

5 Developing intercultural communicative competence across the Americas

Diane Ceo-DiFrancesco¹, Oscar Mora²,
and Andrea Serna Collazos³

Abstract

Foreign language telecollaboration offers innovations to enhance language instruction. Previous research has cited its use to develop linguistic skills and intercultural competence (Belz, 2003; Blake, 2013; Chun, 2015; O'Dowd, 2000; Schenker, 2014). This article reports preliminary outcomes of a pedagogical project which leveraged telecollaborative practices in both English and Spanish as a foreign language in order to document the processes of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) development.

Keywords: videoconferencing, oral proficiency, language development, intercultural communicative competence.

1. Introduction

The notion that a cultural and linguistic synchronous exchange can enhance language learning is gaining ground in higher education in the Americas, where

1. Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio, United States; ceo-difr@xavier.edu

2. Pontificia Universidad Javeriana Cali, Cali, Colombia; oscmoras@javerianacali.edu.co

3. Pontificia Universidad Javeriana Cali, Cali, Colombia; asernac@javerianacali.edu.co

How to cite this chapter: Ceo-DiFrancesco, D., Mora, O., & Serna Collazos, A. (2016). Developing intercultural communicative competence across the Americas. In S. Jager, M. Kurek & B. O'Rourke (Eds), *New directions in telecollaborative research and practice: selected papers from the second conference on telecollaboration in higher education* (pp. 59-67). Research-publishing.net. <https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2016.telecollab2016.490>

the objective of producing interculturally competent citizens is a necessity. As educators search for ways to provide transformative learning experiences for all students regardless of socioeconomic background, interest in telecollaboration has increased.

The integration of telecollaboration as a pedagogical tool in language teaching expands the treatment of cultures, which, according to [Byram \(1997\)](#), was previously nonexistent or limited to isolated facts and homogenous descriptions. While [Lange \(2003\)](#) found that teachers are often ill-prepared to teach cultures, telecollaboration addresses these limitations. Furthermore, telecollaboration is increasingly theorized to improve language proficiency, cultural knowledge and intercultural awareness ([Chun, 2015](#)).

Multiple researchers have defined intercultural competence and ICC (e.g. [Bennet, 1997](#); [Byram, 1997](#); [Deardorff, 2006](#); [Sanhueza Henríquez, Paukner Nogués, San Martín, & Friz Carrillo, 2012](#)), with the distinction pertaining to the use of language to build relationships. As telecollaboration practices grow, it is critical to understand how this pedagogical tool contributes to development of ICC.

This article reports preliminary outcomes of a pedagogical project leveraging telecollaborative practices in both English and Spanish, documenting developmental processes of intercultural sensitivity and ICC. The overarching research questions are:

- What is the effect of telecollaboration on students' linguistic development?
- How does student engagement in telecollaboration affect the development of ICC and intercultural sensitivity?

This report focuses on a preliminary set of data, part of a larger study using multiple tools to assess ICC and intercultural sensitivity.

2. Methods

2.1. Context

Instructors of English in Colombia and Spanish in the United States developed a joint program to integrate telecollaboration into course design. The faculty engaged students in synchronous, one to one video conferencing and asynchronous discussion board interactions between September and November 2015. The curricular program focused on the telecollaborative cultural exchange embedded into the course.

2.2. Participants

The participants (N= 38; 25 females, 13 males) were enrolled in an English IV course in Colombia and an Intermediate Spanish I course in the United States. The age range of participants was 18 to 24. Given the nature of self-selection in course matriculation, participants were not assigned at random.

2.3. Structure of telecollaborative sessions

A five step pedagogical design was created, based on the description of ICC development proposed by [Liddicoat and Scarino \(2013\)](#), which highlights noticing, comparing, reflecting and interacting. First, students prepared for telecollaborative sessions with a pre-task assignment, examining their own cultures. The pre-task findings were shared in class. The interactive telecollaborative task was then recorded. Following the session, students posted a reflection to a discussion board. The final step was a class discussion.

2.4. Data collection

Data were collected from surveys, pre and post interviews in the target language, recorded telecollaborative sessions, reflective discussion board posts and self-reflective post surveys. The reflection data from the online forum and recorded

telecollaborative sessions have not yet been analyzed and do not appear as part of this article.

2.4.1. Pre and post surveys

Two surveys, adapted from Vila (2004), were administered at the commencement of the course of study and at the end of the treatment to measure intercultural sensitivity and ICC. The Scale of Intercultural Sensitivity (SIS) consists of 22 items measuring the affective aspects of ICC and includes five dimensions: engagement in intercultural communication, respect for different cultures, confidence in intercultural communication, enjoyment of intercultural interactions, and attention during intercultural communication. The Test of ICC consists of 18 situations, of which nine measure cognitive competencies and nine behavioral competencies of ICC. The objectives of the test are to evaluate abilities to interpret aspects of verbal and nonverbal communication and levels of flexibility in multicultural contexts. Adaptations to both tools proved necessary to address age and cultural context.

2.4.2. Pre and post target language interview

Structured oral interviews were administered to assess linguistic levels at the commencement of the course and following the treatment. Participants were interviewed by the native speaking professor of their language of study. The interview included elicitations and responses pertaining to self descriptions, justifications of major area of study, comparisons and contrasts between student and best friend, descriptions of family gatherings and opinions regarding national celebrations. All interviews were recorded.

2.5. Data analysis

Qualitative analyses were applied to the test and survey ICC data. The researchers looked at average responses across all participants for the three categories of questions established previously by Vila (2004): non-verbal skills, verbal skills and cultural components. The analyses were performed separately for the two groups in order to qualitatively compare mean responses for each category. Pre

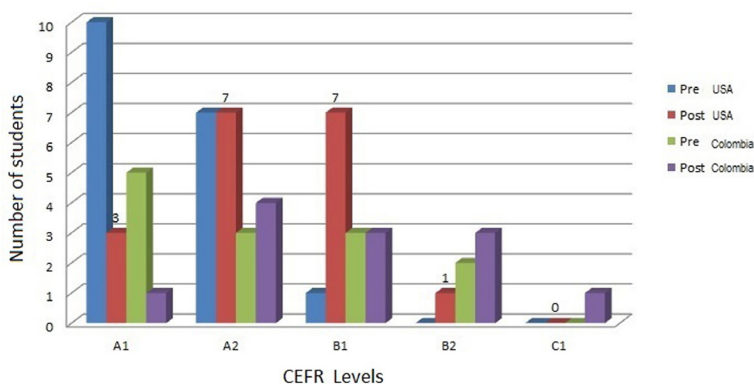
and post target language interviews were analyzed according to the illustrative scales in the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (Council of Europe, 2001), specifically global description, self-assessment grid, qualitative aspects of spoken language use, overall listening comprehension, overall spoken interaction, understanding a native speaker interlocutor and conversation. A global assessment was determined and a level assigned for each participant prior to and following the treatment. The interviews were analyzed by the native speaking professor of their language of study.

3. Preliminary results

3.1. Structured oral interview results

Both groups demonstrated changes in oral proficiency development between pre and post treatment. Of the 13 students who completed both pre and post interviews in English, only one remained in level A1 at the end of the study. The remainder of students advanced to a higher level. In Spanish, post evaluation results revealed that only three subjects remained at the A1 level following the treatment (see Figure 1).

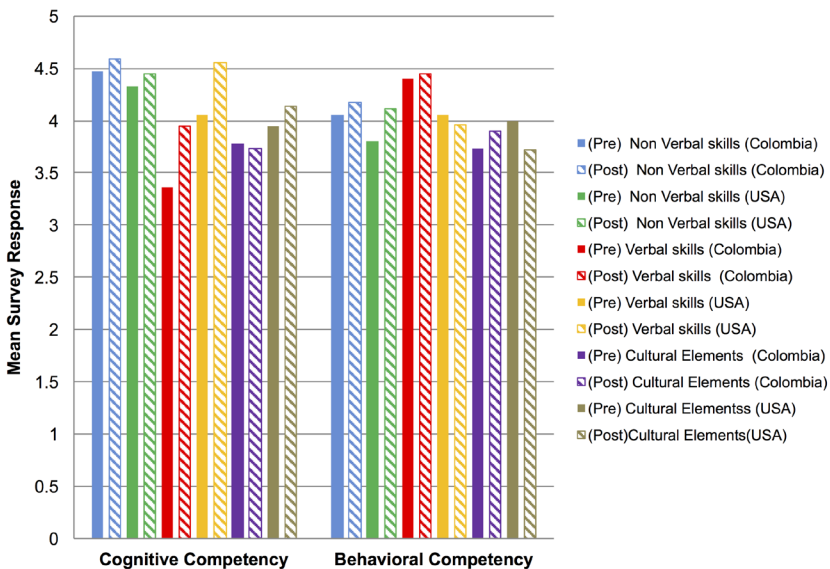
Figure 1. Pre and post interview USA and Colombian students



3.2. Survey of intercultural sensitivity and ICC results

A comparison of survey results suggest slight gains overall for both groups and potential growth in the attitudinal, cognitive and behavioral components of ICC. With regards to the affective aspects of ICC, specifically, student disposition to interact with those of other cultures, students showed potential gains in nearly all five dimensions of the SIS. Both groups showed positive growth in two dimensions: implications for interaction with others and level of enjoyment of interaction with others. The United States students scored higher post compared to pre assessment regarding confidence and attention during interactions. Only the Colombia group showed increased scores pertaining to respect for different cultures (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Intercultural communicative competence



According to pre and post score comparisons of the SIS and the test of ICC, each group showed a tendency toward increased tolerance of other cultures, both in average scores on test items and in average overall test scores.

4. Discussion

Although we report gains in linguistic proficiency, this preliminary report is a limited subset of all data from this project. Data reported here does not include a comparison group, and consequently the gains in linguistic competencies cannot be attributed solely to telecollaboration. However, additional data sources mentioned may provide insights, allowing for a breakdown of components of telecollaboration that led to the gains.

The five step process of the telecollaborative sessions overlapped with classroom activities. Due to this design, telecollaboration was an integral part of the curriculum. Chun (2015) notes that as telecollaboration becomes more crucial to program protocol, the development of ICC cannot be separated from the classroom-based activities that support it.

Group comparisons present some noteworthy tendencies. The U.S. students grew in confidence and attention to others. This may suggest that telecollaboration offers students a means of increasing their confidence level in interactions, specifically ones that cause anxiety in situations beyond their comfort zones. U.S. students made progress in active listening skills necessary for interacting in global settings. Interestingly, Colombian students made gains in the area of respect for others different than themselves. Awareness of others, exploration of difference, respect for peers and reduced anxiety during interactions with peers from foreign lands are reasons that telecollaboration is a useful tool in foreign language higher education.

Despite shortcomings of this report, the data sheds light on the fact that important components of telecollaboration leading to ICC development could be culture specific. Future studies may permit researchers to tease out dimensions of the telecollaborative process that depend on cultural environments. In our case, this preliminary data suggests that ICC growth is possible in an exolingual environment which integrates telecollaboration into course design. Further work is needed in order to document how the cultural settings influence development of ICC.

5. Conclusion

Telecollaboration offers the potential to develop ICC and is particularly useful for populations in which linguistic and cultural interactions outside of the classroom do not readily exist. In this context, telecollaboration becomes a viable if not a necessary strategy to develop ICC. The five step process created for this study serves as a model of practice. Finally, growth differences in ICC development suggest that cultural environments may influence aspects of telecollaboration.

References

- Belz, J. A. (2003). Linguistic perspectives on the development of intercultural competence in telecollaboration. *Language Learning and Technology*, 7(2), 68-117.
- Bennet, M. J. (1997). How not to be a fluent fool: understanding the cultural dimensions of language. In A. E. Fantini & J. C. Richards (Eds), *New ways in teaching culture. New ways in TESOL series II: Innovative classroom techniques* (pp. 16-21). Alexandria, VA: TESOL.
- Blake, R. (2013). *Brave new digital classroom: technology and foreign language learning* (2nd ed.). Washington, D. C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Chun, D. M. (2015). Language and cultural learning in higher education via telecollaboration. *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, 10(1), 5-21. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1554480X.2014.999775>
- Council of Europe. (2001). *Common European framework of reference for languages: learning, teaching, assessment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Deardorff, D. K. (2006). Identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization. *Journal of Studies of International Education*, 10(3), 241-266. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1028315306287002>
- Lange, D. L. (2003). Future directions for culture teaching and learning: implications of the new culture standards and theoretical frameworks for curriculum, assessment, instruction and research. In D. L. Lange & R. M. Paige (Eds), *Culture as the core: perspectives on culture in second language learning* (pp. 337-354). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

- Liddicoat, A. J., & Scarino, A. (2013). *Intercultural language teaching and learning*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/9781118482070>
- O'Dowd, R. (2000). Intercultural learning via videoconferencing: a pilot exchange project. *ReCALL*, 12(1), 49-61. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0958344000000616>
- Sanhueza Henríquez, S., Paukner Nogués, F., San Martín, V., & Friz Carrillo, M. (2012). Dimensiones de la Competencia Comunicativa Intercultural (CCI) y sus implicaciones para la práctica educativa. *Folios. Segunda época*, 36, 131-151.
- Schenker, T. (2014). The effects of a virtual exchange on students' interest in learning about culture. *Foreign Language Annals*, 46(2) 491-507.
- Vila, R. (2004). *La comunicación intercultural en educación secundaria obligatoria: test de competencia comunicativa intercultural*. Granada: Investigación Y Sociedad.

Published by Research-publishing.net, not-for-profit association
Dublin, Ireland; Voillans, France, info@research-publishing.net

© 2016 by Editors (collective work)
© 2016 by Authors (individual work)

New directions in telecollaborative research and practice: selected papers from the second conference on telecollaboration in higher education
Edited by Sake Jager, Malgorzata Kurek, and Breffni O'Rourke

Rights: All articles in this collection are published under the Attribution-NonCommercial -NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) licence. Under this licence, the contents are freely available online as PDF files (<https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2016.telecollab2016.9781908416414>) for anybody to read, download, copy, and redistribute provided that the author(s), editorial team, and publisher are properly cited. Commercial use and derivative works are, however, not permitted.



Disclaimer: Research-publishing.net does not take any responsibility for the content of the pages written by the authors of this book. The authors have recognised that the work described was not published before, or that it was not under consideration for publication elsewhere. While the information in this book are believed to be true and accurate on the date of its going to press, neither the editorial team, nor the publisher can accept any legal responsibility for any errors or omissions that may be made. The publisher makes no warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein. While Research-publishing.net is committed to publishing works of integrity, the words are the authors' alone.

Trademark notice: product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

Copyrighted material: every effort has been made by the editorial team to trace copyright holders and to obtain their permission for the use of copyrighted material in this book. In the event of errors or omissions, please notify the publisher of any corrections that will need to be incorporated in future editions of this book.

Typeset by Research-publishing.net
Cover design and cover photos by © Raphaël Savina (raphael@savina.net)
UNICollab logo – Harriett Cornish, Graphic Designer, KMi, The Open University

ISBN13: 978-1-908416-40-7 (Paperback - Print on demand, black and white)
Print on demand technology is a high-quality, innovative and ecological printing method; with which the book is never 'out of stock' or 'out of print'.

ISBN13: 978-1-908416-41-4 (Ebook, PDF, colour)
ISBN13: 978-1-908416-42-1 (Ebook, EPUB, colour)

Legal deposit, Ireland: The National Library of Ireland, The Library of Trinity College, The Library of the University of Limerick, The Library of Dublin City University, The Library of NUI Cork, The Library of NUI Maynooth, The Library of University College Dublin, The Library of NUI Galway.

Legal deposit, United Kingdom: The British Library.
British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data.

A cataloguing record for this book is available from the British Library.

Legal deposit, France: Bibliothèque Nationale de France - Dépôt légal: novembre 2016.
