THE ROLE OF RHETORIC IN TEACHER VIRTUAL EXCHANGES: NAVIGATING DIGITAL COMMUNICATION IN EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS

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Abstract

Educators' rhetorical skills are pivotal in virtual collaboration between teachers and parents, enhancing communication clarity and overcoming cultural barriers, thereby enriching educational experience and fostering intercultural understanding. A review of scientific databases such as Academic Search Complete, ERIC, SCOPUS, and Web of Science, was conducted to identify peer-reviewed articles from 2018 onwards that explore the role of rhetoric in teacher virtual exchanges. Articles were analysed for themes, findings, biases, and research gaps. A notable finding is the lack of research on rhetoric in virtual teacher exchanges, despite its potential to overcome cultural barriers and enhance collaboration. The study reveals that effective rhetorical techniques can improve clarity, persuasiveness, and intercultural understanding in virtual exchanges, indicating a need for more research and educational programs in this area. Furthermore, the study extends to virtual communication between teachers and parents, especially with non-native speakers or those with limited proficiency in the official language. This highlights the need for teachers to use sophisticated rhetorical strategies in diverse linguistic situations to improve understanding and involvement. In summary, the research underscores the significant impact of rhetorical skills in virtual teacher exchanges, with broader implications for global collaboration and intercultural understanding in the educational sphere.
Keywords: *educational technology, intercultural communication, parent-teacher collaboration, rhetorical strategies, virtual exchange.*

Introduction

In the contemporary pedagogical landscape, the advent of digital technologies has precipitated a paradigm shift towards more inclusive and accessible forms of education. This shift is embodied by the emergence of virtual collaboration, a modality that not only transcends geographical limitations but also cultivates a rich milieu for intercultural exchange and learning. Virtual collaboration, often referred to as online intercultural collaboration, involves consistent online interactions and collaborative projects between groups of learners from different cultural backgrounds or geographical areas, integrated into their educational curricula (Lewis & O'Dowd, 2016). Virtual exchanges represent various educational approaches that connect individuals from different cultural backgrounds in collaborative online learning. In the contemporary educational context, these exchanges have become of paramount importance, enabling intercultural interaction and understanding without physical mobility. Particularly significant are the networks of virtual innovations and support, which can be defined as virtual exchange programs. These networks not only bring together teachers, prospective teachers, and experts but also engage parents in focused online collaboration, addressing current educational challenges. Such collaborations not only promote professional development but also facilitate

the resolution of real educational issues in a global context (Virtual Innovation and Support Networks for Teachers, 2023). Recently, virtual exchanges have gained prominence, representing a modern form of education characterized by rapid development and adaptation to new challenges and opportunities.

While virtual exchanges represent a modern approach to intercultural learning and collaboration, the effectiveness of these exchanges also hinges on the application of age-old communication techniques and skills. One such technique, still relevant and significant in the digital age, is rhetoric. The foundations of rhetoric were established in ancient times. The first critical consideration of rhetoric was undertaken by Plato (Cooper, 1997). However, his student, Aristotle, recognized as the "father" of modern rhetoric and an ancient Greek philosopher who lived between 384 and 322 BC, is more renowned. He authored over 200 works on various subjects, including rhetoric, logic, philosophy, politics, poetics, psychology, and biology. In his work "Rhetoric," Aristotle defines rhetoric as the ability to discover all possible means of persuasion in any given case. He elaborates that rhetoric is not merely the art of speech but the capability to persuade through argumentation (Crowley & Hawhee, 1999; Roberts, 1984). The understanding of rhetoric was influenced not only by the Greek thinkers but also by philosophers like the Roman philosophers Cicero (Steel, 2002) and Quintilian (Russell, 2002).

Although the foundations of rhetoric were laid in ancient times, its role and significance in the modern world have not diminished. On the contrary, in the age of digital communication and globalization, it has become even more crucial for understanding and crafting effective communication strategies. In the context of virtual exchanges, where communication across diverse cultural and linguistic barriers is necessary, rhetoric serves as a tool enabling teachers to effectively connect with and persuade their interlocutors, including parents, thereby shaping and influencing our communication in various contexts. Rhetoric, defined as a branch of science focused on studying and understanding communication strategies for the purpose of persuasion, remains a key component of human interaction and dialogue. It has been a pivotal tool shaping public discourse since ancient Greece, profoundly influencing politics, law, literature, education, and much more within a broader context (Roberts, 1984). It doesn't merely concern the structure and style of speech or text but also examines the context in which the communication is situated, including the historical and cultural background, the audience, the occasion, and the goals of the speaker or writer. Thus, rhetoric isn't solely about the simple construction of arguments; it also zeroes in on strategies individuals use to navigate various discursive spaces, aiming to achieve a specific influence or outcome (Crowley & Hawhee, 1999). In its most expansive definition, it studies various aspects of communication, including word choice, style, tone, structure, argumentation, and other rhetorical devices such as metaphors, symbols, repetition, and rhetorical questions. It explores how these devices affect the audience's interpretation and response and how they can reshape the audience's perception, opinions, emotions, and actions (Lunsford et al. 2017). While rhetoric is deeply rooted in history and has been pivotal in shaping public discourse over the centuries, its application in modern times has taken on new dimensions. In an era where digital communication has become predominant, the importance of rhetoric has only amplified. Its fundamental principles, developed in ancient times, remain relevant but have adapted to new media and environments. In the digital age, where communication is swift and often impersonal, rhetoric becomes essential for establishing connections and understanding among individuals from diverse cultures and backgrounds. Today, rhetoric not only enriches communication but also strengthens understanding and collaboration in virtual interactions.

Research Problem

Understanding the role of rhetoric in virtual exchanges among teachers and parents has become increasingly vital, especially in light of rapid technological advancements and the

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increasing use of online communication tools to connect teachers, students, and parents from diverse cultural and geographical backgrounds (O'Dowd, 2018). In digital educational settings, such as virtual exchanges, communication between teachers takes place through digital tools. While these tools allow for visual and audio contact between participants, they still present challenges compared to traditional communication. These challenges include limited body language, potential technical issues, the loss of subtle non-verbal cues, and other characteristics of virtual communication that can significantly impact the quality and effectiveness of interactions. Virtual exchanges, as described in studies, facilitate intercultural interaction and collaboration, transcending the traditional boundaries of classrooms and countries (Cummins & Sayers, 1995). In such environments, rhetoric is essential for successfully navigating through diverse cultural contexts and establishing effective communication (Helm, 2015). Rhetorical skills, which encompass thoughtful word choice, tone of voice, message structure, and the manner of presenting information, can become especially crucial in virtual settings. Without strong rhetorical skills, teachers might face challenges such as misunderstandings, cultural shocks, or difficulties in establishing trust (Lewis & O'Dowd, 2016) with parents. Teachers need to adapt to these specifics and develop strategies for effective communication that promotes collaboration, fosters intercultural understanding, and prevents misunderstandings. Despite the growing use of virtual tools for meetings and education, there remains a research gap in this area, focusing on the role of rhetoric and its strategies in the context of virtual exchanges among teachers and parents. With a solid understanding of rhetorical techniques, teachers can craft their messages in a manner that is clear, persuasive, and tailored to the needs of their intercultural interlocutors (Thorne, 2006) including parents. Thus, rhetoric not only enhances the quality of communication but also strengthens intercultural understanding and collaboration in virtual educational settings (Belz, 2003), emphasizing intercultural communication where it's essential to consider diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of all involved (Koran & Sarnou, 2022) also of both students and parents.

Research Focus

The study focuses on the role of rhetoric in communication among teachers and parents within the framework of virtual exchanges, where conventional communication signals, specific to in-person communication, are not always clearly present. It explores how rhetorical strategies and techniques could be employed to enhance the quality and effectiveness of such communication. In this context, the research addresses the question of how teachers and parents can effectively utilize rhetorical strategies and techniques to bridge communication gaps that may arise in digital environments.

Research Aim and Research Questions

The aim of the study was to explore and define the potential role of rhetoric in communication among teachers and parents within the context of virtual exchanges. It sought to lay the groundwork for understanding how rhetorical strategies and techniques might influence the effectiveness and quality of communication in digital educational settings and establish a foundation for further research. Within the scope of this study, the following research question was posed:

- How might rhetoric be employed in virtual exchanges and virtual communication among teachers and parents to promote collaboration and foster intercultural understanding in the absence of existing research in this area?

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Research Methodology

Database Selection

To obtain relevant literature and ensure a comprehensive review of existing research on the selected topic, a systematic search approach was employed across the following scientific databases: Academic Search Complete (EBSCOhost), Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), SCOPUS, and Web of Science (WOS). EBSCOhost was chosen as the leading interdisciplinary full-text scientific database, offering extensive information from numerous academic fields, including education. ERIC serves as the central database for educational literature, encompassing articles, reports, conferences, and other resources related to education. SCOPUS, an extensive abstract, and citation database from the Elsevier publishing house, covers a wide range of thematic areas and is crucial for identifying highly cited articles and research trends. Meanwhile, WOS represents a multidisciplinary database that provides citation information and is essential for tracking the impact and trends in scientific literature.

Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted on August 31, 2023. A combination of the following keywords was utilized: rhetoric, virtual, exchanges, teachers, and communication. Search strings were formulated to capture as many relevant articles as possible:

- "rhetoric" AND "virtual" AND "exchange" AND "teacher" AND "communication"
- "rhetoric" AND "virtual" AND "exchange" AND "teacher"
- "rhetoric" AND "virtual" AND "communication" AND "teacher"
- "rhetoric" AND "virtual" AND "exchange"
- "communication" AND "virtual" AND "exchange" AND "teacher" (added due to the absence of results from the initial queries).

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Articles were considered for review if they were peer-reviewed, published in scientific journals from 2018 onwards, and written in English. A primary inclusion criterion was the emphasis on rhetoric within the context of teacher virtual exchange. Given the initial search queries yielded no results, an additional search string was devised, wherein the term "rhetoric" was substituted with "communication". Post the initial search, duplicate sources were meticulously eliminated. Subsequently, the titles, abstracts, and keywords of the remaining articles were scrutinized in alignment with the inclusion criteria. Articles meeting these criteria were then exhaustively reviewed to extract detailed insights pertaining to their content and methodology.

Data Analysis

The selected articles underwent a qualitative content analysis to capture nuanced understandings and interpretative depths regarding the role of rhetoric in virtual teacher exchanges. This methodology was chosen for its capacity to systematically examine textual data, enabling the identification of patterns, themes, and relationships not immediately apparent through quantitative analyses. The focus was on the key themes, methods, findings, and conclusions of each article. The results were synthesized to provide a holistic overview of the current state of research in the field. This refined version provides a clear, structured, and coherent

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presentation of the methodology, making it suitable for a scientific article. The synthesis process involved a thematic analysis approach, where findings from individual articles were aggregated and examined for commonalities, differences, and emerging themes. Key elements identified in each study were coded and categorized, allowing for a comparative analysis that distilled a comprehensive understanding of the research landscape. This methodological examination ensured the synthesis not only aggregated individual findings but also reflected collective insights, highlighting prevailing research narratives and gaps. The quality and reliability of the gathered articles were assessed, evaluating whether the methods used were appropriate and if their conclusions were based on data. Potential biases, limitations, and gaps in the literature were taken into account. It was analysed how authors address these topics, whether there are differences in interpretations, conclusions, and recommendations. Through this analytical procedure, the information was synthesized and placed within the broader context of the research topic, ensuring the reliability and validity of the overarching conclusions presented.

Research Results

Table 1 provides an overview of the results obtained from each database using the search string "rhetoric" AND "virtual" AND "exchange" AND "teacher" AND "communication".

Table 1

Search Results in Scientific Databases for the Search String "rhetoric" AND "virtual" AND "exchange" AND "teacher" AND "communication"

Scientific database	Search String "rhetoric" AND "virtual" AND "exchange" AND "teacher" AND "communication"
Academic Search Complete	0
ERIC	0
SCOPUS	0
WOS	0

The systematic search across the databases Academic Search Complete, ERIC, SCOPUS, and Web of Science (WOS) yielded no results for the specific search string "rhetoric" AND "virtual" AND "exchange" AND "teacher" AND "communication". Table 1 clearly illustrates that none of the selected databases contained articles that simultaneously addressed all the specified keywords. This absence of results suggests that the intersection of these terms, as defined by the search string, represents a niche or under-researched area in the current academic literature. The lack of findings underscores the potential novelty and significance of the present study, as it seeks to explore a topic that has not been extensively addressed in existing research. Furthermore, this outcome emphasizes the need for further exploration into the role of rhetoric in virtual exchanges among teachers, especially when considering the rapid evolution of digital communication tools and platforms in the educational sector.

Given the limited results from the initial search string, a modified search was conducted to potentially capture a broader range of articles. Table 2 displays the outcomes when the search criteria were slightly adjusted by excluding "communication".

Table 2

Search Results in Scientific Databases for the Search String "rhetoric" AND "virtual" AND "exchange" AND "teacher"

Scientific Database	Search String "rhetoric" AND "virtual" AND "exchange" AND "teacher"
Academic Search Complete	0
ERIC	0
SCOPUS	0
WOS	0

Table 2 presents the outcomes of a refined search, where the keyword "communication" was excluded from the initial search string to potentially broaden the scope and capture more relevant articles. However, even with this adjusted search criterion, the databases Academic Search Complete, ERIC, SCOPUS, and Web of Science (WOS) did not yield any articles that matched the terms "rhetoric," "virtual," "exchange," and "teacher." This continued absence of results, even after broadening the search parameters, highlights a noticeable gap in the literature concerning the interplay of rhetoric within the realm of virtual teacher exchanges. The consistent lack of findings across both search strategies accentuates the pioneering nature of this research endeavour. It also underscores the importance of delving deeper into this subject, as the integration of rhetorical strategies in virtual teacher exchanges could offer valuable insights for enhancing pedagogical practices in digital environments.

Despite the adjustments made in the search criteria, the results remained limited. To further explore the potential literature available, another variation of the search string was employed, this time focusing more broadly on the intersection of virtual exchanges and communication among teachers. The outcomes of this search are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Search Results in Scientific Databases for the Search String "rhetoric" AND "virtual" AND "communication" AND "teacher"

Scientific Database	Search String "rhetoric" AND "virtual" AND "communication" AND "teacher"
Academic Search Complete	0
ERIC	0
SCOPUS	0
WOS	0

Table 3 illustrates the results of another variation in the search criteria, focusing on the intersection of "rhetoric," "virtual," "communication," and "teacher" without the term "exchange." This adjustment aimed to explore the broader context of rhetorical practices in virtual communication among teachers, irrespective of the specific framework of exchanges. Yet, the outcome remains consistent with previous searches, as none of the databases—Academic Search Complete, ERIC, SCOPUS, or Web of Science (WOS)—yielded relevant articles for this combination of terms. The persistent absence of literature in this domain suggests that the dynamics of rhetorical strategies in virtual communication among educators might be an underexplored area. This finding further emphasizes the novelty of the research topic and

indicates a potential avenue for future studies. The consistent void in the literature across these search parameters underscores the need for more comprehensive research to understand the nuances of rhetorical practices in shaping virtual pedagogical communication.

To further refine the search and potentially capture more relevant articles, the criteria were slightly modified by narrowing the focus to the relationship between rhetoric, virtual platforms, and exchanges, excluding the specific emphasis on teachers. The findings from this adjusted search are detailed in Table 4.

Table 4

Search Results in Scientific Databases for the Search String "rhetoric" AND "virtual" AND "exchange"

Scientific Database	Search String "rhetoric" AND "virtual" AND "exchange"
Academic Search Complete	0
ERIC	0
SCOPUS	0
WOS	0

Table 4 narrows down the search criteria to focus solely on the interplay between "rhetoric," "virtual," and "exchange," eliminating the specific context of teachers. This approach was adopted to gauge the broader landscape of rhetorical practices within virtual exchanges, irrespective of the educational setting. However, the results from the databases—Academic Search Complete, ERIC, SCOPUS, and Web of Science (WOS)—remain consistent with zero relevant articles found. This outcome is intriguing, as it suggests that even when broadening the scope to encompass general virtual exchanges, the role of rhetoric remains largely uncharted. Such a consistent lack of literature, even in a more generalized context, highlights a significant gap in understanding the rhetorical dimensions of virtual exchanges. This could point to a broader trend where the intricacies of rhetorical strategies in virtual environments, especially exchanges, are yet to be deeply probed and articulated in academic literature.

Given the limited results from the previous searches, it was deemed necessary to pivot the approach. Recognizing that the term "rhetoric" might be too specific and could potentially exclude relevant studies that focus on broader communication dynamics in virtual exchanges, the decision was made to replace "rhetoric" with the more general term "communication". This adjustment aimed to capture a wider range of studies that address communication practices and challenges among teachers in virtual exchanges. The outcomes of this revised search are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Search Results in Scientific Databases for Search String "communication" AND "virtual" AND "exchange" AND "teacher"

Scientific Database	Search String "communication" AND "virtual" AND "exchange" AND "teacher"		
	Author	Title	Year
Academic Search Complete	Gleason, B. Jaramilo Cherrez, N.	Design thinking approach to global collaboration and empowered learning: Virtual exchange as innovation in a teacher education course	2021
ERIC	Hilliker, S. M. Lenkaitis, C. A. Ramirez, A.	Expanding teacher candidate linguistic knowledge: Analysing recorded virtual exchange sessions	2021
	Biondo Salomão, A. C.	Foreign language communication in virtual exchanges: Reflections and implications for applied linguistics	2022
	O'Dowd, R. Sauro, S. Spector-Cohen, E.	The role of pedagogical mentoring in virtual exchange	2019
	O'Dowd, R.	Innovations and challenges in using online communication technologies in CLIL	2018
SCOPUS	Kohn, K.	Focus on the speaker-learner in English as a global language: Agency and satisfaction	2022
WOS	Lenkaitis, C. A.	Teacher candidate reflection: Benefits of using a synchronous computer-mediated communication-based virtual exchange	2020
	Kleban, M.	Academic English language teachers' roles in a virtual and hybrid exchange project	2021
	Grau, M. K. Turula, A.	Experiential learning of telecollaborative competences in pre-service teacher education	2019
	Uzum, B. Yazan, B. Akayoglu, S. Mary, L. M.	Pre-service teachers' translingual negotiation strategies at work: telecollaboration between France, Turkey, and the USA	2021

Table 5 reveals a significant shift in the number of relevant articles when the search criteria were adjusted to emphasize "communication" in the context of virtual exchanges among teachers. This pivot from "rhetoric" to "communication" yielded a richer array of studies across the databases, underscoring the broader academic interest in communication dynamics within virtual educational settings. In summary, while the term "rhetoric" might have limited the scope of the initial searches, the broader concept of "communication" has unveiled a plethora of studies that delve into various facets of virtual exchanges among teachers. These findings underscore the importance of communication strategies, tools, and pedagogies in enhancing the quality and impact of virtual exchanges in educational contexts.

To deepen the explored field, a more detailed review of studies found in scientific databases was conducted, establishing a bridge between the "communication" and "rhetoric" components of virtual exchanges. The study conducted by Gleason and Jaramilo Cherrez (2021) utilized a design-thinking approach in a virtual exchange to introduce pre-service teachers to global collaboration using educational technology. Emphasizing design-thinking principles, the

research found that participants had effectively used digital tools for intercultural understanding and knowledge construction. However, challenges have arisen concerning linguistic perceptions and biases. The findings underscored the potential of virtual exchanges in education, emphasizing the importance of addressing biases for effective intercultural communication. The findings, therefore, emphasize the importance of communication and technological competence, demonstrating how rhetorical skills can play a crucial role in improving the quality and effectiveness of communication among teachers in a virtual educational environment, particularly in light of the challenges posed by virtual communication. It is precisely here that rhetoric can enter the realm of teachers' virtual exchange. Rhetorical skills, which encompass thoughtful word choice, tone of voice, message structure, and presentation style, indeed become paramount. Teachers must adapt their communication style and develop strategies for effective communication that promotes collaboration, intercultural understanding, and prevents misunderstandings.

The article, written by Hilliker et al. (2021), explored the impact of virtual exchange on the understanding of English linguistics among future teachers who had been going to teach English as a foreign language (TESOL). Through interactions with EFL learners from Mexico, U.S.-based TESOL candidates analysed real-world language errors, primarily in syntax and semantics. This hands-on approach, using recorded sessions, enhanced their linguistic insights. The study highlighted the value of virtual exchange in teacher training, emphasizing its role in applying linguistic knowledge. It suggested further research to gauge the lasting impact of such exchanges once candidates had become teachers, emphasizing the potential benefits for pedagogical practices. The analysed article doesn't directly relate to rhetoric; instead, it primarily focuses on language errors in virtual exchanges, which can indirectly impact the effectiveness of communication in the context of rhetorical challenges.

Biondo Salomão (2022) discussed the emergence and importance of Virtual Exchange (VE) as a collaborative educational methodology that had transcended language teaching to encompass various knowledge domains and had fostered soft skills and intercultural competences. The study explored the strategies employed by non-language specialist professors to facilitate foreign language communication within the Brazilian Virtual Exchange (BRaVE) program, with a focus on the implications for applied linguistics. The research employed qualitative methodology, primarily analysing participants' reflections. The article underscored the need for a theoretical framework to guide VE as an interdisciplinary field, highlighting its relevance for foreign language learning, internationalization, and the training of professors in designing and implementing activities involving foreign language communication. It highlights the importance of communication strategies that teachers had used in the virtual environment to facilitate communication in a foreign language. These strategies can also be understood as rhetorical techniques because they had involved careful selection of words, tone of voice, message structure, and the manner of presenting information. The article acknowledged the crucial role of rhetorical skills in ensuring clear and persuasive communication in virtual exchanges, even when it came to foreign languages, thus emphasizing the broader significance of rhetorical techniques in digital educational environments.

O'Dowd et al. (2019) examined the role of teachers as pedagogical mentors in virtual exchanges for foreign language education. By focusing on two mentoring techniques, the study found that pre-exchange strategy modelling had had limited impact, while integrating students' online interactions into classroom work had revealed themes related to digital, intercultural, and linguistic competences. The research underscored the need for further exploration of teacher interventions in virtual exchanges and the evolving dynamics of online communication tools. Although the article delves into strategies and techniques that teachers employ to guide students in online intercultural projects, it indirectly emphasizes the importance of effective communication, which is at the core of rhetoric. The exploration of mentoring strategies in the

article can offer insights into how rhetorical techniques can be used to address the challenges. By understanding effective mentoring techniques in virtual exchanges, teachers can better leverage rhetorical strategies to improve communication, promote intercultural understanding, and manage the complexities of digital interactions.

The article, written by O'Dowd (2018), examined the role of virtual exchange in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) contexts. Virtual exchange, an online collaborative approach, had enhanced students' foreign language skills and intercultural competence. While research on its application in bilingual education had been limited, its potential in CLIL had been clear. Established online platforms like Etwinning and iEARN had supported such initiatives. The article suggested that CLIL educators should have utilized these platforms to enrich their students' intercultural online experiences. The contribution emphasizes the importance of online interactions in improving language and intercultural skills. While it primarily focuses on language learning, the nuances of effective communication in virtual exchanges are implicitly linked to rhetorical strategies. The challenges of online communication, in fact, underscore the need for adept rhetorical skills to navigate these challenges. By combining the insights from both the contribution and rhetoric, a deeper understanding of the nuances and complexities of effective rhetorical communication in digital educational environments can be achieved.

Kohn (2022) addressed the pedagogical discussions around Global Englishes (GE) and English as a lingua franca (ELF). Contrary to the prevailing view of English Language Teaching (ELT) students as deficient in GE/ELF communication, it had advocated recognizing them as 'speaker-learners' with inherent communication skills. The study promotes an immersive GE/ELF approach through virtual exchanges, emphasizing the role of pedagogical mentoring. The conclusion highlights the importance of empowering these speaker-learners to adapt standard English to their needs, suggesting this approach could also benefit continuous teacher development. Given the emphasis of the study on recognizing innate communication skills in the context of GE/ELF, it becomes evident that rhetoric plays a pivotal role in virtual exchanges. As participants explore the nuances of GE, they naturally employ rhetorical strategies to convey meaning, establish connections, and adapt to various target audiences. This aligns with the challenges faced by teachers in virtual exchanges, where the effective use of rhetoric becomes crucial.

In Lenkaitis's research (2020), 15 TESOL teacher candidates from a U.S. university engaged in a 4-week virtual exchange using videoconferencing. The study aimed to understand how these candidates interacted with beginner and intermediate learners in their content area and how they developed reflective practices by reviewing their recorded sessions. The findings revealed that the virtual exchange had provided an authentic teaching experience, enabling teacher candidates to apply theoretical knowledge into practical teaching scenarios. The process had not only enhanced their language teaching skills but had also emphasized the importance of reflection in their professional growth. The study concluded by advocating for the integration of virtual exchanges and reflective practices in teacher preparation programs, emphasizing the value of bridging theory and practice in teacher education. Building on this, the role of rhetoric becomes exceptionally significant in such virtual exchanges. A teacher's engagement in the digital environment can significantly impact the effectiveness of their interactions with the support of rhetorical skills. Reflective practices, as highlighted in the study, provide a unique opportunity for critical analysis of the use of rhetorical strategies. Through a thorough review of recordings, teachers can effectively assess the clarity, persuasiveness, and adaptability of their communication. Such an approach to rhetoric in virtual exchanges can serve as a model for improving intercultural communication, ensuring that the essence of content is effectively conveyed to bridge potential gaps that may arise in digital interactions.

Kleban (2021) examined the evolving roles of English language teachers within the CLA-VIER virtual and hybrid exchange project, spanning six years between French and Polish

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partners. Amidst the digital shift and pressures on internationalizing education, the research revealed a transition from traditional language instruction to roles emphasizing meaningful communication and management of both offline and online educational activities. Differentiating between "virtual" and "hybrid" exchanges, the research suggested that modern English language teachers needed to integrate digital and organizational skills to cater to diverse, intercultural contexts. Though based on a specific project, the findings hinted at broader implications for the teaching profession's future trajectory. The research on English language teachers in virtual and hybrid exchanges emphasizes the importance of effective communication in the digital and intercultural environment, complementing and highlighting the need for rhetorical strategies to improve communication quality. In addressing the unique challenges of digital communication, the crucial role of rhetoric in overcoming digital communication challenges becomes evident, suggesting that mastering rhetorical techniques is essential for successful intercultural interaction in virtual environments.

In their study, Grau and Turula (2019) explored the proficiency of prospective foreign language teachers in telecollaboration, with a focus on the experiential learning of Polish and German TEFL students in virtual exchanges. Grounded theory, surveys, ethnographic observations, and a case study have been employed in the research, revealing the effectiveness of the experiential learning approach in developing telecollaborative competences. However, it also highlighted the complexities of real-world telecollaborative classrooms and the need for further research, especially in primary education settings. Key areas of interest included computer-mediated communication, teacher education, and learner autonomy. The research points to the crucial role of rhetoric in teacher virtual exchanges. While the experiential learning approach has proven effective in telecollaboration, the unique challenges of virtual communication underscore the importance of mastering rhetorical techniques. Effective rhetoric can bridge the gaps inherent in digital interactions, ensuring clarity, promoting understanding, and preventing potential misunderstandings. Thus, for teachers engaging in the digital environment, rhetoric serves not only as a tool but also as an essential skill, highlighting the need for deeper exploration of how rhetorical strategies can be leveraged to optimize communication in virtual educational environments.

Uzum, et al. (2021) examined the use of translingual negotiation strategies in telecollaboration among preservice teachers from France, Turkey, and the USA, focusing on how these strategies influenced the construction of cultural, linguistic, and professional identities. Through the analysis of asynchronous discussion board data, the research highlighted the significance of translingual strategies in fostering critical discussions and rich exchanges in online contact zones. It further emphasized the value of a three-way exchange, encouraging diverse viewpoints and dispelling cultural stereotypes. The study advocated for a translingual approach to intercultural communication research, emphasizing the cooperative nature of communication and the need to move beyond language proficiency-centred assumptions. Overall, this research contributed to understanding the complexities of intercultural communication in virtual spaces and underscored the importance of translingual negotiation strategies in facilitating meaningful interactions.

Discussion

In the realm of academic research, the dynamics of virtual communication among educators has become an increasingly pertinent subject, especially in the digitally interconnected era. Navigating this landscape requires an understanding of the nuances of communication tools and strategies, including how specific terms, such as 'rhetoric', may influence research findings and interpretations. This understanding becomes even more critical when considering the inclusion of parents in the virtual communication process, particularly when dealing with parents who may not be fluent in the language of teaching.

The results of the research are based on findings from a systematic search in scientific databases such as Academic Search Complete, ERIC, SCOPUS, and Web of Science. The initial search, which incorporated the term 'rhetoric', yielded no results. This absence of findings might suggest that this area is either under-researched in the current academic literature or even overlooked. This lack of findings underscores the potential novelty and significance of this research, addressing a topic that has not been extensively explored in existing studies. It was also noted that the outcomes from the initial search string indicated a limited scope of relevant literature. As a result, a modified search was conducted to capture a broader range of articles. It was found that the term 'rhetoric' might be too specific and could potentially exclude pertinent studies focusing on the broader dynamics of communication in virtual exchanges. Consequently, the term 'rhetoric' was replaced with the more inclusive term 'communication'. This facilitated the capture of a broader array of studies focusing on communication practices and challenges among teachers in virtual exchanges. This change resulted in a richer collection of studies from all databases, reflecting a broader academic interest in the dynamics of communication within virtual settings.

In summary, the term 'rhetoric' limited the scope of the initial searches, while the broader concept of 'communication' revealed a multitude of studies addressing various aspects of virtual exchanges among teachers and parents. These results highlight the importance of communication strategies, tools, and pedagogy in enhancing the quality and impact of virtual exchanges in educational environments. The enhanced communication between teachers and parents, especially when parents are non-native speakers or have limited proficiency in the language of instruction, is critical. It can facilitate better understanding and engagement in the educational process, not only when the teaching language is the same but also in consideration of the diverse cultural backgrounds of the parents. This tailored approach in communication could significantly ease interaction and mitigate potential language barriers. To address the research question, which inquires about how rhetoric can influence virtual exchanges among teachers to foster collaboration and intercultural understanding, a re-evaluation of these studies is required. The conspicuous absence of existing research on the application of rhetoric in virtual exchanges among teachers and parents to foster collaboration and intercultural understanding underscores an intriguing research opportunity. Rhetoric can play a pivotal role in enhancing communication in virtual exchanges between teachers and parents, bridging cultural differences, and facilitating collaboration. Effective rhetorical strategies are crucial in ensuring that communication is clear, persuasive, and culturally sensitive, especially when interacting with parents from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

While this review, due to the scarcity of prior studies, does not provide direct empirical evidence, it suggests potential approaches to harnessing rhetoric in this context based on theoretical foundations. Firstly, for teachers communicating with parents, especially those with limited language proficiency, rhetorical strategies can be crucial in ensuring the clarity and effectiveness of the messages conveyed. Secondly, the use of rhetorical tactics that emphasize empathy, active listening, and cultural sensitivity becomes paramount in interactions with parents. In doing so, teachers can create an inclusive and respectful virtual environment that promotes intercultural learning and collaboration.

Moreover, teachers can use rhetoric to constructively shape discussions. By employing rhetorical techniques like framing and audience adaptation, they can guide discussions in a manner that promotes critical thinking and constructive dialogue. Such an approach can facilitate collaboration by encouraging a respectful exchange of ideas and perspectives. Given the absence of existing research in this area, this study serves as a foundation for future research. It suggests that the strategic use of rhetoric in virtual exchanges among teachers and parents has the potential to enhance collaboration and foster intercultural understanding. However, empirical research is needed to validate these assumptions and provide practical guidance for teachers in virtual educational settings.

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The present study, which explores the role of rhetoric in virtual exchanges among teachers and parents for fostering collaboration and intercultural understanding, joins the existing literature on communication and education. Although it was found that little research has been conducted in this area, rhetorical principles can be linked to a broader body of literature on communication in virtual environments and intercultural education. Several avenues for further research are opened up. One potential direction for subsequent research is the exploration of how rhetorical techniques can be effectively employed by teachers in communicating with parents especially those from different cultural backgrounds and with varying levels of language proficiency. Research could focus on the efficacy of such programs in enhancing teachers' communication skills and their impact on intercultural understanding in virtual settings. It would also be worthwhile to conduct a thorough analysis of teachers' communication patterns and rhetorical skills in virtual exchanges. The research would examine how teachers choose language, adapt to different cultural contexts, construct persuasive arguments, and use rhetorical strategies to foster collaboration and intercultural understanding. Further research could also concentrate on the role of rhetoric in motivating teachers in virtual exchanges. This would study how rhetorical strategies can motivate teachers towards better engagement and active participation in intercultural exchanges. It would also involve examining how rhetorical skills influence a teacher's own satisfaction and enhancement of their pedagogical practice. It would be intriguing to explore how teachers from different cultural backgrounds perceive and use rhetoric in virtual exchanges and how its use varies across cultures. Also, researching how rhetoric impacts the learning outcomes of students participating in these virtual exchanges would be relevant. Additionally, one could explore various methods of educating teachers about rhetoric and how these methods influence their ability to foster collaboration and intercultural understanding.

The conducted review of the domain of rhetoric in teachers' virtual exchanges offers insights into a crucial area of teacher communication in virtual exchanges, which remains relatively uncharted. The findings emphasize the role of rhetoric in fostering teacher collaboration and multicultural understanding, contributing to the discourse on the importance of communication in educational settings, which can serve as a starting point for further research in this field.

Conclusions and Implications

This study delves into the nuanced interplay of communication tools and strategies, particularly the use of specific terms such as 'rhetoric', and their influence on research findings and interpretations. It underscores the critical role of incorporating parents into the virtual communication process, especially those not fluent in the teaching language, reflecting on the systematic search across prominent scientific databases that initially revealed a significant gap in literature pertaining to rhetoric in virtual teacher exchanges. The research's exploration into the broader term 'communication' over 'rhetoric' facilitated a more comprehensive capture of studies, indicating a wider academic interest in virtual communication dynamics. This shift not only broadened the scope of the literature review but also enriched the understanding of communication practices among teachers in virtual settings, offering insights into the challenges and strategies pertinent to enhancing teacher-parent interactions in diverse linguistic and cultural context.

Conclusions drawn from this study highlight the transformative potential of rhetoric in virtual exchanges, emphasizing its role in bridging cultural divides and fostering collaboration. The findings suggest that effective rhetorical strategies are essential for clear, persuasive, and culturally sensitive communication, especially in interactions involving diverse linguistic backgrounds. This research lays a foundational framework for future empirical studies,

suggesting that the strategic application of rhetorical principles in virtual educational settings could significantly improve intercultural understanding and collaborative efforts.

Implications of this study extend beyond theoretical contributions, proposing practical approaches for educators to harness rhetorical strategies effectively. It advocates for the development of educational programs aimed at enhancing teachers' rhetorical competencies, potentially revolutionizing virtual teacher-parent exchanges. Further research is encouraged to empirically test these theoretical assumptions and explore the impact of rhetorical education on teachers' communication efficacy in virtual environments. This study not only contributes to the academic discourse on communication in education but also opens several avenues for future research, underscoring the importance of rhetoric in facilitating meaningful virtual exchanges in an increasingly interconnected educational landscape.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors declare no competing interest.

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