A telecollaborative study of university students in Spain and Sri Lanka using the Soqqle video app

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Abstract. This study addresses interculturality and Intercultural Competence (IC) by connecting university students in Spain and Sri Lanka through the use of the Soqqle app, an education-based video app. The students were asked to create five videos independently using English as a lingua franca and upload each video to the app related to the assigned tasks. The goal of this study is to determine whether creating videos increases the IC of the students and whether the video creation activities enhance the students' English as a Foreign Language (EFL) listening and speaking skills. The students were given a pre-questionnaire at the onset and post-questionnaire at the conclusion of this study. The results show that the students increased in their cultural knowledge from the pre- to post-questionnaire. Additionally, the students reported that their Foreign Languages (FL) skills increased, and they generally enjoyed participating in this study.

Keywords: virtual exchange, telecollaboration, mobile assisted language learning, social media language learning.

1. Introduction

Interculturality, when introduced in a classroom, often relies on the biased and subjective comparisons of different cultures (Li & Dervin, 2018). When interculturality is introduced, students not only learn what is culturally appropriate, despite any biases, but they also develop an understanding of how to use language to build relationships across cultures (Belz, 2003; Ferreira, Bezanilla, & Elexpuru, 2018; Kramer Moeller & Nugent, 2014). In addition to interculturality, which is a comparison of cultures, IC is often introduced in

classes to teach students how to have meaningful interactions with those from different backgrounds. There are several approaches to how teachers introduce online communication in a classroom with the goal of increasing IC (O'Dowd, 2018). This study incorporates Deardorff's (2006) model of IC and aims at answering what it means to successfully communicate and interact with those from different cultures (Deardorff, 2006, 2011). In this model, there are three main components that can be assessed, which are the *attitudes* of the individuals, which includes respect, openness, and curiosity to discover, *knowledge and comprehension*, which includes cultural self-awareness, cultural knowledge, and sociolinguistic awareness, and finally *skills*, which is the ability to observe, listen, and evaluate. The current study focuses primarily on assessing the knowledge and comprehension, along with the skills that the students acquired in a telecollaborative virtual exchange that connected students from the Catalan region of Spain with students in Sri Lanka. Additionally, the attitudes of the students were assessed, but mainly regarding the enjoyability of the project. Since students between Spain and Sri Lanka are not often paired in a virtual exchange, we were interested in observing how the students advanced in their knowledge of the foreign culture, the advancement of the students' skills in using English as a FL, and their overall attitudes from participating in this project, such as their level of enjoyment. Thus, the following research questions were asked.

- Will using the Soqqle video application to create short videos as part of this telecollaboration project increase the cultural knowledge and IC of the participating students?

- Will the participation in this project by creating and watching videos of their peers and partners in the foreign country increase their EFL speaking and listening skills?

- Will the students enjoy creating videos in English and participating in the project?

2. Method

2.1. Participants

There were 56 students enrolled in the English degree program at a university in the Catalan region of Spain and 54 students enrolled in the business English program

at a university in Sri Lanka who participated in this study. All the participating students have a level of English between A2 and C2 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages scale.

2.2. Materials

This study employed the use of the Soqqle. Soqqle is an education application that allows students to create videos as part of their homework assignments. This app is secure, and the students and teachers require a class code to upload and watch the videos. The app was built for asynchronous learning, as there is no live stream. Videos are uploaded to the app, and it functions like other social media apps allowing peer-based learning, since the students can like their peers' videos and leave comments.

2.3. Procedure

The students filled out a pre-questionnaire that assessed their knowledge of the foreign country they would be working with. Over the course of the autumn semester in 2021, the students uploaded five videos based on the assigned theme. They were required to watch and comment on the other videos with instructions on how to give valuable feedback. The themes for the videos were as follows: food, neighborhood, music, hobbies/sports, animals, and pets. At the end of the semester, the students filled out a post-questionnaire detailing their perceptions of language improvement, their knowledge of the foreign country, and their level of enjoyment.

3. Results

When analyzing the students' knowledge of the foreign countries collectively, from the pre-questionnaire (M=3.83, SD=2.52) to the post-questionnaire (M=8.68, SD=2.10), the analysis shows that the results are significant, $t(110)=-17.34$, $p<.001$. We then examined the differences by each university using an ANOVA and found that there was a difference between the students at the different universities $F(1)=22.32, p<.001$.

As can be seen in Figure 1 below, the students in Spain claimed to know less about their counterparts in Sri Lanka than their partners claimed to know of Spain. However, the scores of the students at both universities were similar when the study concluded.

Figure 1. Cultural knowledge of the students in Spain and Sri Lanka from the
pre- to post-questionnaire
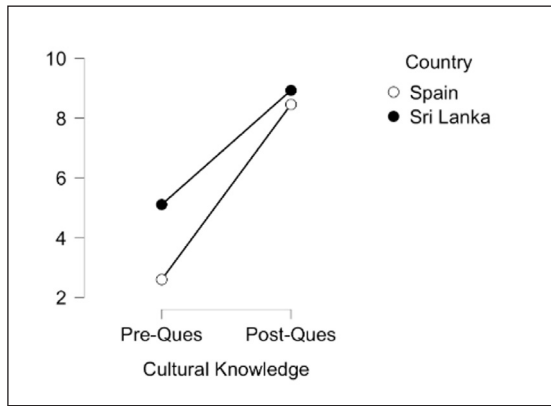
To analyze the perceptions of the students' overall FL skills, FL listening skills, and
FL speaking skills, chi-square goodness of fit tests were conducted to determine
whether the skills were equal between the Likert options that ranged from strongly
agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). The proportions differed for each of these
variables, as can be seen in Table 1 below. The students generally reported that
they agreed (M>3) this project increased their overall FL skills, speaking skills,
and listening skills, as can be seen in Table 2 below.

Table 1. Chi-square goodness of fit tests for language skills

Location	Skills	χ^2	df	p
Spain	FL General	64.000	4	<.001
Spain	FL Listening	39.714	4	<.001
Spain	FL Speaking	37.929	4	<.001
Sri Lanka	FL General	52.296	4	<.001
Sri Lanka	FL Listening	49.889	4	<.001
Sri Lanka	FL Speaking	30.630	4	<.001
Both	FL General	109.545	4	<.001
Both	FL Listening	89.182	4	<.001
Both	FL Speaking	65.182	4	<.001

Table 2. Descriptive statistics on perceptions of skills

	Increased General FL	Increased Listening	Increased Speaking
Mean	3.865	3.919	3.748
SD	0.814	0.811	0.879

Additionally, a chi-square goodness of fit test was also completed to determine whether the students' reported enjoyment when participating in this project was equal on the Likert scale. The proportions also differed for each variable, as can be seen in Table 3 below. The students generally reported that they enjoyed participating in this project (M>3), as can be seen in Table 4 below.

Table 3. Chi-square goodness of fit tests for enjoyment

Location	Perceived Enjoyment	χ2	df	p
Spain	Enjoyed Participating	54.893	4	<.001
Sri Lanka	Enjoyed Participating	102.852	4	<.001
Both	Enjoyed Participating	148.727	4	<.001

Table 4. Descriptive statistics on perceptions of enjoyment

	Spain	Sri Lanka	Both
Mean	4.339	4.618	4.477
SD	0.837	0.757	0.870

4.   Conclusions

While the students at the conclusion of the study generally shared the same amount of knowledge of the other culture, at the onset of the study, the students in Spain appeared to know less of Sri Lankan culture than their partners knew of Spain. However, the results show an increase in cultural knowledge from the pre-questionnaire to the post-questionnaire for both schools and this increase is significant. Additionally, the students from both universities reported that they generally felt that all three skills have increased due to their creation of videos in English and watching the videos of their classmates and foreign peers. Finally, the students generally agreed that they enjoyed participating in this project. As the findings support our research questions, we consider this collaboration project to be a success. Nevertheless, most of the data collected was based on an analysis of student perceptions, that is, whether they feel their skills have improved.

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