care about mathematics and physics, while the others would go for languages and they learn Italian in addition to French, English and Arabic.

[00:01:48] Unfortunately, I didn't learn Italian. I am now a third year English student. I am going to graduate this year, hopefully. I want to major in literature which is something that does not exist here in my city. So I'm going to be leaving next year. This idea terrifies me, to be honest. I don't do well with changes. But let's just hope wherever I go, people would be nice because I'm not that good at interacting with people. And I would rather stay home reading a book or watching something than going out and interacting with people or talking to them. Yeah. That's kind of weird, I know. I bet you guys noticed that most of us wear scarves around our heads, which is basically a piece of clothing that covers our hair, ears and neck. It is a part of us being Muslims or it is a part of our religion.

So, that's it. I have nothing else to say. Hope you guys enjoyed me being awkward and embarrassing myself. Hope we learn something from this new experience and how fun, all of us together. So, guys have a great day and stay safe. Thank you.

Participants, as presented in the transcriptions were very excited and this was depicted in all their videos. They followed the instructions but at the same time each one presented their ideas in a different way, and talked about their interests that varied from one topic to

another. Some of them also made the effort to learn greetings and expressions in Portuguese to show their interest to their Brazilian partners, such as: *Olà, Obrigado, Bom dia, Adeus and Brazuca style.*

During the second week and after participants had watched their peers' videos, they commented on each presentation. It is shown through their comments that they were excited and kept waiting for others to post, so they can get to know them and comment on their videos. The majority of students greeted and welcomed others under each video, like: *"Nice to meet you!", "Glad to meet you!", "Glad to know you Gilson! Looking forward to talk to each other more"* or *"Nice to meet you! Hope we feel connected by this language and understand each other"*; others commented and discussed their peers' interests they found in common:

- *"Hello Vanessa! I love travelling too. You sound like a calm and shy person, I love your video."* (Nesrine)
- *"I think we would get along because we share some interests happy to know that!"* (Chaima)
- *"Hello Mayra! I love that we share the same passion about animals. I also have a cat named snow"*(Ouala)
- *"Indeed you're very experimental when it comes to food. PS: big fan of Lasagna as well."* (Malek)
- *"Hey Matraca, you're so cute. I also love supernatural stuff; I think we will get along well. Looking forward to talk to you next time!"* (Kaouther)

The Post- Actional Phase

The post- actional phase occurred at the end of Week 2 in order to discuss what happened in the action phase; I invited my students to join a Google Meet to interview

them. My questions were based on knowing their reflections and impressions of the others and how they found the platform.

Concerning my observations during the first two weeks, I noticed that students struggled in uploading their videos on the platform because of their sizes. Some of them sent a message in the Messenger group seeking their friends' help or mine, in which I provided different solutions so they could upload the videos. Besides that, everything went smoothly; students did not have any problems or complaints.

As far as the first question is concerned "*What do you think of the first task?*" students had really positive feedback on their first experience. The overall responses were that they have enjoyed creating their videos and talking about themselves. As well as, watching and getting to know their Brazilian partners, since it was their first occurrence. One of the students said: "I really enjoyed recording my video and watching the presentations of Brazilians! It's the first real experience for me to knowing foreigners." Many other students liked commenting and interacting with each other under every video, of their classmates to encourage them and partners.

The next question "*Did you have any issues with the first task?*", as I already observed, some students mentioned their struggle in uploading the videos in the *Padlet* which was frustrating for them. However, they said that it was not a big problem since they got help as soon as they shared their concern. Nevertheless, they did not encounter any other problem and considered everything else to be good.

The last question "*Are you still as excited?*" all students said yes. I think that the first task motivated them further for the upcoming tasks and made them look forward to the next week. This was confirmed through their responses; they had a positive attitude and reactions towards the project, as they felt excited and eager to learn about the next activity and to interact with the Brazilian participants. After hearing all what they had to

say, I encouraged them to come forward and express their feelings on the next lived experiences.

Week 6-7: The Pre- Actional Phase

As mentioned above, for every new topic uploaded for students, I had a meeting in the beginning of the week with my Brazilian partner on Google Meet to discuss the week's task and agree on the following points:

- **The week's topic:** after raising students' familiarity with each other through the first task, we agreed "Accents" to be their topic two. The reason behind choosing this specific subject is that they were going to deal with it in the classroom as well, so we thought it would be easier and fun for them to discuss.
- **The method used by participants to present:** for this task, participants had the freedom to choose the method they wanted to share their posts.
- **Instructions:** participants were provided with the necessary instructions that would help them in writing their posts:

"Go to http://accent.gmu.edu/browse_language.php?function=find&language=english and surf through the accents archive by clicking on (english1, english10, english33, etc), then, answer the following questions:

1. *How do you react to the accents presented in the archive?*
2. *Now, think of the English accents you know. Share it with your peers.*
3. *Do you think it's possible to adopt just one of those accents? If yes, which one? If no, why not?*
4. *In your opinion, should we have an American or British English accent? Why? Why not?*
5. *5 - Do you accept your English accent? Why? Why not?*

6. 6 - *Do you think your native language/ mother tongue has influenced your English accent? If yes, how? If no, why not?*

When you post your answers, you should put "Week 02" in the title box"

The objectives of the second two weeks' task were:

- To help students understand that online activities are not separate from those done in class.
- To improve/assess their writing ability as a result of their linguistic abilities.
- To increase students' motivation to participate in online discussions and read what others have written.

Students were divided into groups of five, two Algerians and three Brazilians. This resulted in the creation of 14 groups in total. The reason behind adopting such a method for students to participate was to organize their interactions, and to make all students feel included and not feel left out by the others' posts and comments.

The Actional Phase

In the first week, students of each group posted their answers to the questions provided in the instructions rubric after they had visited the website. In the examples below, they discussed their pre- knowledge about English accents, the one they used or preferred to use, and shared some accents they did not know about before. All participants expressed their enjoyment of the accents provided in the website shared for them; they better understood the diversity of English accents, as most of the students were only familiar with "American and British English".

They argued that this helped them have an in depth idea about the subject and enjoyed the discussions with their peers in the comment section. Some also stated that this topic reinforced their understanding of identity by linking it to the language they speak and

how it has an impact on learning foreign languages. In the following extracts, I selected some of the most liked posts in the Padlet:

1. I was captivated by the variety of accents but when you dig deep you can detect the tiny details that make the difference. However it is mind blowing that the difference doesn't occur just from one language to another but within the language itself.
2. Thanks to the kids programs that I grew up watching just like: The Wizard of Waverly Place, Zack and Cody and The Cramp Twins. Who introduced me to both British and American accents, besides actors, musicians and Youtubers from all around the world who've peppered their English by their mother tongue influence from these accents we mention: Irish, Australian, Canadian, Korean and Indian.
3. There is no universally acknowledged standard that tells you what accent you should adopt but for most British one is highly sophisticated while the American one is the common one and a lot of us find the Indian one annoying, but at the end of the day it's just a way to communicate and transmit ideas.
4. It doesn't make a difference what accent we should adopt as long as we can communicate and transmit our ideas effectively, and for those who want to make up their minds by whether the British or American one it is up to their motive and personally I'm fond of the British one.
5. I accept my English accent as it is and I've gained it by imitating actors, musicians who spoke English until I reached a point when my pronunciation of words is highly acceptable.
6. My mother tongue "Arabic" didn't influence my English accent because both are widely different and for most Arabian people we don't face difficulties when it comes to learning a new language and sometimes it is impossible to discover that our L1 is Arabic.

Another student provided the following answers to the post's questions:

1. At first, I thought that there is no big difference between accents, but then it was pretty clear that each accent has its special details which differs it from the other, and I find this so interesting.
2. According to some series and TV shows, British, American and Australian accents are the most common for me.
3. Yes it is possible to adopt one of them, because accents are mostly based on our listening skill, for example the American one.
4. British English is the academic one; I think that we should have it since it is more appropriate.
5. I am working on developing it; I hope that it will be much better by practice
6. My native language is Arabic, so it has nothing to do with English, neither influences it. Because the two languages are from different families, so far from one another

In week six, students were asked to comment on each other's posts either in their specific groups or even in the other groups. Some comments were generally about accepting ones accent:

- "Hi Ana Laura! I highly respect your pride in the Brazilian accent and your tight hold to your identity." (Imen)
- "I agree with you Giovana! We shouldn't be forced to adopt just one accent." (Ouala)
- "I highly agree that each person has a history and that history can be reflected through their accents. Also you should never be ashamed of your accent; it's only a matter of time, practice and more effort and you'll be the best version of yourself." (Hiba)

What they found interesting was that they shared the same ideas on how they have learned their English accent through watching the same shows and listening to the same music.

- "I swear by those shows, they helped me a lot too." (Chaima)

- “I to watch Disney movies and shows too all the time!” (Khaoula)
- “It’s really interesting that you know of Dora the explorer! I used to watch her too when I was young. “ (Hiba)

However, they also had some different experiences, especially when it comes to the influence of the native language on their English accent, where most Algerian participants answered no since Arabic was from a different language family, but argued that French as their SL definitely had an influence:

- “Hiii Mariana. Yes, I see your point, here in Algeria too people struggle with accents because our dialect is very different than English and we use French more often than Arabic and English even, but with practice, one could make it. I was lucky enough that I started learning English at a young age and it was fun for me to adapt to other accents easily.” (Malek)
- “Hey Beatriz! So for me French is very close to English except in grammar, so what I do is when I write a word, for example in French: civilisation and in English I just switch the ‘s’ by ‘z’. I think the same way you do but for me I switch it in my mind.” (Kaouther)

The Post- Actional Phase

They were asked ‘*How do you feel about the group division?*’ in which all of them had positive attitudes toward. They agreed that it was better to post in groups, so they have better and organized communication. One of the participants commented: “I actually like the groups because it is organized and I can read all posts without scrolling much.” Therefore, groups raised both their feelings of closeness and familiarity, as another student said: “I think that groups helped in making us feel comfortable with the other members, and so we had in depth conversations in the comments.”

The second question was about their learning outcomes from this week's task; they argued that it helped them learn more about the different English accents, and that it gave them a general idea about others. Some of them also stated that they were interested in the topic that they searched for more YouTube videos on each accent they found intriguing. Others asserted that this week's topic created the opportunity for them to know about the English-Brazilian accents of their peers and how they felt about it, which they enjoyed later discussing in the comments. I also asked them if they felt uncomfortable in continuing the project, in which they all disagreed saying that they like doing it. They were also advised to communicate with me any concerns or discomfort during the weeks.

Week 8- 9: The Pre- Actional Phase

For week eight, after me and my partner had a meeting to discuss the topic and questions, in order to upload them for participants, we agreed on the following:

- **The week's topic:** to make it possible for students to get to know each other more, mainly at a socio-cultural level, we asked them to talk about celebrations in their country/region. The purpose was for them to experience cultural diversities and know how to talk about their own culture.
- **The method used by participants to present:** students were not required to use a specific method for this task, however, they were asked to be as creative as they could by adding videos, songs or pictures to help describe their culture.
- **Instructions:** participants were provided with the necessary instructions/ questions that would help them in writing their posts:

“Talk about one of the celebrations in your country/ region.

** *Try to be very creative in this activity! Through pictures, songs, videos, pic collages, social media, etc, use the following questions as a guide/ directions for your production, in order to show the essence of the celebration you chose and how you feel towards it:*

1. *What do you celebrate in your country/ region?*
2. *Is it a traditional or religious holiday?*
3. *When, how, and why do you celebrate them?*
4. *What do you usually do on this holiday?*
5. *Does religion play a role in these celebrations?*
6. *Are there special foods connected with the holiday?*
7. *How important are traditional celebrations in keeping the culture alive?*
8. *Are there special songs associated with the holiday?*

##When you post your answers, you should put “Week 03+ your name” in the title box.”

The goals set for week 8 and 9 were:

- To raise participants’ awareness about both their own and target culture.
- To raise participants’ cultural sensitivity.
- To develop learners’ writing skills (e.g. new vocabulary) and communication abilities.

The Actional Phase

Participants in the first week of this task shared their posts into their designated groups and opted for different delivery methods to better represent and describe their celebrations and culture in general. They used videos and songs along with texts to illustrate their traditions, holidays and celebrations. Others used images to explain and illustrate some cultural words from food, clothes and traditions. Students found this week’s topic to be very fun and interesting to talk about because they wanted their partners to explore and learn about their culture. Chaima shared:

“Hey everyone,

I’m very excited for u guys to know about our religious celebrations, first let me say that there are technically three Eids in a lunar year (Arabic calendar):

- El Mawlid Al-Nabawi (birth of the Prophet Mohammed Peace Be Upon Him)
- Eid el Fitr.
- Eid el Adha (Feast of Sacrifice)

Eid el fitr: was almost two weeks ago , I wanted to talk about it and share with you guys some information concerning the way we celebrate and what we do in those three days of Eid.

Eid, means gathering at a day, Festival of Breaking Fast.

Fitr, means to break the fast. Also called al- Eid al –Saghir (The small Eid).

It marks the end of Ramadan, the Muslim holy month of fasting, and is celebrated during the first three days of Shawal, the 10th month of the Islamic calendar (though the Muslim use of a Lunar calendar means that it may fall in any season of the year).

In the early morning of that day , one wakes up early, before Fajr salaah (prayer), read Quran , take a bath, wear the best available clothes for women some prefer to wear traditional clothes like “kaftan or Djebba” and so as for children, wear perfume, eat sweets like (baklava , maqroud , Tcharek...) and many other types of desserts which differs from one place to another (tradition), without forgetting Takbirs we hear in early morning from the mosques “Allahu Akbar (Allah is Greatest) Allahu Akbar (Allah is Greatest) – la ilaha illa Allah (there is none worthy of worship but Allah) – wa Allahu Akbar (and Allah is Greatest)– Allahu Akbar (Allah is Greatest) - wa li Allahi Al-hamd (and for Allah, is praise).” This religious occasion is celebrated in the presence of our family and friends, or visiting our relatives especially elder people (the grandparents) giving and receiving gifts and tasting the sweets that the whole family made. We also have this thing in which we give children money (this act would make them very happy and at the end of the day they see whom collected more money than the others lol.

So we mark the end of the month-long fasting of Ramadan by a day of celebration where the people receive the rewards after a month-long worship and spiritual training. Similarly, it is also the day of thankfulness to God because He has opened the doors of mercy and forgiveness through the blessed month of Ramadan 🌙🌙. For me personally since I was a little girl I would never have enough sleep the night before “Eid” (because of excitement), however, there is a kind of “hand decoration” or what we call “Henna” usually women do it as a kind of showing the joy of this day and I personally love it (and you can say I’m very good at it xD)

These kind of religious celebrations make us close to each other, and it’s kind of a chance to forgive and forget.”

Meriem chose to talk about another celebration and prepared a video to illustrate the traditions and food prepared in that celebration:

“ALGERIA is famous with several celebrations. The main Islamic festivals are Ramadan and the two Eids (eid-al-fitr, Eid-al-Adha) and Mawlid (the prophet’s birthday) and there's also the Independence Day.

- My favorite is the Mawlid (the prophet's birthday). It is religious.
- We celebrate it on the 12th Rabe-al-Awal (Rabe-al-awal is the third month of the Islamic calendar).
- Most of time is related to worship and prayer, and the family members meet for dinner and enjoy meals and sweets.
- Traditional celebration is a part of the country’s identity, and it contributes a sense of comfort and belonging.

**I prepared this video, about Mawlid and preparations.”

Ouala shared the following post and added a link to a famous song played by almost every Algerian house the day of celebration:

“Due to the variation in my country we do have many different celebrations throughout the entire year, national celebrations such as: ‘the anniversary of our Revolution on the first of November , the Independence Day on the 5th of July every year’ or region ones like ‘the amzight new year’ and of course the religious ones like ‘the birth of our prophet -peace be upon him- Ashura and Eids: Eid al-Adha (feast of sacrifice)and my favourite one Eid-Al-fitr with the end of Ramadan .

2/ Eid-Al-Fitr is a religious celebration of Muslims, a two days of celebration.

3/ It does not really have a specific time to celebrate it, but it's always after Ramadan ‘the month we fast in’. Each year it advances ten days, for instance this year was on the 13th and 14th of May, while last year it was on the 24th and 25th of May.

Why we celebrate it? Simply it means ‘the festival of breaking our fast -Ramadan- and celebrate what god has gave us the strength and ability to complete the whole month of Ramadan.

4/ Eid Al-Fitr includes the special morning prayer with the sun rise; a very beautiful spiritual connection with god. We dress in our best forms and visit our families and relatives by telling them ‘Eid Mubarak’ meaning blessed Eid. The old ones give the younger money which we call it ‘Eidia’ best thing in Eid (^) and not to forget we do Henna.

5/Yes, religion does play a major role.

6/Yes, there are the Eid sweets, well here it differs from a region to another but the shared one is called ‘Makroud’, which is basically a homemade sweet that we share and eat.

7/ There is the Takbbir it's not a song it's a prayer that we say to thank god and how great god is, but there is a song for me if I don't hear it at the morning of Eid it will seem missing a thing for me I will put the link hope you hear it!”

Wail shared a video talking about Yanayer, in which I provided the script for:

“Speaker1: [00:00:00]Hi Everybody. Hopefully you're all doing good. Today my presentation is going to be about Yanayer, or January 12th. It's a national holiday here in Algeria and it's pretty common in the entire territory of North Africa because we are connected by the same Amazigh roots. And yeah, so it's a cultural celebration here, not a religious one. The story takes place 950 B.C. the Amazigh king of that time “Chichnak” decided to wage war against the Egyptian Pharaoh, Ramses the third, because he threatened his territory with armed men. And the response came with a total colonization of his kingdom. So Chichnak decided to solidify his triumph with the introduction of the new calendar. And yeah, that's the one we celebrate now. I'm not going to mention how we celebrate it, because one of my colleagues already did a video about how we do it. You can check it out. It's pretty beautiful... Yeah... And yes, this celebration marks the beginning of something else, the agricultural year here in Algeria. Most farmers have some folktales about this specific time of period of time. For instance, there is the story about the old lady who decided to risk herself and her cattles with her. So the story goes like this: This old lady believed that on the last day of January there will be no extreme weather or cold weather whatsoever. So she decided to bury her goats on that day. And January got offended by her, the defiance and challenge. So he borrowed the day from February to punish her with what she feared the most. So farmers on our country decided to not go out on that day and not work at all, risking the punishments of January. And yeah, that's pretty much yeah, that's pretty much it. Thanks for listening!”

In the second week of this subject, students got to comment on their peers’ posts and discuss each others’ celebrations. Reading about others’ cultural celebrations would definitely help students in finding common traditions, embrace and accept the diversity, and promote open-mindedness. This was maintained through their comments:

- “By reading this I really felt the feelings you wanted to share and yes I just think that Brazil festivals are the best they are so unique and special I hope one day I can attend one of it.” (Ouala)
- “You guys know how to have a good Time, it looks fun.” (Malek)
- “Wow! I'm really impressed with this cultural diversity... Loved the oriental vibe and fyi I adore Sakura trees.” (Wail)
- “The fact that because of the pandemic people cannot celebrate anymore made me sad I wish that the next year you can celebrate it happily. And about this celebration, I loved the theme and how joyful it is I loved the dresses and how all people dance together I wish one day when I visit brazil I join in this festa, and a question do you still celebrate it like prepare food and greet each other with social distancing?” (Kaouther)
- “OMG, I want to experience this party!! And I loved your video and how you explained everything!” (Douaa)

The Post- Actional Phase

At the end of week nine, the post- actional phase took place in Google Meet for a group meeting with my students to discuss their week’s experience, reflections and impression on the topic from a cultural perspective. Concerning my observations during the weeks, I noted that students did not encounter any issue with uploading their posts on the platform, especially after some of them opted for different methods of sharing: texts, videos and pictures. I also noticed that participants at this point were becoming more familiar with the whole situation; they were excited to express their impressions. They were also getting comfortable with each other, especially with their peers from the small groups and they enjoyed having conversations with them in the comments.

Concerning the first question “*What did you think of this week’s topic?*” students expressed that the topic was interesting and were excited to share with their peers all information about different Algerian celebrations. One student shared: “I was very excited with the topic, because Algeria has a rich culture and wanted to let them know at least a portion of it.” The majority of them agreed to this comment and argued that they were fascinated by the diversity of cultures in the world and for each country. This allowed them to know a lot about Brazilian culture and by reading their posts they “created an image about Brazilians that was ambiguous before.”

For the second question “*What did you learn?*” some students mentioned that they got to revise their answers and look for errors they made in previous posts to correct when writing for this post. Others said that at first they used to just write the posts, but now they double check their answers using Google, as well as, look for new vocabulary to use every week either for the new topic or for discussing in the comments. A participant argued that: “I always look for words that are linked to the topic” when asked why, they said “it was because I wanted to use the appropriate vocabulary.” This indicates that the project helped students in becoming more autonomous.

As far as the second question is concerned “*Are you still motivated for the next tasks?*” students admitted that this week’s topic motivated them even more, because they enjoyed talking about different cultural aspects. Some of them asked for other culture-related topics for them to discuss in the next weeks. They felt excited and eager to learn about Brazilian culture, to interact with them and tell them all about Algerian culture, from all perspectives.

Week 10- 11: The Pre- Actional Phase

For the topic of the week, researchers like in previous weeks arranged a Google meet where they decided on the task and prepared the questions to guide students in writing their

posts. I contacted my students on the Messenger group to remind them to check the Padlet the day we posted the new task:

- **The week's topic:** up to this point, me and my partner wanted students to discuss different topics from different perspectives so they would not feel like repeating their ideas and thoughts. For that reason, we opted for more of a personal topic this time, as we asked them to talk about their free time activities and hobbies. The objective of this task was to make students know each other on a deep level and discuss their interests furthermore.
- **The method used by participants to present:** students got to choose what method they found suitable for them.
- **Instructions:** participants were provided with the necessary instructions/ questions that would help them in writing their posts:

“Talk about your free time and hobbies.

*** Use the following questions as a guide:*

1. *What is your favourite free-time activity?*
2. *Do you think your activities are typical of most other-aged people in your community?*
3. *What new activities would you like to learn?*
4. *Do you have a hobby?*

##When you post your answers, you should put "Week 04+your name" in the title box."

Objectives of week eight were:

- To raise students' awareness about the different ways of thinking.
- To prompt students feeling of closeness and provide for them opportunities to express their interests.
- To develop students' writing skills.

The Actional Phase

In week ten, researchers opted for a different personal topic, in which students were asked to share their hobbies and how they spend their free time. They were guided by a set of instructions to help them when needed. This task encourages building the relationships on a more personal level and learners found it fun to discuss their free time and know how their partners were spending their time. Dhikra shared:

“Free time activities:

1/ well, in my free time I hate sticking to one routine I always tend to try new things, when I'm free I like to try new recipes and designing cakes, it's my meditative activity, I scroll through tiktok a bit too much u.u, I spend time with my family, but if it's night time then I'll just binge watch series till sunrise.. Etc

2/ I honestly don't know, I'm not doing something special but everyone tends to spend their time differently according to their preferences.

3/ I would love to grow a sweet tooth for reading books since doing that isn't my favorite thing to do. And why not learn an instrument, make soap or candles, I have so many

4/ I don't know if it's a hobby but I love photography so much, I enjoy outdoor activities more , I love to up cycle my things, face painting and many more depending on my mood”

Douaa posted the following:

“1/ I enjoy spending time watching different kind of series and anime. For the genre I like the most is fantasy like LOTR and harry potter. Also, since I'm an outgoing person, I like going out in trips with my family and friends from time to time. This period of time, I'm into cooking, I usually try to cook some new recipes from different cultures like Italian and Asian food.

2/ I think for the people with same age of me, we do really share some hobbies and activities

3/ For me, I do really like to learn how to play the piano and guitar.

4/ For my hobby, I don't really have particular one because I enjoy doing different things."

Nesrine's response was the following:

"Hello everyone! I hope y'all doing great

So much free time that we'll have especially by the end of this semester! So I'll gladly be enjoying some of my favorite activities, some of them are typically what any girl in her early twenties like me does in her free time, like watching series and go shopping with friends, and others are my little specific pleasures in life that I enjoy on my own, like spending the whole afternoon recording songs on different singing apps and making duos with online friends and oh! It is so much fun; especially to music addict such myself. I also have fun decorating my little reading space in my room and make it a super comfortable corner for a good read! Now comes my favourite spare time activity, taking that coffee shop and checking my to read list, pick up the book of the day and sail away until it's bed time. I also adore cooking! I am an international cuisine passionate! I spend a lot of my free time checking new recipes and dishes from all around the world and I even try them, and I never fail ME, they taste great every time!

The diversity of the international menus is as wide as the diversity of cultures; it is mind blowing and never fails to amaze me! And to balance my love for cooking which absolutely means more calories with the body healthy shape that I'd like to have I never forget my workouts, I workout harder in my free time as it feels super great to have an extra dose of oxytocin!

I would like to learn dancing; I am a big fan of dances no matter what, especially zumba! I feel like it is a perfect way to lose this crowded reality for a bit and just enjoy the mini world you created in your mind."

Moreover, Wail posted:

“Hey everyone hopefully you are all doing good. Today I'll be discussing my favorite free time activity.

- I really enjoy being out in the nature, so spare time for me is the ultimate chance to further explore nature.

- For me my activity is really rare due to the change of time, and the fact that most people today would rather stay at home and explore the virtual world instead of the real one. So others my age are probably not invested in my hobby.

- Personally, I've been considering playing the guitar a lot. I have an overwhelming fondness of its melodies.

- My favorite hobby ever since infancy has been football, though i haven't been practicing it in ages due to my academic/professional heavy schedule. But I would gladly participate in a match every now and then.”

Concerning the second week of this task, participants had to comment on each others' posts. They were eager to find about the activities and hobbies they had in common, thus this would help them to bond; this was presented in the following statements:

- “Hi, Ana Carol! I think it is really beautiful that you like writing and that you can express yourself this way :)” (Chaima)
- “Hi Giovana, I'm like that you're improving your cooking skills, I love to cook too and I think that's a funny and joyful way to spend your free time and to connect with people, 'cause it's an activity that, sometimes, can involve more than one person :)” (Ouala)
- “I also love Volleyball! I'm not one for sports, but volleyball it's definitely my favourite"! (Mouatez)
- “I spent my entire childhood watching animes! But now I'm more of a TV shows kinda girl!” (Naila)

- “Oh, my mom crochets and knits all the time, I tried to learn it, but 0% talent for that!” (Douaa)
- “I also want to learn how to draw!” (Wail)
- “I loved the quote u used and I am also interested in plants and I like learning about them” (Kaouther)
- “I love K-dramas too! I think we would get along really well xD” (Chaima)

The Post- Actional Phase

The post- actional phase occurred on week eleven, where the group meeting took place in the same Google Meet as usual. My students had the chance to reflect on the week’s content, i.e. the topic of the week. When asked “*What did you learn?*” many replied that they acquired new vocabulary and some new grammatical structures linked to the topic; as one commented: “I searched for new vocabulary to use in my post, and I ended up learning new expressions and sayings!” They also mentioned that they learned a lot when it comes to their partners’ character by reading their posts and interacting with them in the comment section.

As for the second question, all students highly appreciated talking about their free time and hobbies. This brought the groups closer; it gave them the opportunity to share details about themselves and find similar interests within their daily lives. Some of them mentioned that at this point, they considered their Brazilian partners as friends more than just partners. One of the students said: “I like the fact that I learned about the different ways they spend their time, which we sometimes shared the same hobbies and sometimes not.” At the end of the group meeting, I asked them to reach out to me for any problem they would face, or if they felt less motivated to continue the project.

Week 12- 13: The Pre- Actional Phase

For the last two weeks of the telecollaboration project, a final topic was decided upon in the Google Meet between the Algerian and Brazilian partners, and a set of guidelines were put as demonstrated:

- **The week's topic:** The last task was about interpersonal communication etiquette, in which students had to share manners and norms in their societies. The reason behind this topic was to reinforce good communication between participants and to explain another aspect of intercultural communication.
- **The method used by participants to present:** Students could choose whatever method they liked to share their posts.
- **Instructions:** Participants were given guidelines to help them discuss the topic:

“Talk about interpersonal communication etiquette.

Use these questions as a guideline:

- What are some major dos and don'ts in communicating with other people?
- How do you greet your friends/family/professors?
- How do you approach new people?
- What are some things a foreigner should be aware of?
- Are there certain gestures or body language that have a significant meaning?

##When you post your answers, you should put "Week 05+your name" in the title box.”

The objectives of the last week were:

- Participants exchange knowledge about their cultural behaviour.
- Make participants reflect on their behaviour, manners and societal norms.
- Raise students' intercultural awareness.

The Actional Phase

In week twelve, researchers wanted to focus on a different angle of cultural diversity between the two societies which would reinforce their intercultural awareness and sensitivity. Participants shared posts on interpersonal skills that would help them to know how to maintain relationships; social etiquette is important to ensure healthy and respectful environments. Imen's post was:

“-What are some major dos and don'ts when communicating with other people?

The dos: being a good listener and maintaining eye contact while the don'ts: avoiding judgment and interrupting the speaker or showing a negative body language.

-How do you greet your friends/family/professors?

When it comes to my friends or family members i use informal casual vocabulary for greetings but for professors I definitely use formal appropriate vocabulary for greetings or rather I'll be considered as an impolite and offensive. -How do you approach new people?

By being polite with greeting, introducing myself, asking about whether they're okay or not.

-What are some things a foreigner should be aware of?

Their culture and idioms so we won't be considered as an ignorant if they Express themselves with an indirect or idiomatic expressions

-Are there certain gestures or body language that has a significant meaning?

Yes, certainly some gestures considered okay in some countries but in others are inappropriate so we have to be aware of this things.”

Ouala shared:

“I think in communicating there are some rules that should be followed like respect what the other is saying not trying to prove yourself right and the other is wrong ,not to interpret them while they are talking ,not to steal from the other mouth , listen to what saying try to understand them and accept their point of view .

2/with my family and friends i be natural and spontaneous like telling a joke out of nowhere, using a slang language.

But with professors I try to be more formal and choose the right words and be more respectful and polite.

3/foreigners should be aware of the slang it's better to use the formal language to avoid any misunderstanding.

4/ It's funny but we have a lot of gestures specially our moms they be means “you are in trouble "the look□□□□□” means "stop what you doing “ ” this hand move means “wait”, which can means something else in outer countries.

Kaouther posted:

“1/some major dos and don'ts in communicating with other people

Dos: listen carefully to the other side

-Respect the other opinion

-Give your point of view in the conversation

-Try to use eye contact

-Show the other side that you are interested in what they are saying

Don'ts: try not to interrupt the other side while they're talking

-Don't use your phone while they are talking because some people find it annoying

-Don't make fun of things while they are talking

2/I greet my friends, family and professors by saying good morning asking about how they are doing.

3/ How to approach new people

In college you can know a lot of people or you can make new acquaintances that takes the same class with you ask them for help about the lesson, or maybe in summer vacation or family gatherings.

4/ some things a foreigner should be aware of the most important thing is the culture of the other country so it would be easier when they interact with others because there are certain limits in cultures if you do something they find it rude and disrespectful

5/there are certain gestures or body language that have significant meaning in my country there are a lot people here use their hands when they talk in other cultures it's a rude thing but here it is common to use ur hands for example This stands for ok or great in other cultures but in Algeria it means threatening but in funny way.”

Chaima’s ideas were the following:

1_The major dos and don'ts in communicating with others:

Communicating with others is a relationship that involves interaction between two parts. This interaction should be with respect, Don’t interrupt people when they are talking – it hampers their thought process and its rude , Don’t be defensive or offensive – stay neutral , use eye contact more that will make people think you are interested in what they are saying , smile and be polite .

2_ I tend to greet my friends and family with informal expressions like 'hello', 'hi' or 'hey' and add to it u by asking “How's it going?”, “How are you doing?” or “How's life?” to find out how the person is?.

3_The things that a foreigner should be aware of are: to

I think foreigner should be aware of other people culture and language in a more deep way , an example when we greet people we shake hands that's a common thing , but when it comes to a Muslim women that's forbidden in our religion to shake hands with a Man who is (non mahram) ,Also avoiding physical interaction , that would be much better !! When it comes to communication meaning of words changes according to the culture or believes of that place so foreigners should be aware, so as all the world know that Algerians speak Arabic but The truth is that the Algerian dialect originates from Arabic but it can be a language in its own.

4_ I approach new people by asking a question maybe or starting a small conversation

5_ are there certain gestures or body language that has significant meaning:

Yeah, like waving our hands means hello and that's a common thing, in Algeria you can watch neighbors having entire conversations with other people in other buildings using hand gestures alone. They would catch up on local news, gossip and share jokes , and for children we use hands when we cannot talk like when we have guests and the children are being Naughty and there you Will see this gesture it means you are dead After they leave !!

and we Also have this 🖐️ it's like " wait or stop ... And many other gestures.”

Douaa added:

“1. What are some major dos and don'ts in communicating with other people??

-To do : be polite and responsible for what are you saying and try to Use formal language as possible as you can and listen carefully.

- Don't interrupt and don't be rude

2- How do you great your family / friends /professors!?

-by saying hello or in Muslim Arabic world we use the expression "AL SALAMU ALAIKUM"

3-what are some things that foreigners should be aware of!!?

-Try to be respectful towards the culture of the country for example if you are visiting Algeria try to avoid “too mush physical contact”

4-The body language reflects the culture for example means stop threatening but in more playful way.

5-how do you approach new people!!?

By saying hello and introducing myself also I try to start light conversation.

In the last week of the exchange project, students commented on their partners' final posts. They agreed that this topic made them identify interpersonal skills which would help in

monitoring and interpreting their behaviour in the future, as well as, being respectful and open towards differences. Students said:

- “I’ve always wondered if others had the same gestures and it turns out we have some in common lol!” (Chaima)
- “I think Mom’s hand gestures are universal” (Kaouther)
- “This is so interesting! I think the major do’s and don’ts in communication are universal” (Ouala)
- “I like this cultural diversity, we have some differences in greeting people but I like it!” (Douaa)
- “I didn’t think we shared lots of these interpersonal etiquettes” (Dhikra)
- “I will definitely do these when I visit Brazil! Thank you” (Wail)

The Post- Actional Phase

The last week of the discussion- based project in our action research study took place in the group meeting with my students to not only discuss their reflections and impressions about the topic but to also reflect on their experience. The first question was “*What did you learn last week?*” where all of them asserted that talking about interpersonal communication as it helped them to better communicate with their peers and learn how to comment on conversational behaviours using the appropriate vocabulary and grammatical structures. Some students argued that it could be applicable with others: “What I have learned of behaviours this week, I think I can use with other people.” I think the most important result for this week’s topic was that they understood the immorality of poor conversational behaviour at the social or cultural level.

For the second question “*What did you not like for this week?*” participants and to my surprise expressed that everything was all right and that they did not encounter any issue. They said the project was stimulating and enjoyable. I think that their participation

in this first telecollaboration project positively influenced their attitudes and impressions. They expressed their excitement to the learning and interaction space with their partners. Nevertheless, I made it clear that they were encouraged to express their feelings and reflections on the project and not feel obliged to praise what has been done.

At the end of the second research cycle, I can say that my behaviour during the project was driven by enthusiasm towards the subject matter. The fact that I decided to take on the challenge and begin on the current study, had surely motivated the 25 eager participants to try their best to learn English. Furthermore, my decision to perform this research made the English teaching and learning environment more pleasant and helpful. Students liked the opportunity to test out the platform's different features and benefits. It also had definitely a psychological effect on teacher- student relationship that was based on mutual respect, tolerance, and support.

Students' participation in the project made them more motivated to share their thoughts, talk about their culture, and make efforts every week. Many of them stated that they did not feel bored or overtaken by the tasks, as it helped them change from the traditional classroom learning processes. They argued that teaching techniques and processes were different as were the learning materials and the spatial design of the classroom (Dornyei, 2003). The implementation of Padlet, group conversations, and the sharing of recordings transformed mundane activities into engaging and real tasks.

In addition they liked the topics suggested during the weeks. The project helped them improve their writing and oral skills, in terms of grammatical patterns and new vocabulary; It helped raise their intercultural awareness, i.e. intercultural attitudes, values and differences. During the whole process students got to use their previous knowledge about the subject matters and engaged with less participation. However, when they dealt

with new topics, they searched for new vocabulary, concepts and information to use in creating posts.

Action Research Cycle 3

Cycle 3 was the epilogue of the 10 week virtual exchange that took place in *Padlet*. I adopted the same framework as the previous cycles: pre- actional, actional and post- actional phase which lasted two weeks.

The Pre-Actional Phase

In this cycle, I created participants' post- intercultural exchange questionnaire (see appendix C) to investigate students' experience and the outcomes of the Algeria- Brazil telecollaboration project. The focus was on English language learning and intercultural competence development.

The Actional Phase

In the same week of research cycle 3, I sent the participants the link to the Google Forms post- project questionnaire via the messenger group created for the telecollaboration VE; where they were asked to state their reactions on the whole project.

The Post-Actional Phase

The last session in our action research study took place at the end of week 14. Participants got to not only share their final impressions but also to reflect upon the whole intercultural exchange project during the 14 weeks. The group meeting was also dedicated to the evaluation of what was done previously. Participants' responses to the usual questions were quite indicative. They asserted that they have enjoyed taking part in the telecollaboration project and learning about the Brazilian culture as well as learning new vocabulary in relation to the designated tasks every week. They liked the idea of sharing information with each other.

Students' Post- Project Questionnaire Analysis

The post- project questionnaire consisted of 14 both quantitative and qualitative questions. The aim was to investigate participants' experience, interaction and outcomes. In this section, I started by analyzing quantitative results.

Frequency Tables

Table 44

Participants' Telecollaboration Experience

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Fun	6	24,0	24,0	24,0
	Useful	1	4,0	4,0	28,0
	Tiring	3	12,0	12,0	40,0
	Interesting	9	36,0	36,0	76,0
	Motivating	6	24,0	24,0	100,0
	Total	25	100,0	100,0	

The first question in the post- project questionnaire was to have an impression on how students perceptions. They were asked to choose from a set of adjectives: *fun, boring, useful, frustrating, tiring, interesting, motivating* and *stressful* to better describe their experience in the Algerian- Brazilian virtual exchange, in which the vast majority (36%) found the project interesting, as well as, equally motivating and fun by (24%) of them. However, (12%) of participants noted it was tiring because of their studies along with doing the tasks and that required a lot of effort to do, but this does not mean they did not enjoy it.

Table 45*Participants' Learned Outcomes*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Digital skills	2	8,0	8,0	8,0
	General vocabulary	3	12,0	12,0	20,0
	Specific vocabulary	2	8,0	8,0	28,0
	Creativity	3	12,0	12,0	40,0
	Research skills	2	8,0	8,0	48,0
	Cultural skills	13	52,0	52,0	100,0
	Total	25	100,0	100,0	

Next, concerning participants' telecollaboration learning outcomes: language, digital and cultural; the results obtained suggest that the virtual exchange was beneficial for participants, where (52%) of students believed they developed cultural skills, which is potentially expected (Bateman, 2002; Chavez, 2002; Kern, 2005). Other students agreed that telecollaboration enhanced their English language skills, as well as, creativity and digital competences. They all stated that with each topic they enriched their vocabulary to use properly for certain contexts. Moreover, they were presented to new grammatical patterns which made their writing and discourse more grammatically and lexically structured.

For the next question, students were asked to Likert scale whether they agree or disagree with below statements. The aim was to get their impression on participating in the Algerian- Brazilian project. I presented them with seven outcomes to rate from being happened or not during the project:

Table 46*Participants' Reactions to the Statements*

<i>I have enjoyed this project</i>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally Agree	19	76,0	76,0	76,0
	Agree	6	24,0	24,0	100,0
	Total	25	100,0	100,0	
<i>I looked forward into reading my partners' posts</i>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally Agree	13	52,0	52,0	52,0
	Agree	11	44,0	44,0	96,0
	Neutral	1	4,0	4,0	100,0
	Total	25	100,0	100,0	
<i>I liked the fact we can share about our culture</i>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally Agree	18	72,0	72,0	72,0
	Agree	7	28,0	28,0	100,0
	Total	25	100,0	100,0	

The project was relevant to real life English language

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally Agree	17	68,0	68,0	68,0
	Agree	6	24,0	24,0	92,0
	Neutral	2	8,0	8,0	100,0
	Total	25	100,0	100,0	

The project has been motivating for me

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally Agree	16	64,0	64,0	64,0
	Agree	8	32,0	32,0	96,0
	Neutral	1	4,0	4,0	100,0
	Total	25	100,0	100,0	

This project made me feel anxious

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally Agree	1	4,0	4,0	4,0
	Agree	2	8,0	8,0	12,0
	Neutral	4	16,0	16,0	28,0
	Disagree	11	44,0	44,0	72,0
	Totally Disagree	7	28,0	28,0	100,0
	Total	25	100,0	100,0	

This project brought me closer to a new culture

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally Agree	16	64,0	64,0	64,0
	Agree	8	32,0	32,0	96,0
	Neutral	1	4,0	4,0	100,0
	Total	25	100,0	100,0	

This project was a good opportunity to experience online interaction

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally Agree	19	76,0	76,0	76,0
	Agree	6	24,0	24,0	100,0
	Total	25	100,0	100,0	

In the line of this Likert scale, it is further demonstrated that students enjoyed taking part in this project and thought it was a good opportunity. Their interest was manifested through them looking forward to sharing and reading their partners' posts. As they were excited to learn more about the target culture, as well as, share and explain their home culture in return, which is an important skill. Thus, the vast majority believed that this project brought them closer to a new culture and broadened the horizons (Chun, 2011; Jin, 2013); that they had no previous ideas about before. Participants also agreed on the fact that telecollaboration helped develop and expand their everyday, real life English language by using new vocabulary both general and specific. Another prominent factor was motivation, in which all students agreed it was increased during the weeks. The last statement was about whether it made them feel anxious, where they all disagreed about.

Table 47*Participants' Willingness to Participate in Other Telecollaboration Projects in the Future*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	25	100,0	100,0	100,0

Concerning students' willingness to participate in other telecollaboration projects in the future after their first experience, all of them (100%) said yes; since they enjoyed interacting with other people from different cultural backgrounds. According to the present findings, we can say that it supports the cross-case results in the pre- project questionnaire in that their excitement and interest did not change through the weeks of the exchange.

Table 48*Participants' Own Culture Rightness*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	No	25	100,0	100,0	100,0
	Total	25	100,0	100,0	

Table 49*Participants' Appreciation of Other Cultures' Richness*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	25	100,0	100,0	100,0

In the last two questions, students' intercultural sensitivity was investigated, in which it was demonstrated that all of them (100%) appreciated the richness of the target culture and showed an ethnorelative perspective (Bennett, 1993) towards their partners' culture. In addition, they believed in diversity and were open minded; this manifested in their answer to '*Do you think that your culture is the only right one?*' in which all participants (100%) said no. This aspect is further discussed below in interviews answers.

Telecollaboration and EFL learning

According to previous research (Belz & Thorne, 2006; Ware & O'Dowd, 2008) telecollaboration has proven to be beneficial in developing language learning skills, which was investigated through participants pre- and post- project questionnaires and interviews. The focus was on how telecollaboration promoted students' English as a foreign language competence in terms of writing and speaking. For this reason I address research question number one: *Does telecollaboration develop learners' English as a foreign language?* I start by analyzing participants' post- project data, and then I discuss students' views on the use of *Padlet* as a platform for this Algerian- Brazilian project.

Participants' reflections as demonstrated in the group meetings and the tables of frequencies were positive; as they found the project enjoyable and stimulating. Therefore, they agreed on the fact that it developed their EFL competences. This was presented in their post- project questionnaire and interviews. All students said it was a good and fun experience, and would definitely do the project again in the future. They did not feel bored since they felt involved and stimulated by trying a different learning style, "I enjoyed the change of learning environment, it was fun but at the same time I learned many new things" one student explained.

Based on the exchanges, when asked in their post- project questionnaire and interviews on '*What did you learn from this project?*' Students mentioned two prominent themes: ICC development and language learning. They enhanced their linguistic features; writing and oral skills. This was achieved through their use of new specific and general task-based lexicon, as well as, their use and awareness towards their posts by constantly self-correcting and checking their grammar. As far as vocabulary is concerned, students used frequent and appropriate words in accordance with the weekly tasks. Besides conversational routines (Thornbury & Slade, 2006) such as fillers, discourse markers, tails and social

greetings were also present in the discussions. However, in terms of grammar, the seven elements of conversation (Quaglio & Biber, 2006) were evident in students' interactions via the usage of pronouns, inserts, ellipses, discourse markers, vocatives, inquiries, deictic expressions, and word categories. The presented findings in this section were on language and communication development:

- "I've learnt a lot of new vocabulary, especially the specific ones about culture to use with my partners. Not only that but searched for grammatically correct sentences to use"
- "New accents of English, mainly Brazilian. Also, with the task about accents I learned about others"
- "I learned how to communicate with people from other countries"
- "This project enhanced my communication skills by using correct vocabulary for each task."
- "I enriched my vocabulary of culture"
- "I learned new vocabulary concerning culture and how to interact with others"

Developing communication skills includes correct use of the language, expressing ideas and opinions, exchanging and corresponding information based on the weekly tasks. One of the participants explained: "I enjoyed how I found and searched for specific vocabulary for each task you gave us and how I tried to communicate all aspects." This indicates that they made an effort to actively participate, thus, learn more.

Concerning *Padlet* as a third core subject, it facilitated participants' interactions and made them develop their digital skill. The vast majority were satisfied with the platform, even though it was new and they never tried it, they felt it was like any other social media. Many argued that "*Padlet* is amazing, I liked how well organized it is." Others argued that "it is accessible and easy to use". These were the most prominent

themes in their responses. However, three of the participants said they did not like it very much, and preferred to use *Facebook* or *Instagram* instead because it was a little slow when editing and they found it also hard to use.

Students' Definitions of Culture

Students were asked to provide their own definition of culture in both pre- and post-project questionnaires in order to assess their development in understanding culture as a concept. As it was mentioned in the intercultural communication chapter, the term was not easy to define, but participants were encouraged to explain it in their own, simple words. I could notice their answer changing after they have finished the telecollaboration project, as it got more developed and detailed on what is culture. For this specific question, I opted for traditional pen and paper coding in analyzing the data, where I put the most recurrent themes in their pre- project definitions (Table 50).

Table 50

Recurrent Themes in Participants' Definitions of 'Culture'

Themes	Repeated number of the theme	Examples
Customs and Traditions	21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "I think culture is about customs and traditions of particular people or society." - "Culture is what we inherited from our ancestors that include customs and traditions."
Lifestyle	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "It is the lifestyle of people." - "Culture is a word for the 'lifestyle' of groups of people, meaning the way they do things." - "An integrated pattern of human knowledge,

		beliefs, values, traditions and customs shared by a society.”
Beliefs	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Culture is the passed on and agreed upon notions and beliefs of a population of one demographic region.” - “To me, culture is the traditions, customs and beliefs people share.”
Religion	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “It’s the beliefs, religion, customs and traditions of people.” - “It’s the characteristics of a group of people sharing religion, beliefs and language.”
Language	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Language is the language of people.” - “Simply, the language, religion, customs and traditions, food and clothes of a society.”

In the pre-project questionnaire, as shown in the table 50, participants showed a rather generalized understanding of culture as a concept which is considered as valid; they mainly talked about cultural perspectives (beliefs) and practices (customs, traditions, language and religion) in describing the components of culture, i.e. the surface or external culture of Hall’s iceberg (1976) or big ‘C’ (Peterson, 2004; Lee, 2009)

Regarding students’ definition of the concept of culture after the virtual exchange in the post- project questionnaire, the most repeated themes were about: attitudes, the way of life, behavior, beliefs and values (table 51). One must note that they had quite similar conceptualization with the addition of some new internal understandings (Hall’s cultural iceberg, 1976) In terms of Big ‘c’ and little ‘c’, we can say that they managed to give definitions with the combination of both categories.

Table 51*Students' Definition of Culture (Post- Project Questionnaire)*

Themes	Repeated Number of the Theme	Examples
The way of life	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "It's the way of life of a group of people that share the same customs, beliefs and traditions." - "As the inherited traditions, beliefs and most importantly the way of life. Shared by the inhabitants of one geographical region."
Attitudes	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Culture is about the attitudes." - "Culture influences our attitudes and behaviors towards other people."
Beliefs	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "The common beliefs and traditions of a group of people." - "Our beliefs shape our culture."
Values	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Someone's values and beliefs." - "Culture is the identity and values of people in a country."
Behaviors	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "It is about the way of life and behaviours of people." - "Culture affects our behavior and attitudes about others."
Identity	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Culture is our identity." - "To me it's the ideas, Arts, beliefs, costumes, social behaviour of group of people in which they share with others as a part of their identity."

Culture is definitely a complex culture, and all definitions are valid, since there is no definite one. Thus, students agreed that culture defines a person's way of living, attitudes, behaviors, beliefs and the values with which they were born and raised to. They demonstrated an understanding of the concept as: “culture embraces all the manifestations of social habits of a community, the reactions of the individual as affected by the habits of the group in which he lives, and the products of human activity as determined by these habits.” (Boas, 1942; p.449) Students had specific comprehension this time, as one of them explained that it is about: “your beliefs and what you stand for in terms of morals.” Or “everyday actions (routines) and rituals... your clothes, how you talk... anything that incorporates pretty much the society around you”.

Some participants also discussed the idea that culture in any geographical region, even within the same country, city or household, has multiple layers. Even though this was mentioned by some before the virtual exchange started, more participants shared this idea in post-project interviews. They explained that they believe cultures have subcultures within the same area, as demonstrated in the following examples:

- “Each one of us has his own culture and this doesn’t mean it should be the same.”
- “Culture is the different values and morals of a group of people in the same geographical area.”
- “There are many cultures in one city.”

Participants’ pre- and post- project responses certainly demonstrated a great variability in explaining what culture is by presenting more sides, yet, their level of detail has increased. They managed to mention both surface and deep aspects of culture (Hall, 1976). This suggests that participating in the telecollaboration project exposed them to a wide variety of aspects of the concept, and thus, it could have deepened their perception and made them aware as a result. Nevertheless, there is not enough data to support these claims;

however, this enabled them to develop their intercultural competency and prepared them for future intercultural exchanges; they would be less astonished if their interlocutors acted or spoke differently than they did.

Bridging the Gap

In this section I deal with research question 3: *Does telecollaboration bridge the gap between the groups?* I explain students' ethnorelativism after the project. I start by their explanation of language learning and intercultural communication, and then I analyze two questions from their post- project questionnaire and interviews about the difficulties faced when explaining home culture and understanding target culture.

When asked about the importance of learning about the culture along with the language system in the post- project interviews, all students agreed with them favouring practical rather than abstract instruction. The majority also stressed the necessity of being open-minded, understanding and respecting those who are different from us. Many argue that these reasons imply that cultural education and awareness makes us better people. Other reasons to why they should learn culture was to prevent and overcome stereotypes; to "make us erase the false image(s) we have about others" as one participant claimed. Furthermore, stop being insensitive towards people from different cultural backgrounds, thus, avoid misunderstandings and conflicts. This supports previous findings (O'Dowd, 2008; Helm & Guth, 2010; Lee, 2019) that telecollaboration may aid in increasing learners' openness to and comprehension of cultural learning.

Teachers when asked in their questionnaires to elaborate on whether they think telecollaboration reinforces stereotypes; the vast majority disagreed, explaining that on the contrary, telecollaboration helps bridge the gap between people. It provides a firm foundation for students to gradually detach themselves from their own culture and understanding the target culture, this would develop their own understanding, resulting in a third type of culture

where learners are going “to take both an insider’s and an outsider’s view.” (Kramersch, 1993 p.210) Some examples of their answers were:

- “To my mind, telecollaboration destroys stereotypes mainly the negative ones for learners become aware of the other and know more about the culture differences and yet they tolerate and respect the differences; however, tolerance and respect vis-á-vis the other should be shared by all and telecollaborators in particular.”
- “On the contrary, I believe the more we break the language and cultural barrier, the more one comes to see the extent to which stereotypes are invalid and ungrounded.”
- “On the contrary, I think it should elucidate discrepancies between what is real and what is not, as learners would be offered an opportunity to develop an insider's perspective (in addition to the long-acquired outsider's perspective).”
- “Probably the opposite because it is likely to reduce them by encouraging students to be open- minded and conscious of the other's culture and beliefs and accept him as such.”
- “With today's digital shift any form of online learning is beneficial to EFL students as it develops their cognitive and metacognitive skills. Besides, telecollaboration is likely to yield conscious preparation for real life social and employment situations.”
- “On the contrary it reduces stereotypes and clichés by creating a bridge between the local and foreign culture. A more realistic and authentic context.”
- “I believe that telecollaboration will develop and promote intercultural understanding and awareness of the otherness and dismiss or at least reduce stereotypes. It is always good to know and be familiar with the target culture to change our behaviour and negative thoughts and stereotypes.”

- “Telecollaboration improves our understanding to the worldly experiences and thereby the other. Understanding the other means understanding oneself. In other words, intercultural competence is needed to strengthen one's cultural identity.”
- “Foreign language teachers and learners should develop flexibility and open-mindedness. These two qualities could be fostered only through telecollaboration.”
- “I think that it's not the use of telecollaboration that will define the outcome but rather the way this collaboration will be implemented. I believe that the course design (the tasks, material choice, etc.)”, the choice of the collaborators, and the way the collaboration will be monitored, among other aspects, are the decisive elements...”

Some other teachers believed that it depends really on how the telecollaboration project was implemented and students' interactions could either reinforce or reduce stereotypes. They argued that:

- “My exact answer to the yes or No is REALLY BOTH. How? Well, it depends on the circumstances really, for example: if an underprivileged university of an underdeveloped country initiates a telecollaboration, the other side of the screen would be convinced if sth goes wrong due to electricity blackout or internet mishaps that such country is indeed UNWORTHY, UNDERDEVELOPED, & ETC; & vice-versa the case if the university has an outstanding infra-structure; the others would get rid of their stereotypical vision & eliminate their preconceived ideas.”
- “It gives a clear image, an image that may either reinforce or weaken stereotypes.”
- “I think that it's not the use of telecollaboration that will define the outcome but rather the way this collaboration will be implemented. I believe that the course design (the tasks, material choice, etc.) , the choice of the collaborators, and the

way the collaboration will be monitored, among other aspects, are the decisive elements...”

The last group, where few teachers agreed on the fact that telecollaboration reinforces stereotypes, arguing that the misuse of technologies in this type of projects would add to participants’ negative attitudes and wrong beliefs. As one said “It is crystal clear that technology affects our life as it does with teaching, especially at university... but telecollaboration would raise a bunch of issues vis-a-vis students’ stereotypes, their lack of seriousness, skills, and familiarity with the use of internet or technology in general.”

This proves that telecollaboration allows students to bridge the gaps and build interconnections between the different groups in terms of language and culture. It is clear that every student is going to interpret and perceive in a different way, thus this project prompted them to analyze their own culture, as well as others’. I asked participants to tell me about one instance when they could not explain something well to their Brazilian partners and why it happened. Some of them said they did not face this problem at all; they found themselves at ease talking about their culture and doing the tasks. There could be some difficulties at the beginning, which is understandable, since it was their first time participating in this type of project and interacting with other people from a different cultural background but then they had no problem “In the beginning I felt that it's hard to explain my ideas well to my Brazilian partners, but with more activities this feeling was gone” One of them explained.

Furthermore, the most common problem faced by participants was talking about traditional and religious ceremonies; they had a hard time explaining Algerian weddings, ceremonies and celebrations because they felt that non-Algerians would not understand them properly and sometimes could not elaborate on why they do them. One participant said “I did not think it would not be easy, but I’ve never had to explain my culture so I was lost on how to explain our traditions.” However, the telecollaboration made them reflect

and better analyze their own culture which was a first for them. All students agreed that they really enjoyed exchanging with their Brazilian peers and that they did their best to explain their ideas.

Concerning the understanding of target culture, as discussed in chapter 3, Deardorff (2006) stressed that recognizing and appreciating cultural differences at the level of ideas and beliefs, is considered a crucial intercultural competence skill. Participants were asked about an instance in the virtual exchange where they thought one of the Brazilian traditions was hard to understand. Their responses were divided into two groups; the first group of students, who were the majority, did not have any problem in understanding Brazilian traditions and culture. They argued that everything was clear and that is because their peers explained very well their traditions and that they were not that strange or weird. The second group of students claimed that some of the target culture festivals and events were confusing, especially religious ones because it was very different from theirs and had no previous knowledge about. But this does not mean they were dismissive towards their traditions, quite the opposite, they enjoyed the interaction as it allowed them to reflect and relate the new knowledge and compare it to their own.

Before the start of the project and as demonstrated in the pre- project responses, participants were on the spectrum of being ethnorelative, at the acceptance stage (Bennett, 1993). Nevertheless, according to their statements, participants demonstrated a shift towards a deeper ethnorelative intercultural sensitivity, i.e., adaptation and integration orientations. Telecollaboration offered them the opportunity to analyze the target culture, in addition, students were also able to assess and examine their own culture from an outsider perspective which is an essential intercultural skill. This indicates that virtual exchange helped learners to build intercultural sensitivity and understanding. Regarding

Byram's ICC model (1997), in post- project answers, it appears that participants developed critical cultural awareness, i.e., *savoir s'engager*.

Conclusion

This chapter determined how telecollaboration in a social networking site (SNS) affects the development of learners' EFL and intercultural competency. In addition, it investigated the impact this project had in bridging the gap between the groups. The analysis of the questionnaires and learners' telecollaboration experience was based on both a quantitative and qualitative approach. The project took place in a *Padlet* between Algerian English university students from Souk-Ahras and Brazilian English university students from Araraquara for 10 weeks. Every two weeks students were assigned a task to discuss within their groups then comment on each others' posts. The present study focused on Algerian students' experience in the project and Algerian EFL university teachers' perspective in integrating telecollaboration in their teaching practices. Participants were asked to answer a pre- and post- intercultural exchange questionnaire, along with interviews; in which findings were analyzed to answer research questions.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

GENERAL CONCLUSION

This study has aimed to investigate how the integration of telecollaboration in EFL classrooms affects learners' language and intercultural communication development. In addition, it has examined the roles of telecollaboration in overcoming global digital divide (GDD) by bridging the gap between the different groups. This integration was achieved through a 10 week virtual exchange project between Algerian EFL university students at Mohamed Cherif Messaadia- Souk Ahras and Brazilian EFL university students in Araraquara. The project took place in a relatively new and different social networking site (SNS) called Padlet, where students exchanged information about their own culture and commented under the posts of the assigned tasks every week. Data analysis was based on participants' experiences, quantitative and interpretative qualitative approach through data collected using different tools, teachers' questionnaire, students' pre- and post project questionnaires and group meetings.

The findings of the present study, addressing the researcher's research questions, revealed that the integration of telecollaboration projects in EFL teaching and learning practices promotes language learning, intercultural competence and bridging the gap. In research cycle 1, results from the pre-project questionnaire and interviews demonstrated that both teachers and students were in favour of implementing cross-cultural projects in their EFL classrooms, as they believed it facilitates language learning and ICC development. Learners were also motivated and had a great attitude towards their participation in the project and interaction with their Brazilian partners.

The two remaining research cycles witnessed the start of the discussion-based project and the analysis of learners' post- telecollaboration questionnaire. Findings disclosed that learners and teachers' expectations were correct. In particular, insights about participants' linguistic and socio-cultural skills were provided. As far as the linguistic skill is concerned,

25 of the participants were able to improve their lexical and grammatical components related to the chosen topics. They also developed some interactive features; presented in their coherent, meaningful and cohesive discussions.

In addition, they enjoyed sharing the different aspects of their own culture with their Brazilian partners and learning about the target culture. They had the opportunity to examine their own culture from an outsider's perspective and explore the target culture which would create a shift in their worldview. This helped students to have a thorough understanding of the concept and realized its importance in learning about foreign cultures, as well as, languages. This project also helped in bridging the gap between the groups in terms of overcoming stereotypes and attitudes, using web- based tools in their interactions, and combining learning with online tasks.

Limitations of the Study

Nevertheless, besides the positive results, some limitations were noticed. This project obtained findings may provide different outcomes for other instructors and cannot be applicable to other situations due to different reasons: transferability problems, the study's qualitative nature, having different partners, the use of different discussion- based framework, learners' language proficiency, and the use of different topics and tasks. Furthermore, concerning data collected from questionnaires and group meetings, students could try and predict the answers wanted by the researcher, thus, give more desirable responses. To prevent this from happening, researchers could include more than one data collection tool.

Another limitation was the lack of live- based interactions between the groups due to time zones constraints; the use of Padlet as a platform for this exchange rather than a popular social media like Facebook; partnering with non- native speakers to the target language. Moreover, the present study does not provide detailed understanding of the cross-cultural exchange since data collected was solely analyzed from the perspective of Algerian

participants, given logistical problems and lack of time. Finally, the unequal number of participants, being 30 students from Algeria (in which 5 of them were not able to continue the exchange due to personal reasons) and 55 students from Brazil, could have affected the outcomes. As well as, their participation frequency to the weekly tasks might have affected the learning outcomes.

Future Research Recommendations

Future research, in order to prevent previous limitations, could use different frameworks to the project by focusing on different target languages, partnering with native speakers, using different platforms for the exchange, using different tasks and topics, and having equal numbers of participants. In addition, it would be useful to have videoconferencing sessions between groups, in order to allow participants to collaborate in real-time.

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APPENDIX A**Teachers' Questionnaire**

Dear teacher,

The survey focuses on access to and use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in teaching and learning, as well as what you, teachers of English as a Foreign Language, think of integrating telecollaboration into your teaching practices. The results will be integrated within my doctoral thesis in Language Sciences and Didactics. It should take you few minutes to answer the questionnaire. You are kindly requested to answer the questions by ticking the boxes or by making a full statement where necessary.

May I thank you in advance for your collaboration.

Abir Benabdallah
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Ben Ahmed- Oran2

Section1: Background Information:

1- Gender:

a- Male

b- Female

2- Age range:

a- 20 – 29

b- 30 – 39

c- 40 – 49

d- 50 or over

3- Qualification:

a- Masters degree

b- Magisters degree

c- Doctorate

d- Other:.....

4- Teaching experience:

a- Less than one year

b- Between 1 – 3 years

c- Between 4 – 6 years

d- Between 7 – 10 years

e- More than 10 years

Section 2: ICT experience in general:

5- Do you have a computer?

a- Yes

b- No

6- How often do you use your computer each day?

a- Less than one hour a day

b- 1 to 3 hours per day

c- 4 to 6 hours per day

d- More than 6 hours a day

7- Do you have internet access at home?

a- Yes

b- No

8- Do you use technology to prepare your lessons?

a- Always

b- Often

c- Sometimes

d- Rarely

e- Never

- If yes name the tools you use

.....

.....

.....

9- What is your proficiency level as a technology user, please select which of the following categories best describes you.

Unfamiliar - I have no experience with computer technologies.

Newcomer - I have attempted to use computer technologies, but I still require help on a regular basis.

Beginner - I am able to perform basic functions in a limited number of computer applications.

Average - I demonstrate a general competency in a number of computer applications.

Advanced - I have acquired the ability to competently use a broad spectrum of computer technologies

Expert - I am extremely proficient in using a wide variety of computer technologies

Section 3: ICT and Language teaching:

10- Does your institution promote ICT innovations?

a- Yes

b- No

11- Is your classroom environment connected to internet?

a- Yes

b- No

12- Do you integrate technology in your teaching activities?

a- Not at all

b- Rarely

c- Occasionally

d- Frequently

e- Almost Always

f- All the time

- If you do please describe how you have used any technologies in your teaching.....

.....

.....

.....

13- If circumstances were different or more favorable, would you use it in your classroom?

a- Yes

b- No

14- What are the challenges that faced you in using ICT inside the classroom?

a- Technology access

b- Language technology training

c- Time

d- Language curriculum and/or texts used at my teaching institution

e- Student interests

f- Other(s):

.....

15- Do you think that technology increases students' academic achievement?

a- Yes

b- No

16- According to you, is technology helpful in the classroom?

a- Yes

b- No

17- Does technology change the role of the teacher?

a- Yes

b- No

18- Does technology enhance lifelong learning?

a- Yes

b- No

19- Does technology improve students' communication skills?

a- Yes

b- No

Section 4: Telecollaboration:

20- Are you familiar with one of these terms "telecollaboration", "Virtual Exchange" or "Online Intercultural Exchange"?

a- Yes

b- No

*Note: Telecollaboration according to O'Dowd is: "the application of online communication tools to bring together classes of language learners in geographically distant locations to develop their foreign language skills and intercultural competence through collaborative tasks and project work."

21-Do you have any experience with telecollaboration in language teaching and/or teacher development?

a- Yes

b- No

- If you do please describe your experience.....

.....

.....

22-Do you have any experience with collaborative learning in teacher professional development?

a- Yes

b- No

- If you do please describe your experience.....

.....

.....

23-Do you think developing students' intercultural communicative competence is important?

a- Yes

b- No

24-Do you think that the integration of telecollaboration would develop students' intercultural communicative competence?

a- Strongly agree

b- Agree

c- Neutral

d- Disagree

e- Strongly disagree

25- How would you describe intercultural communicative competence and why do you think it is important for language teaching?

.....

.....

.....

26- Please rate the order of importance (with 1 as most important) of possible pedagogic aims of a telecollaboration project. Add any additional aims that you believe should be included.

	1	2	3	4	5
Develop intercultural awareness and communication skills.					
Develop foreign language competence.					
Develop online communication and collaboration skills (digital literacy).					
Learn more about their subject from a foreign perspective.					
Provide authentic communication scenarios in a foreign language.					

27- What are the challenges that would prevent you from integrating telecollaboration in teaching EFL?

.....

.....

.....

.....

28- What would you believe the results of telecollaboration integration?

	Agree	Disagree	undecided
Students would improve their intercultural awareness.			
Students would improve their intercultural communication skills.			
Telecollaboration would affect students' attitudes and perspectives towards intercultural learning.			
Students would improve their foreign language skills.			
Telecollaboration would affect students' attitudes and perspectives towards EFL learning.			
Students would improve their online communication and digital literacy skills			

29- Do you think telecollaboration could reinforce the stereotypes?

a- Yes

b- No

- Please, elaborate more.....

.....

.....

APPENDIX B

Students' Pre-Project Questionnaire

Dear student,

The survey focuses on how students think of integrating telecollaboration into their learning practices. The results will be integrated within my doctoral thesis in Language Sciences and Didactics.

It should take you few minutes to answer the questionnaire. You are kindly requested to answer the questions by ticking the boxes or by making a full statement where necessary.

May I thank you in advance for your collaboration.

Abir Benabdallah
Department of Foreign
Languages
University of Mohamed
Ben Ahmed- Oran2

Section One: Background Information

1- Name:

2- Age:

3- Have you ever traveled or studied abroad?

a- Yes

b- No

- If yes, where did you go and for how long?

4- Do you have any friends or family who come from other countries?

a- Yes

b- No

- If yes where are they from?

.....

- How often do you interact with them?.....

Section Two: Pre-Project Expectations:

5- What is your reaction to the Google Classroom project?

a- It sounds interesting. I'm looking forward to it!

b- It's interesting, but I feel a little bit intimidated

c- I don't care

d- It doesn't sound like a good idea

e- I hate it

f- Other:

6- What do you expect to learn in this project?

.....

7- How do you feel about the project?

a- It's just another homework assignment.

b- It will probably be fun sometimes

c- I think it will be a fun way to practice English

8- Do you think you will learn anything from it?

a- Yes

b- No

- If yes, what?

9- Do you think it would be interesting to participate in this kind of project, in terms of your development as a student and a future teacher? Why?

.....

10- Do you think learning about other cultures is important in general?

a- Yes

b- No

- Why (not)?

.....

11- Do you think it is important for language learners to also learn about the culture or is it just about the language?

a- Yes, it is important

b- It is just about the language

- Could you please explain?

.....

12- In your opinion, what is culture?

.....

.....

.....

APPENDIX C**Students' Post-Project Questionnaire**

Dear student,

The survey focuses on post- telecollaboration project questionnaire. The results will be integrated within my doctoral thesis in Language Sciences and Didactics.

It should take you few minutes to answer the questionnaire. You are kindly requested to answer the questions by ticking the boxes or by making a full statement where necessary.

May I thank you in advance for your collaboration.

Abir Benabdallah
Department of Foreign
Languages
University of Mohamed
Ben Ahmed- Oran2

1- Name:

2- My telecollaboration experience was:

a- Fun

b- Boring

c- Useful

d- Frustrating

e- Tiring

f- Interesting

g- Motivating

h- Stressful

i- Other:

3- This project helped me improve my:

a- Digital skills

b- General vocabulary

c- Specific vocabulary

d- Creativity

e- Autonomy

f- Research skills

g- Cultural skills

h- Other:

4- Choose whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Totally	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Totally
	Agree			Disagree	
I have enjoyed this project					
I look forward into reading my partners' posts					
I liked the fact we can share about our culture					
The project was relevant to real life English language use					
The project has been motivating for me					
This project made me feel anxious					
This project brought me closer to a new culture					

5- Would you like to participate in a similar telecollaborative project in the future?

a- Yes

b- No

6- If you had to participate in a telecollaborative project again, what changes would you like to see and why?

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.....
.....

7- Did you like using Padlet for the online exchange with your Brazilian peers? Why (not)?

.....
.....
.....

8- Tell about one instance when you felt that you could not explain something well to your Brazilian partners. Why did it happen?

.....
.....
.....

9- Tell me about one instance when you thought that one of the Brazilian traditions was hard to understand.

.....
.....
.....

10- Do you think that your culture is the only right one?

a- Yes

b- No

11- Do you appreciate the richness of other's culture?

a- Yes

b- No

12- How would you define “culture” after your experience in this project?

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.....
.....

13- What did you learn from this project?

.....
.....
.....

14- What is your overall impression on your experience?

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.....
.....

RESUME

Les progrès continus et la diffusion des technologies basées sur Internet ont créé le besoin d'un monde interconnecté où les disparités numériques ou la fracture numérique mondiale entre les pays ne cessent de s'étendre. À cet égard, les personnes issues de zones géographiques et de milieux culturels différents ont besoin de compétences de communication appropriées et efficaces qui peuvent être développées grâce à la télécollaboration. La présente étude de rend compte d'un projet de recherche-action et examine l'impact de l'intégration de la télécollaboration dans les classes d'anglais comme langue étrangère sur la réduction des fractures entre les groupes, ainsi que le développement des compétences linguistiques et interculturelles des apprenants par le biais de sites de réseaux sociaux. Un projet de télécollaboration a été conçu entre des apprenants universitaires d'Anglais, Algériens et Brésiliens, en utilisant Padlet comme plate-forme d'échange pendant dix semaines. Les participants ont partagé des informations en fonction des tâches et sujets assignés et ont commenté leurs publications et réactions. Les expériences et résultats d'apprentissage des 30 étudiants Algériens ont été analysés sur la base de questionnaires pré- et post-projet et des réunions de groupe, ainsi que le questionnaire des enseignants enquêtant sur leur perception de l'intégration de la télécollaboration. L'analyse des données a indiqué que les participants ont réalisé un développement notable en termes de leurs composantes linguistiques, lexicales et grammaticales en relation avec les tâches ainsi que leur compétence en communication et conscience interculturelles. En ce qui concerne la fracture numérique mondiale, ce projet a contribué à combler le fossé entre les deux groupes à mesure qu'ils éliminaient les barrières culturelles et technologiques. En conséquence, la télécollaboration aide les étudiants à développer leur compréhension envers les différentes cultures et devenir de meilleurs communicateurs interculturels.

ملخص

أدى التقدم المستمر وانتشار التقنيات القائمة على الانترنت الى خلق الحاجة لعالم مترابط اين التفاوت الرقمي أو كما يعرف بالفجوة الرقمية العالمية بين البلدان تستمر في التوسع. في هذا الصدد يحتاج الأشخاص من مناطق جغرافية وخلفيات ثقافية مختلفة إلى مهارات اتصال مناسبة وفعالة يمكن تطويرها من خلال التعاون عن بُعد. تقدم هذه الدراسة تقريراً عن مشروع بحث إجرائي يدرس تأثير دمج التعاون عن بُعد في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية على سد الفجوة بين المجموعات بالإضافة الى تطوير الكفاءات اللغوية والثقافية للطلبة من خلال مواقع الشبكات الاجتماعية. تم تصميم مشروع تعاوني عن بُعد بين متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية من الجامعات الجزائرية والبرازيلية باستخدام Padlet كمنصة للتبادل على مدار عشرة أسابيع حيث تبادل الطلبة معلومات بناءً على المهام والمواضيع الموكلة لهم وأيضاً التعاليق و ردود الافعال على مشاركات بعضهم البعض. حللت هذه الدراسة تجارب 30 طالباً جزائرياً ونتائج تعلمهم بناءً على استبياناتهم قبل وبعد المشروع واجتماعاتهم، بالإضافة إلى استبيان موجه للأساتذة للتحقيق في مفاهيمهم حول دمج التعاون عن بُعد. اما بخصوص الفجوة الرقمية العالمية, فقد بينت النتائج التخلص من العوائق الثقافية و التكنولوجية بين الطلبة مما ادى الى على تطوير فهمهم و استيعابهم للثقافات الاخرى

