Peer feedback among learners of English and Arabic as a foreign language in a telecollaborative language learning program

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Advancement in online collaboration between community members enables new forms of feedback in language learning settings. This exploratory study presents an analysis of peer feedback on writing tasks. Participants included learners of English and Arabic as foreign languages, at the college/university level, in two learning contexts (Saudi Arabia and the United States), throughout a 12-week telecollaborative project. Four different tasks, related to giving feedback on each other's writing, were given to participants in the two contexts. These activities were designed to investigate the impact of this approach at enhancing foreign language learning with telecollaboration. The objective was to create a digital environment for language learners, in which cultural elements could be discussed among people from diverse backgrounds. The study applied qualitative methods, using codes and thematic analysis. The data analysis was conducted with qualitative methodology, classifying speech acts and language functions based on Leng's framework (2014). The findings confirmed the positive contribution of this approach for language learning, specifically increasing intercultural understanding. Participants, regardless of their linguistic or cultural feedback, easily maintained reciprocal communication through shared feedback. Social interaction regarding the cultural encounter culture served as an active agent for the learning process of each target language. Pedagogical implications of this research include the value of situating peer feedback within telecollaboration to help students create their own intercultural stances by negotiating linguistic, social, and cultural inputs.

Introduction

This study investigates the impact of online-based peer feedback among college level learners of English and Arabic as foreign languages in two dissimilar learning contexts (Saudi Arabia and the United States). As the number of learners of English and Arabic as foreign languages is swiftly increasing, this research proposes the practice of peer feedback via telecollaboration. O'Dowd (2007, 2013) argues that telecollaboration, including its associated online exchanges and communication, has resulted in many benefits for boosting language learning and intercultural education, despite the possible difficulties of its implementation. Telecollaboration practices, including the provision of peer feedback, do not happen in a vacuum. Godwin-Jones (2019) confirms that effective telecollaboration, which result in linguistic and cultural gains, is conditioned by well-designed procedures, best practices, and a variety of other factors (i.e., suitability of course content, availability and readiness of partners, and technological, pedagogical, and practical support).

Since the 1990s, the link between language and culture has become increasingly emphasized in a global world. Koole and ten Thije (2001) confirmed that in interethnic and intercultural communication, as in other communicative processes, communication can only happen if the participating actors share some knowledge of the world to which they refer, and some knowledge of the linguistic conventions used. Moreover, research in telecollaborative communication in the last 30 years has shown that online communication can enhance both the quality and the quantity of the language produced by language learners (Kramsch & Hua, 2016).

In fact, several theories investigated the nature of such off-line and online communication environments and individuals' communicative competence including some existing theories such as the Speech Act Theory by Searle (1969, 1976); Language Functions by Holmes (2001). This research has been established based on the theoretical foundation of Leng (2014) and the concept of the intercultural 'third place' when teaching culture in the foreign language classroom by Kramsch (2009). Leng's framework has become preferable to the research objectives since it provides insights into the possibility of identifying a taxonomy of sound feedback practices by considering the views of the giver and receiver of written feedback. This framework has also become a reference for developing a fair system of categorization for students' writing and also their attitudes towards writing.

Furthermore, the current study has enabled learners to work in peers and groups in a telecollaborative environment, in order to support Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) and virtual internationalization, which can provide individuals with

direct exposure to other cultures, perspectives, values and ideologies

through engagement with speakers of languages [students] wish to learn, an experience that might otherwise not be available or financially possible. (O'Dowd & Lewis, 2016, p. x).

Several studies have explored the impact of shared interaction and cross-cultural communication between learners of Arabic and English as a foreign language during study abroad (e.g., Kuntz & Belnap, 2001; Palmer, 2012; Shiri, 2015; Trentman, 2013a; Trentman, 2013b), rather than as part of telecollaborative exchanges or ICC pedagogy in foreign language classrooms. Within the field of ICC and telecollaboration, the emphasis has shifted away from only focusing on the comparative and culture-as-nation paradigm (Byram, 2021). In addition, few studies have specifically focused on providing virtual peer feedback in the two contexts selected for this research (García-Sánchez & Rojas-Lizana, 2012; Wang, 2013). As for research on peer feedback, most of the studies looked at language forms and writing competences, rather than intercultural competences and intercultural awareness (Foo, 2021; Lee, 2011; Ware & O'Dowd, 2008).

This study attempts to bridge these research gaps by exploring the effect of online-based, peer feedback "virtual exchanges" among foreign language learners in two distinct cultural contexts (Saudi Arabia and the US). This exploration includes linguistic and intercultural developments and learner reflections in both contexts. The research sheds light on students' perspectives and intercultural understanding between members of these two cultures through sustained interactions. Specific prompts were provided to elicit feedback. These prompts focused on giving peer feedback in the source language (L1) on writing tasks that had been composed in the target (foreign) language. The present study addresses the following key research questions:

RQ 1. What are the types and nature of feedback provided by learners of English and Arabic as foreign languages through telecollaboration, based on Leng's framework of speech acts?

RQ 2. How effective was the practice of telecollaboration and peer feedback "virtual exchange" in supporting learners' Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)?

Literature review

Telecollaboration and intercultural communication

Telecollaboration seeks to improve foreign language skills, intercultural communication, and digital literacies (Guth & Helm, 2010). Telecollaboration has also been known as virtual exchange, online intercultural education (OIE), collaborative online international learning (COIL), e-Tandem, and e-Twinning (Wimpenny & Orsini-Jones, 2020). Telecollaboration is the practice of engaging learners in geographically diverse places to exchange, using Internet

communication tools for the enhancement of language and/or intercultural competence, along with the provision of a valuable experience in terms of the internationalization of the classroom and authentic learning tasks (Helm, 2015). Telecollaboration is also defined as an "Internet-based intercultural exchange between people of different cultural/national backgrounds, set up in an institutional context with the aim of developing both language skills and intercultural communicative competence (as defined by Byram 1997) through structured tasks" (Guth & Helm, 2010, p. 14). This definition indicates that the process of learning has shifted from the communicative approach to the intercultural communicative approach, as manifested through telecollaboration. It implies acts of accommodation and mediation that occur between different cultures in the learners' minds, along with the integration of technology, e.g., WhatsApp-based activities (Maulina et al., 2019), Wiki writing (Khan & Hameed, 2021), and Google tools. Dooly & Sadler (2013) claim that online collaboration has improved teachers' abilities and their educational professionalism (including language teachers) because they become more skillful in connecting theory and practice. They emphasized that such collaboration can be achieved through numerous tools such as Moodle, Skype, emails, wikis, Second Life, and podcasting. Facilitators play a significant role in facilitating telecollaboration by integrating technologies and social networking tools into traditional (technology-free) learning settings (Ware & Kessler, 2016).

Such online practices, supported by socially-oriented tools, have directly contributed to better telecollaborative practices. They benefit the process of giving and receiving peer feedback and have proven enlightening for meta-awareness of communication and language-in-use strategies (Joseph et al., 2021). Clavel Arroitia (2019) explained that similar initiatives of telecollaboration supported individuals' negotiation of meaning, recasts, and correction where they could be delivered by scaffolding. Successful telecollaborative experiences can be activated through Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), as shown by Godwin-Jones (2019). According to Byram's definition, ICC involves the following components: intercultural knowledge, skills, attitudes, and critical intercultural awareness. Byram (2021) also indicated that ICC is a major component in telecollaboration and telecollaborative-relevant studies. ICC involves gaining a deeper understanding of the term "culture," which is defined as a "pattern of learned, group-related perceptions – including both verbal and non-verbal language, attitudes, values, belief systems, disbelief systems and behaviours – that is accepted and expected by an identity group" (Singer, 1998, p. 5). Toscu and Erten2020)) also demonstrated the positive consequences of telecollaboration in supporting ICC. Specifically, they highlighted its ability to enable participants to gain a better understanding of the various elements of ICC, which, in turn, had a positive impact on learners' perceptions and their performance.

The concept of a "third place" and intercultural communication

A "third place" commonly occurs during language learning, indicating that language learners do not have a single unified culture or solo ownership of a language. It takes place when "meaning is redefined, negotiated and reshaped to attain mutual understanding that in some way transcends more obvious cultural boundaries" (Welsh, 2011, p. 39). When learners feel motivated to learn a new language/culture, they expand their intercultural competence. In so doing, they create their own "third place," located between the cultures of the source language and target language.

This concept is associated with intercultural communication studies, including intercultural awareness (Chamberlin-Quinlisk, 2005). It is also fundamental to understand culture whenever intercultural communication or ICC is considered. Culture "can be defined as an accumulated pattern of values, beliefs and behaviors shared by an identifiable group of people with a common history and verbal and nonverbal code systems" (Neuliep, 2012, p. 41). Kramsch called for the teaching of language as culture (Kramsch, 2009, 2013). Jandt (2001) emphasized that culture is associated with the experiences that guide the members of given culture through life.

Kramsch (1993) proposed the concept of a "third place," which develops within the shared areas between the learners' first culture/s and the target culture/s. It includes critical examination of the boundaries, similarities, and dissimilarities between self and other. And it yields an intercultural speaker – that is, a speaker who selects those forms of accuracy and those forms of appropriateness that are called for in each social context of use.

> [I]ntercultural communication is *social* (inter-)action – a series of interrelated actions mediated by ideologies, societal structures, power (im)balances, self-ascribed and other-prescribed identities, memories, experiences, accumulated cultural knowledge, imagination, contingencies, and the combined forces of globalisation and local adaptation and resistance. (Kramsch & Hua, 2016, p. 42)

The fact remains, however, that Kramsch and others have asserted that supporting students' development of ICC and measuring learning outcomes continue to present challenges in foreign language learning (Byram & Kramsch, 2008; Dooly & O'Dowd, 2018). Zhao & Jiang (2003) claim that ICC comprises language skills, pragmatic competence, and behavioural competence. Wu et al. (2015) claimed that ICC depends on: knowledge of self, knowledge of others, attitudes, intercultural communicative skills, intercultural cognitive skills, and awareness. These elements have been described as inseparable elements of ICC (Deardorff, 2006). Moreover, Byram & Zarate (1997) claimed that an interculturally competent speaker is someone who is sufficiently competent to be able to transform intercultural encounters into intercultural relationships, in order to obtain an inside view of the other person's culture. At the same time, an interculturally competent speaker can also contribute to the other person's understanding of his or her own culture from an insider's point of view.

Feedback and peer feedback

As a tool used to enhance learning, feedback has been defined as an oral or written utterance that shows a learner's output needs correction (Lightbown & Spada, 1999). Feedback is used as a technique to stimulate learning and learners (Qutob & Madini, 2020). Feedback, specifically corrective feedback, increases the engagement of learners toward achieving more active learning (Tang et al., 2021). According to Ellis (2009), feedback is classified into four types when referring to correcting linguistic errors in students' written work: 1) metalinguistic, 2) focused and unfocused, 3) electronic feedback, and 4) reformulation. According to AbuSeileek and Abualsha'r (2014), feedback is initiated to support language learners with direct (explicit) or indirect (implicit) feedback that may be useful in developing language-related skills. Direct feedback is a strategy that supports students to correct their errors by providing the correct linguistic form (Seiffedin & El-Sakka, 2017). In contrast, indirect feedback specifies the existence of an error without providing the correct form (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Ferris, 2006). Truscott (1996) claimed that informing students of their errors as part of the feedback process causes stress and inconvenience for learners. However, this argument has been opposed by several scholars, such as Hyland & Hyland (2006), who stated that feedback assisted language learners in gaining control over their writing skills.

One way of getting feedback is through peers instead of instructors or tutors. Peer feedback is defined as comments provided by one or more students to another, with the intention of aiding their peer's progress in learning (Zhang et al., 2014). The research findings of Ware & O'Dowd (2008) suggest that language learners appreciate their partners' active attempts to provide them with individualized feedback. However, their findings indicate that peer feedback, in the sense of asking students to provide accurate explanations of their native language grammar, may not be an appropriate use of telecollaboration.

Peer feedback has been shown to result in encouraging positive outcomes regarding improving linguistic correction such as grammatical accuracy (Van Beuningen et al., 2012), critical thinking abilities (Wu et al., 2015), and cultural competence (Fithriani, 2018). Fithriani (2018) stated that (inter)cultural-related feedback is seen as complementing (inter)linguistic correction and feedback in general, and particularly in L2 writing. Ferris (1995) confirmed that the positive evidence supporting peer feedback has been neglected. In addition, Sheen et al. (2009) reported that peer feedback helped learners to increase their competence. Shang's (2019) findings revealed that peer feedback is useful in improving grammatical errors and lexical-related problems. Wang (2013) concluded that peer feedback contributed to fostering learners' positive affect, including positive writing motivation, willingness to participate in collaborative learning, and taking responsibility for self-learning.

In this study, the term peer feedback is understood as the responses or comments on linguistic and (inter)cultural-related phenomena by peers to provide linguistic and cultural explanations. Kramsch's view of peer feedback is understood as follows:

> [L]anguage learners learn who they are through their encounter with the Other. They cannot understand the Other if they don't understand the historical and subjective experiences that have made them who they are. (Kramsch, 2013, p. 61)

This concept is in line with Eriksson et al. (2019), who support the notion that helpful feedback, particularly in the field of language learning, must tackle linguistic and cultural issues. This is due to the importance of cultural values in educational practice and in the process of language learning. Drawing foreign language learners' attention to appropriate cultural norms, in addition to correct linguistic forms, is crucial to both reducing misunderstood stereotypes and boosting mutual cultural awareness and understanding of the cultures encountered. In a similar vein, understanding (inter)cultural backgrounds of the language learners is always essential when errors are to be corrected (Eslami & Derakhshan, 2020). As shown earlier, peers play a key role in comprehending feedback. Abdullah et al. (2018) confirm that learners achieved more satisfying outcomes through e-feedback, particularly in writing performance.

Methodology

Design

This qualitative study is part of a larger empirical project: a four-month telecollaboration project between four universities and colleges, one in Saudi Arabia and three in the United States. It utilized shared Google Drive folders as a medium of communication and interaction between each pair/trio of students. The purpose of the study was to enhance linguistic and intercultural telecollaborative exchanges to support linguistic understanding and cultural awareness as part of the foreign language learning classroom. The source data comprises the texts written by students from each group, in the target language, to their counterparts in their group. The data also includes peer feedback, which was given in each student's native language as comments on those written texts. Each group had its own Google Drive folder and the participants worked together to provide electronically written texts and shared feedback on four extended writing tasks. This research focuses on analyzing peer feedback provided in the source language.

Instrumentation

As indicated earlier, Leng's (2014) framework is considered as an extension of two existing frameworks (Searle, 1969; Holmes, 2001) which explore types of feedback used in the communication. However, Leng's framework has become more useful at exploring the relationship between feedback and its role in the process of self-regulation among participants. It has directly addressed categories of written feedback; including what might be involved during the interaction process among collaborators. In addition, this framework recognizes

feedback as a medium of communication and a gate towards building partnership between senders and receivers (writers and readers). In line with this argument, it has been employed because it seen as appropriate to reveal further detailed analysis to distinguish what types of feedback are useful in peers' writings and also their opinions regarding different types of feedback in interculturally telecollaborative settings.

In her analysis of written feedback on ESL students' writing, Leng (2014) suggested that communicative functions and the effectiveness of feedback are enhanced when speech functions guide the feedback given to students. Holmes (2001) identified six speech function categories: expressive, directive, referential, metalinguistic, poetic, and phatic. These are connected to the illocutionary acts that Searle (1976) listed. Searle's classification consisted of five groups: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. In representatives, the speaker is committed to the truth of the expressed proposition. In directives, the speaker tries to stir or direct the hearer toward a particular act. Commissives express an obligation on the part of a speaker, while expressives signify the psychological state of the speaker. Lastly, declaratives have the power to change the world immediately after they are pronounced (Searle, 1976). The researchers also employed Kramsch's notion of the intercultural "third place" in teaching culture in the foreign language classroom (Kramsch, 2009).

Data analysis

The feedback data provided by students in both countries was qualitatively analyzed by implementing Leng's (2014) framework of Speech Acts and Language Functions. The data was coded; then the codes were grouped under general themes of the functions in student-to-student communication.

Participants

Thirty-eight participants volunteered to participate throughout one semester in the two research contexts: 21 from Saudi Arabia and 17 from the United States. Participants were permitted to withdraw at any time, if they wished; this activity was not graded and was not part of the curriculum. The Saudi participants were attending one public university in Saudi Arabia. The US students were attending one state university and two private liberal arts colleges in the United States. Both the Saudi and US cohorts included male and female participants. The learners of English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia were English major students, while the learners of Arabic as a foreign language in the United States came from different majors. The linguistic competence of both cohorts ranged from intermediate to upper-intermediate. The language proficiency level of the participants was indicated by the language class they were enrolled in. US-based students were in 200-, 300- and 400-level classes, while Saudi-based students were in their sophomore, junior, and senior years. All participants were distributed into learning groups formed of pairs or trios

(due to the unequal number of participants on each side) to achieve the designated tasks, as described below.

Nature of tasks

Each participant was requested to produce four feedback responses to four written essays. They uploaded them to a designated Google Drive folder (four written tasks and four responses for each task). There were 21 Google Drive folders, one for each groups. The participants reflected on aspects of relationships and friendships; learning practices and daily activities; food and cooking; and national festivals or holidays. This research focuses on analyzing the peer feedback, provided via telecollaboration, on each other's writings.

For each task, e-feedback was provided in students' first language, for the texts/essays produced by their collaborators in the foreign language. As the participants were selected from different classes, the researchers' main role was to follow up with the participants concerning the completion of the designated tasks and respond to their questions. All participants received instructional training about the mechanism of providing appropriate online peer feedback reflecting on content, ideas, issues, and language.

Each participant was asked to write about 150 to 200 words of e-feedback and submit it to their group's Google Drive folder for his/her partner. Such writing activities were selected for this research to promote language exchange through telecollaboration. It was proposed that such practice, with indirect exposure to two different cultures, could positively contribute to advanced students' intercultural and linguistic experience. Based on the feedback provided, the participants rarely made errors in giving feedback to their peers, as it was made in their L1.

They were prompted to offer missing details, ask questions about parts that were confusing, and praise what they had enjoyed reading. Four extended tasks were assigned to participants in both cohorts. These extended writing tasks concerned the following subjects: relationships and friendships (Task 1), learning practices and daily activities (Task 2), food and cooking (Task 3), and national festivals and special days (Task 4). Students were asked to provide feedback that reflected on the points including, but not limited to, the development of sentences, the logical sequencing of ideas, the language used in terms of vocabulary and syntax, and the most interesting/intriguing culturally-related elements, including similarities or differences.

Findings and discussions

In line with Leng's (2014) framework, the researchers identified two main categories of speech functions in students' feedback: Expressive and Directive. Expressives included the subcategories: Approval/Disapproval, Collaboration, and Reiteration. Directives included the subcategories of Instruction and Clarification, as shown in Table 1. Referential, metalinguistic, poetic, and phatic functions were not significantly present in the feedback text.

Table 1. Feedback categories and subcategories for speech acts and language functions based on Leng's framework

Category	Subcategory
Expressive	Approval (or Disapproval): indicates agreement or disagreement of what is stated/declared by a groupmate in the counterculture
	Example:
	I agree that a close friend can be considered a family member. You can care for them like they are your family.
Expressive	Collaboration: indicates a friendly discussion/dialogue that reinforces mutual understanding between the source & target cultures
	Example:
	Seeing that you take a chunk out of your day to reach university and to study is quite inspiring! The family traditions you have are lovely as well…Your writing is inspiring!
Expressive	Reiteration: indicates a novel meaning and concept which is learned/acquired from the target culture
	Example:
	I did not know, however, that there was strong regional variation in cuisine in Saudi Arabia…
Directive	Instruction: indicates linguistic (written-related) correction, mostly in grammar and syntax
	Example:
	…in fact, all of them are males: male here is used as an adjective to describe your friends and in English, adjectives don't need to agree/match the number of the noun they are describing…
Directive	Clarification: indicates an extensive explanation of a meaning or concept that is driven from the source culture
	Example:
	the popular sports are American football, basketball, baseball and hockey…In my culture, I know a lot of friends go out to parties at bars and clubs

Feedback was provided in L1, in response to a text written by another student in their L2, based on the four tasks and topics. An overall total of 39 instances of feedback responses were analyzed, with 15 feedback instances coming from Saudi students and 24 instances from US students. The feedback responses were a paragraph length each, with each feedback response containing more than one category or subcategory of speech act functions. The total number of speech acts included in the feedback responses was 113. The speech act functions in each category or subcategory were coded according to what the comment did to students. The majority of feedback was from the Expressive category 68%, while the Directive category represented 32% of the total speech acts identified. Within the Expressive category, 5% fell into

the Approval/Disapproval subcategory, 37% fell into the Collaboration subcategory, and 26% fell into the Reiteration subcategory. In the Directive category, the Instruction and Clarification subcategories each represented 16% of the responses (Table 2).

Table 2. Distribution of feedback responses based on Leng's framework

Main function	Subcategory	Number of speech act functions	Percentage
Expressive	Approval	6	5%
	Collaboration	42	37%
	Reiteration	29	26%
Subtotal		77	68%
Directive	Instruction	18	16%
	Clarification	18	16%
Subtotal		36	32%
Total		113	100%

The second research question explored the effectiveness of telecollaboration in students' intercultural performance. The study compared dual telecollaborative feedback, where both Arabic and English native speakers mutually participated in providing feedback. Their responses were single telecollaborative feedback, in which only Arabic or English native speakers participated by providing feedback, without necessarily receiving replies from their peers.

Of the total 39 feedback responses analyzed, 29 (74%) were dual telecollaborative e-feedback responses, while 10 responses (26%) were single telecollaborative e-feedback. The students gradually overcame distance boundaries and cultural differences. However, careful supervision for the participants by expert teachers was necessary in order to motivate the students and provide guidance for establishing helpful feedback.

Unlike single telecollaborative feedback, in dual feedback, including a response and a reply, it was possible to observe frequent examples of discourse markers that indicated motivation and enthusiasm for the establishment of active learning through processes of inquiry and collective ownership. The dual feedback responses inspired the participants to further extend telecollaboration and to promote intercultural and linguistic exchange. This was revealed in students' use of affective speech acts, such as compliments and acts of gratitude (Holmes, 2001). For example: "Look forward to reading your next response, and sorry my last one was so late" (Group 5); "I hope from the bottom of my heart that you will have a wonderful Ramadan and Eid this year. Salaam and best wishes for the future" (Group 8), "Hi Sh. I'm really excited about this cooperation to improve your ideas about the Saudi community and improve mine about the American community, while also improving our writing skills" (translated from Arabic, Group 11). In the following example of dual feedback exchange that comments on students' L2 texts on family and friends,

the Saudi student pointed out the need to converge rather than diverge, since there are many similarities between the two cultures. She also agreed on the value of establishing reciprocated respect, trust, and friendly relationships. In the American student's feedback, she explained some cultural values and events in her own culture and compared them with the other culture. This comparison also highlighted some religious and cultural differences between the writer's culture and the feedback provider's culture (Table 3).

Table 3. Example of dual telecollaborative feedback 1

Feedback delivered to a learner of Arabic as a FL (by a Saudi student)
Text A *(Translated from Arabic original)*
I think that the things you mentioned about friendship reflect the reality we live in. It looks like it's universal because most people look for whoever resembles them in their way of thinking, living standards, or social status. I agree with you that we need trust, not only in friendship, but in all types of relationships. Trust and respect are the two main factors to make any relationship work. Of course, as a continent, America has a variety of schools of thought, religions, ideas, and traditions, which will necessarily affect values. I think that America, as different people mixed together, has developed shared values, but there are still some conservative groups that held on to their own particular value systems. In general, I think that everybody is looking for someone like them and from what you have proposed, I see ideational connections between our culture and yours. Perhaps what links both cultures is the aspect of humanity, since we are all human beings looking for almost the same things while we may have different traditions, methods, and some values.

Feedback delivered to a learner of English as a FL (by an American student)
Text B
It is interesting to learn that there is a specific day in the week that the family comes together. Personally, that day used to be Sundays for me. After my family and I would go to church, we would all go out to brunch and spend quality time together... Similarly, one would hope the family structure here in the United States also instills good values in its children, but a variety of parenting styles are seen here. There are some parents who are very strict, allowing their children almost no freedom to make decisions, and then there are parents who are extremely laid back ...

A further example relevant to twofold telecollaborative feedback is shown in Table 4. The feedback in Arabic shows the student's agreement on several issues stated in the original text. The student pointed out a few linguistic concerns, including the need to use appropriate lexical items and fix less accurate sentences. Furthermore, the student showed a willingness to collaborate with her groupmate from the other culture, particularly to help her to become a better writer in the FL. She created a sense of acceptance of the other culture, while making an observation about her own culture. She also provided directions regarding how to alter some written parts to match the way a native speaker would express the same idea.

Table 4. Example of dual telecollaborative feedback 2

Feedback delivered to a learner of Arabic as a FL (by a Saudi student)
Text A *(Translated from the Arabic original)*
Peace be upon you. Hi, C. First, I want to let you know that you have written the article in a relatively good way. I agree with you in some cases – I think that friendship is important too. Whatever our culture is, we have to respect our parents... but what I have to say is that you made some mistakes in some words, so I was not able to fully comprehend them and I was not able to understand what you wanted to say exactly. [From what you said,] I understand that culture is different from one place to another and from one country to another. I can tell you more about some of the mistakes and sentences that I was not able to understand to facilitate identifying and correcting them later. I want to say that this is a good beginning for you and you can work on these mistakes and correct them if you continue to write in Arabic. It is not a hard language. With practice, you will overcome all these difficulties. I'm happy to give you feedback on your essay and to interact with you.

Feedback delivered to a learner of English as a FL (by an American student)
Text B
Hi R. My name is C. I look forward to reading your essays. I will try to be as thorough as possible and ask me if you have any questions about my comments. This is a really good essay, and I agree with a lot of things that you said. My relationships with my family and friends are the most important thing in my life. I really value friendship. Your essay is really well written... It's a little hard to explain some of my comments, because in most cases what you said wasn't wrong, it was just not the way that a native speaker would have said it... I write a lot and like editing and am happy to give more feedback. I hope this was helpful!

Textual evidence of motivation and engagement was not observed when there was a breakdown in communication in single telecollaborative feedback. The cooperative and collaborative nature of the dual feedback approach was not present. In dual feedback exchanges, students were able to reflect on their understanding of their own culture and the target culture and gain better engagement in the process through sharing opinions with peers in a way that increased their cultural learning motivation. The following example of single telecollaborative feedback by a Saudi participant shows signs of negotiating a degree of acceptance by drawing upon one's cultural knowledge and personal perceptions: 'I think family values consist of some actions and attributes that the family deems important to support. The important values in my family are honesty, trust, and respect for others ... I agree that family has a good influence on our lives' (Group 12). Nevertheless, intercultural learning did not likely happen here because the feedback exchange was broken down.

The findings of this study affirm that learners who received peer feedback electronically reflected evidence of more cultural learning outcomes than those who did not receive or respond to any form of feedback. For instance, one participant in the US confirmed the positive outcomes of interactive writing and corrective feedback through telecollaboration, which were given by a native speaker of Arabic from Saudi Arabia.

I thought it was a very exciting opportunity to get feedback from a native speaker. I was surprised and delighted to find out that my partner could understand mostly everything I wrote, and the whole experience gave me confidence. I really appreciated the individualized feedback since, unlike some of the Arabic language writing assignments I do in school, it felt like I was conversing with another person.

In addition, another participant who shared e-feedback commented on the shared gain for the entire group because of using this style of learning.

I found it helpful for improving my writing skills in Arabic because they were able to give me feedback on how I could've worded things better or used correct grammar. And it was also interesting to see their use of English because ... I could see where they might struggle with similar things like I do in Arabic (prepositions, definite vs. indefinite nouns, etc.).

Students in the groups that maintained twofold e-feedback throughout the four tasks showed more interest in learning about the everyday life of their interlocutor. They used the language to reflect on their experience about issues of similarities and differences between their culture and that of the other. Occupying the position where foreign language learners see themselves both from the inside and the outside is what Kramsch (2009) has called the "third place." This notion of Thirdness has been explored in various fields in Humanities and Social Sciences (Bhabha, 1994). In the field of language learning through technology, it explores how foreign language learners can interact with different speech communities in a virtual mode and how they express themselves as intercultural speakers (Kramsch, 2009). This helps them to achieve the benefits of effective intercultural communication, including productivity and proficiency, fostering a sense of teamwork, and eliminating stereotyping.

In terms of the type and nature of feedback, the findings emphasized that most of the feedback focused on intercultural aspects, not linguistic ones, which is contrary to the findings in Leng (2014), in which students gave more feedback on language forms.

In line with Seiffedin and El-Sakka (2017), it is recommended that foreign language instructors should seriously consider using various tools to boost the practice of e-feedback, i.e., weblogs, wikis, etc., for intercultural and linguistic-related feedback. Relying on e-oriented feedback using telecollaboration, language instructors should combine direct and indirect feedback while delivering instruction. The feedback provided was adequate. However, there were more potential opportunities to receive advanced feedback and deeper questioning about intercultural and linguistic issues. Unsatisfactory instances of participation were attributed to the multiple commitments of the participants, including midterms and final exams, in addition to the weekly assignments. Individuals' cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills have been confirmed as keys for successful feedback offered to peers online, particularly from a countercultural background.

The findings have also shown that the participants did not follow specific

techniques for giving e-feedback throughout the four tasks, though instructions were given at the beginning. They followed the techniques they found most appropriate to bridge the gap between the participants and build more collegial connections. This type of learner autonomy and learning through tasks that address individual everyday life situations is in congruence with Kramsch (2013). Kramsch argued:

> In online or face-to-face interactions, students are seen as constructing their own and others' subject positions through the questions they ask and the topics they choose to talk about or to avoid. These subject positions constitute over time a discursive practice that we call culture. (2013, p. 68)

Conclusion, implications, and future research

The analysis of data shows that most telecollaborative feedback tackled issues pertinent to the establishment of mutual intercultural understanding and constructing channels of comparison and contrast between the two cultures, rather than emphasizing vocabulary and syntactic aspects. Most of the feedback responses were Expressive, with the speakers expressing their feelings, rather than Directives that instructed the receiver to do something. As this study has been guided by notions of ICC as a component in the foreign language classroom in terms of interaction in social contexts, the focus was on how the "little c" or "small cultures" (Holliday, 1999) of everyday life and the culture of the self and the other were perceived and expressed in students' e-feedback in these two different contexts, amid possible misunderstandings and generalized stereotypes. The nature of students' mostly Expressive telecollaborative feedback demonstrated Kramsch's notion of establishing a sphere of interculturality in which the learning of culture is not limited to the presentation of monolithic information between cultures, but rather it is how learners think of their culture in light of another (Kramsch, 1993. The Expressive nature of students' feedback responses in this study confirmed that this type of cultural learning does not necessarily require mutual agreement or a change of identity, but it certainly leads to a better understanding and deeper appreciation of the similarities and differences between cultures in a foreign language learning environment. Intercultural learning happened through participation and interactions.

The findings of this research suggest several pedagogical implications for educators and researchers interested in exploring the centrality of including culturally sustaining pedagogies in classrooms of Arabic and English as foreign languages. The peculiarity, complexity, and interrelationships of the concepts of country/culture/context in Saudi Arabia and the US were a recurrent theme in students' feedback on both sides as they discussed issues related to national identity, education, gender equity and access, religious practices, and many more. The telecollaborative modality, or other online tools, have been recognized to be essential in supplementing face-to-face learning environments

by encouraging students to continue working in a virtual space outside the classroom.

This study has some limitations that need to be addressed in future research. It is acknowledged that this study is limited in scope to the feedback given on students' writing. As a result, it does not offer a detailed assessment of ICC in students' written essays throughout the four tasks. Nor does it cover students' reactions through follow-up interviews. It is also acknowledged that the present study employed a limited sample of students (21 Saudi students and 17 US students). A larger population of students is likely to render more generalizable results. Future research in telecollaborative feedback exchanges between English and Arabic languages is recommended, as there are some limitations surrounding this research, including the length of the project, available time to complete the project, and sample of participants. Such research would explore the effect of direct/indirect feedback on the development of learners' language proficiency and ICC and the sustainability of related knowledge, skills, beliefs, and attitudes. Further research is also recommended in lexical analysis of peer feedback comments to assess degrees of feedback difficulties and in the area of training students to give effective feedback in both the language and cultural domains. Finally, although comparison as such was not the objective of this paper, it is understood that future research would benefit from comparisons of the influence of teacher feedback and peer feedback on writing performance and cultural awareness in the Arabic and English foreign language classrooms.

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