Chapter 6
Technology-Enhanced Approaches to the Development of Intercultural Sensitivity in a Collaborative Language Program: A Japanese-Korean Case

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Accelerated globalization due to immigration as well as the development of Internet technology greatly complicates sociolinguistic issues today. This complexity is especially striking in view of refugee discussions or other issues as wearing a hijab in a public place. In the era of sometimes aggravated confusion and complexity, a liberal arts education (LAE) needs to empower and prepare individuals to grow as competent and mature world citizens who deal with complicated issues arising from diversity and change (Association of American Colleges & Universities, n.d.). In particular, with a sharp increase in the number of multicultural and multilingual environments on- and offline, the fostering of intercultural communicative competence (ICC)[1] has become a crucial factor in foreign language education (FLE).

Though the term ICC is widely used, it is not easy to define because attributes of culture are ambiguous and ever changing (Furstendburg, 2010; Nieto, 1999). There appears, however, to be a general consensus that ICC is "a complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself" (Fantini & Tirmizi, 2006, p. 12). Alternatively, ICC is "an ability to navigate across personal cultural boundaries and create efficient and appropriate linguistic interactions with people from other cultures" (Ohe, 2016, p. 138). This pilot action research is designed to develop a LAE pedagogy to cultivate a foundation for the improvement of ICC by attempting to bring an immediate and contemporary cross-cultural contact setting into the language classroom via online technology.

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[1] Intercultural communicative competence is used interchangeably with intercultural competence, cross-cultural competence, global competence, intercultural sensitivity, or global citizenship competence as pointed out in Deardorff (2004, 2006) though some scholars distinguish intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence in terms of the emphasis on foreign language proficiency (Moller & Nugent, 2014).

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This chapter describes the importance of culturally integrated language teaching and learning combined with a process-oriented approach in order to foster the learner's ICC in the foreign language classroom. It then introduces an intercultural online collaboration between International Christian University (ICU) in Japan and Chung-Ang University (CAU) in South Korea to construct an effective and sustainable international exchange model. It also explores the influence of online technology mediation on the learner's communication and culture. The limitations of tele-collaboration between novice learners are noted. The chapter concludes with brief suggestions for the development of a variety of platforms and sharing of resources in order for liberal arts institutions to consistently carry out similar intercultural collaborative models.

Why Internet-Mediated Intercultural Collaboration in Foreign Language Education?

Approaches to Culturally Integrated Language Teaching and Learning

The ultimate goal of FLE is to foster intercultural sensitivity (Byram, 1997). One might ask, is it possible to achieve ICC naturally and/or automatically by acquiring foreign language competence? Some have considered ICC to be a skill/ability acquired naturally in the language classroom (Bennett, Bennett, & Allen, 2003), while others have argued that ICC is neither acquired naturally nor automatically through foreign language education (Meyer, 1991). ICC includes comprehensive abilities such as intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpretation, relationship, discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997). The Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001), which is widely used in the curricula formation of FLE around the world, has also emphasized that ICC is comprised of cultural competence as well as linguistic/communicative competence. Traditional pedagogy in FLE, however, still concentrates on language use imitating native speakers in language structure, vocabulary, and pronunciation (Byram, 1989, 1997; Liddicoat & Kohler, 2012). Typically, classroom practice with regard to learning intercultural dimensions has been delegated to a subsidiary role or ignored altogether. Therefore, there is a need to take an approach to integrated language teaching and learning that enhances intercultural awareness and understanding (Byram, 1991; Kramasch, 1993; Liddicoat & Kohler, 2012).

Process-Oriented Approaches as Efficient Tools of Intercultural Learning

What approach to the foreign language class can then help learners acquire and improve ICC efficiently? In many foreign language classrooms in higher education, instructors apply information- and/or knowledge-based pedagogy to teach cultural norms (Wright, 2000) and tend to concentrate on teaching knowledge about the target culture (Byram, 1997). This approach, however, has been criticized because (1) the image of the culture presented by the teacher can be different from reality (Chambers, 2004); and (2) cultural facts presented by an instructor may actually lead to less positive attitudes toward the target culture (Wright, 2000).

It is anticipated that adopting a process-oriented approach can address these issues (Byram, 1997; Byram & Zarate, 1994; Deardorff, 2006; Gardner, 1985; Wright, 2000) to help individuals determine how to behave and adapt to specific contexts. A process-oriented approach is a pedagogical practice that applies constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978), which allows students to learn through direct experience rather than through predetermined goals (Byram, 1997). Learning is a constructive process as it is accomplished by associating new knowledge with existing information (Poplin & Stone, 1992 cited in Wright, 2000). From an intercultural language learning perspective, Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino, and Kohler (2003) argued that learners should participate in the social and interactional process actively and positively. This process builds learning, connection, and social interaction.

How can these principles be applied to FLE classroom activities? Some suggest the use of culture portfolios, which is a highly efficient way for learners to develop intercultural awareness and understanding (Scarino, 2010; Wright, 2000). Portfolio use also "provides a mechanism for systematically assessing learning about culture as a significant discovery process in and of itself" (Wright, 2000, p. 335). Others recommend online intercultural collaboration or tele-collaboration, determined to be one of the most effective computer-mediated sources of communication for international collaboration with partners in different regions or countries (Helm, 2009; Murray & Bollinger, 2001; O'Dowd, 2007, 2015).

Online Intercultural Collaboration[2]

Tele-collaboration or online intercultural collaboration is a computer-assisted language learning (CALL) activity differentiated from other online learning in that its practice and principles in pedagogy are intercultural (O'Dowd, 2015). This helps students improve their ICC "in a way that traditional materials for learning culture would not be able to achieve" (O'Dowd, 2007, p. 146). Despite its benefits, it is

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[2] Online intercultural collaboration is used interchangeably with online intercultural exchange, virtual exchange, collaborative online international learning, and tele-collaboration (O'Dowd, 2015).

challenging for instructors to implement because it is a complicated computer-mediated activity that requires organizational, pedagogical, and digital competence (Dooly, 2010; O'Dowd, 2015). Nonetheless, online intercultural exchanges have a greater pedagogical impact in FLE because they are an efficient tool to develop the learner's skills to deal with issues that arise in actual cross-cultural situations. These exchanges can also motivate students to achieve a higher level of the target-language ability by providing them with real intercultural settings. In comparison to study-abroad programs, the greatest limitation of FLE, conducted in a traditional curriculum in LAE, is that there are no real settings for learners to practice content learned in the classroom. This lack of reality tends to lead to a decline in enthusiasm for further learning. In this regard, online international collaboration via Internet technology is a very effective way to help learners overcome those limitations and make it possible to immediately create an intercultural environment without physical and spatial movement. This type of online classroom provides learners with the opportunity to explore different cultural perspectives, as well as enhances the possibility of the negotiation and creation of meaning by intervening in a different linguistic and cultural community (Ware & O'Dowd, 2008).

Pilot Action Research: Intercultural Online Collaboration Between ICU and CAU

In an attempt to investigate how to improve students' intercultural sensitivity in FLE classrooms, this research project pursued international collaboration between a Japanese-language class at Chung-Ang University (CAU) in South Korea and a Korean-language class at International Christian University (ICU) in Japan by adopting an online intercultural exchange style of practice.

Searching for the Counterpart Institution

The first step to arrange the online international collaboration was to search for and choose a partner institution. Requirements for the selection of the counterpart were (1) to have a common goal with the learners at ICU, (2) to be able to help and cooperate with each other, and (3) to minimize the physical constraints in conducting the collaboration, such as time difference. According to the guidelines, the decision was made to have the online collaboration between a Korean class at ICU and a Japanese class at CAU. The learners who study Korean have a common goal with the learners who study Japanese in that both anticipate advancement in their linguistic levels in the target language and want to deepen their understanding of their target culture. They also have a strong desire for collaboration because their partners are individuals from the target language and culture. This type of partnering can further help

each learner when questions arise. In particular, this opportunity provides students a way to think about their own culture relatively and critically by participating in this process. They have to deal with and answer the questions or inquiries from their partners. This process is an efficient tool to train the learner's intercultural sensitivity.

There were three main factors that facilitated this implementation of international collaboration between institutions in Korea and Japan: (1) there is no time difference between the countries; (2) they have similar school systems, which minimizes the practical constraints of collaboration, leading to favorable and effective conditions; and (3) the levels of linguistic proficiency are similar. It was, however, not easy to search for a partner that would meet all conditions. Luckily, we found a suitable partner institution that met all of the requirements, and discussions ensued concerning details for the collaboration. However, the initial counterpart class was canceled due to a low number of enrolled students. While searching for others who might be interested, instructors of a Japanese class at CAU showed a strong desire to participant in the online international collaborations, though the CAU programs are offered as major courses rather than ones in LAE. Instructors from CAU and ICU then discussed the collaboration and decided to go ahead with four sessions for each course which consisted of two groups: one with section A of Korean II (14 students) and Japanese conversation (40 students) and another group with section B (8 students) of Korean II and Japanese phonetics (31 students). This pairing was the only possibility given the class schedules for both institutions.

Devices, Language Use, and Content in the Collaboration

With regard to language use during the collaboration, learners were encouraged to give a presentation and have a discussion in the target language if possible, but they were also allowed to use their own language when they felt that expressing their thoughts appropriately in the target language was too difficult. During the class, participation of instructors was minimized to create an environment where the learners participated in the social and interactive process by taking a primary and active role in the collaboration.[3] In the online international collaboration class between CAU and ICU, instructors attempted a task-based class design (Candlin, 1987, 1989; Levy & Stockwell, 2006; Ware & O'Dowd, 2008). This design was used as a first step in developing a pedagogical strategy and guidelines for a sustainable technology-based international collaborative program in Korean-Japanese classes. Students were encouraged to investigate and give presentations on

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[3] Instructors need to make efforts to prepare the most suitable environments in advance by minimizing the limitations and reducing challenges that can occur in the online intercultural collaboration with regard to implementing this pedagogy (Furstenberg, 2010; O'Dowd, 2007; Schenker, 2012). It seems, however, to be favorable for instructors to play a minimized role during the class so that learners could place themselves as an active agent.

topics that were selected by them or their instructors. In the presentations, ICU students used PowerPoint, while CAU students distributed handouts before the class. Skype, one of the most popular web-based tools used extensively around the world for online chat, was employed to facilitate the collaboration between institutions. Examples of topics used in the collaboration are listed in Table 6.1.

The differences in presentation topics between the two groups reflected the coursework of each university. When choosing the topics above, instructors took into consideration how easily students understand current topics and how they actively participate in discussions regardless of their language skills and ability level (Fig. 6.1).

Each session lasted 70 min. During the first session for each group, students and instructors from the respective institutions introduced themselves and used questions and answers (Qs and As) to build a foundational relationship with each other. During the other three sessions, CAU students gave presentations for 10–15 min

Table 6.1 Topics in the collaboration between Japanese phonetics class, CAU, and Sec. B Korean, ICU

Session	CAU	ICU
First	Opening	
	Individual presentations of students and instructors in the target language	
Second	Rules in Korean phonetic regulations	Cultural events with regard to Koreans in Japan
Third	"Odd" experiences in Japan and the differences from Korean culture	Youth pop culture
Fourth	University life in Korea	University life in Japan

Fig. 6.1 Online intercultural classroom at ICU

followed by a Q and A and/or discussion on each topic for 10–15 min. During the first half, all the students, including ICU students, were encouraged to speak in Japanese, the target language of CAU students. During the second half, ICU students gave presentations and then had discussions with CAU students in a similar manner, only in this case, students from both universities were encouraged to speak solely in Korean.

Analysis of the Objectives and Methodology

Students from ICU were encouraged to write a reflection about what they felt, thought, or learned through the collaboration immediately following the sessions. All sessions were video recorded with the help of two graduate students to see how students resolved problems and cooperated with each other when they encountered issues with their online communication. For example, there were times when the students didn't understand what was going on or what had been said. The analysis of the process was based on the reflections of ICU students only (22 students), an observation of the video files as well as the informal interview with ICU students immediately following each session.

Influence of ICC Through Online Intercultural Collaboration

Despite the fact that many researchers have attempted to develop clear assessment tools for individual ICC ratings in addition to the existing tools for evaluation (Sinicrope, Norris, & Watanabe, 2007), there has been no agreement on appropriate evaluation methods that yield definitive results (Deardorff, 2006; Moeller & Nugent, 2014; Ohe, 2016; Schulz, 2007). Current research suggests using a combination of strategies rather than a single model to evaluate ICC. There are limitations when adapting existing evaluation tools in an objective assessment because of the complexity of cultural competence (Deardorff, 2006; Fantini, 2000; Sinicrope et al., 2007). Therefore, this pilot research does not adopt an existing evaluation tool to assess student ICC in the collaboration class. Rather, the author used content analysis, which is widely and flexibly used in qualitative research to analyze text data (Cavanagh, 1997; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) by adopting a bottom-up approach (Holliday, 2013). This was accomplished by referencing the student comment sheets that were composed immediately after each session. These comments were qualitatively analyzed to determine how technology-mediated international collaboration affects student ICC in a language class.

Though an agreed-upon definition of ICC does not exist due to the complicated essence of culture and its adaptation to each academic discipline, most of the general definitions in the context of foreign language education include the elements of language, communication, and culture. Consequently, the author used these three

common dimensions to categorize individual ICU student reflections from the collaborative class.

Language

Linguistic competence is one of the essential factors for the efficient exchange of different languages and cultures. It is also one of the main goals in foreign language instruction. When I suggested an online collaboration with Korean students, ICU students in the Korean-language class showed two distinct reactions with regard to language issues: the expectations of using the target language and concerns about their poor language skills (Table 6.2).

The results reveal that most students, with respect to language learning, were highly stimulated and motivated by the collaboration with students from the target language and culture. Some students had difficulty understanding what the Korean students stated because of varied target language comprehension levels as well as the pressure to prepare, what they considered to be, a good presentation. The difficulty was clearly connected to a desire to acquire higher language skills and perform well. Results also showed the number of students that felt their linguistic skills in speaking, listening, vocabulary, and pronunciation had improved as a result of this collaboration.

Table 6.2 Aspects in language

Item	Categories	Code descriptions	N
Language	Motivation in language acquisition and performance	Desire to raise linguistic level in target language	35
		Highly motivated in language learning	11
		Desire to give a good presentation	4
	Sense of achievement	Linguist skills in vocabulary, pronunciation, speaking, and listening improved	14
		Glad to use the words learned in class	3
		Satisfied with their performance	1
	Stimulation	Stimulated by counterpart students' good language performance/presentation skills	14
	Challenges	Comprehension difficulty in understanding (what Korean students said due to poor linguistic level in spoken Korean)	9
		Pressure on preparing for a good conversation with their counterpart	2
		Feel uneasy preparing for (good) presentation	1

Communication

Communicating with people from the target language and culture could be a most exciting event for foreign language learners, leading to the building of new relationships as members of the global community. This communication includes interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational dimensions associated with the negotiation of meaning; the sharing of information, feelings, and reactions; and the presenting and interpreting of a variety of topics and opinions (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2014). In the online collaboration, students could participate not only in interpersonal communication but also in interpretive and presentational communication, adopting a task-based approach (Table 6.3).

   These results show that students had fun, enjoyed themselves during the collaboration, and desired to have more conversations with students from the target-language culture to learn more about them. Some of the students revealed a more positive desire to become friends. At the first stage of the collaboration, most students mentioned "tension" in having a session with students from the target culture. It may have been caused by their feeling that their Korean-language skills were not good enough to discuss a topic in Korean. With each session, however, it seemed their tension disappeared upon realizing that students from the target culture were willing to listen to and understand them. Some expressed excitement in having a "real" conversation in Korean. This reveals that they thought their usual Korean-language classes were not as "real" as the collaborative classes.

Table 6.3 Aspects in communication

Item	Categories	Code descriptions	n
Communication	Motivation	Desire for more conversation by speaking and listening to the counterpart	24
		Desire to get to know their counterpart	4
		Desire to become friends	4
	Attitudes	Fun factor	12
		Excited for "real" conversation	3
	Feelings about partners	Students from target culture are so kind as to try to listen to them	4
		Tension was relieved (because students from the target culture were willing to understand them despite their poor Korean performance)	1
	Challenges	Felt tension (in having a collaboration)	10
		Worried if the questions asked were appropriate or not	1

Table 6.4 Aspects in culture

Item	Categories	Code descriptions	n
Culture	Attitudes	Showing interest in the presentation content	28
		Interest in their own culture in the presentations	3
		Surprised to learn a cultural fact in the presentation	2
	Knowledge	Deepened understanding for target culture	10
	Skills of interpreting, relating, and discovering	Noticed cultural differences	10
		Noticed common cultural/interpersonal aspects	11
	Others	Noticed cultural interest in Japan from their counterpart students	6

Culture

Culturally integrated language learning is designed for the learner to become an "intercultural speaker" (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002; Byram & Zarate, 1997) in a global society. A core issue is learning about and developing the cultural dimension in task-based intercultural collaboration. Intercultural components are widely involved in attitudes, knowledge, skills, and values (Byram, 1997) (Table 6.4).

These results show that students felt their understanding deepened after those presentations by students from both their own culture and the target culture. It may have been caused by the fact that all presentation topics dealt with cultural dimensions to a greater or lesser degree. Results also show that some students noticed cultural commonalities and differences while others were stimulated to learn more about their own culture because of the session.

The results presented in the tables above also reveal a strong co-relationship in the three aspects: language, culture, and communication. Students became more interested in and curious about the target culture through the mutual online communication, which led to a strong motivation and desire to acquire a higher linguistic level.

Conclusions

Implications

This pilot action research revealed positive communicative and intercultural attitudes in all respects because students displayed curiosity and openness toward the target culture. This in turn led to increased cultural knowledge and skills of interpreting and relating their existing knowledge about their own culture to new input about the target culture (Byram, 1997). Regarding knowledge about the target culture, students already had some degree of knowledge provided by instructors, and

they leveraged that awareness to absorb new information presented by students from the target culture. It was determined, however, that even for some cultural facts (previously established as part of the curriculum), students felt differently toward some of these facts and even reacted as if they had not been previously introduced or included in the curriculum. This observation reveals that language and culture learning can be carried out more efficiently in a social and interactive setting where learners reconstruct and reconceptualize existing knowledge of their own culture and the target culture through personalized practice and experience.

Limitations and Future Research Plan

This pilot action research has limitations in that students could not participate equally in the collaboration because it was carried out in the framework of class-to-class or group-to-group rather than a one-to-one exchange. Therefore, there was a need to arrange a separate session between small groups or one-to-one sessions right after each presentation to provide learners with a suitable setting to discuss topics in an informal atmosphere and to build rapport with each other. In effect, ICU students showed a strong desire to further collaborate with the CAU students in person via social networking service (SNS). This seems to reflect the ease with which Japanese students use Skype Chat or some similar social media approach as a tool for engagement with students from another culture. Therefore, it is suggested that instructors who want to implement a similar online style need to consider learners' personal and cultural characters and design the class so that students can participate in the collaboration equally and actively.

Learning through intercultural communication can be provided in the classroom; the training can be carried out in "real" cross-cultural settings. Digital networking technology offers learners practice with a virtual environment in their target language with intercultural skills in the foreign language classroom. Despite the limitations of cyber space, online intercultural collaboration or tele-collaboration is an effective tool for learners to communicate and collaborate with their partners. This process encourages learners to become messengers of their own culture as well as recipients of the target culture. Though I employed a type of real-time group discussion, learning culture through online collaboration can be carried out in wide and varied digital settings, such as email, web blog, and SNS, or with a collective use of those technologies. For instance, in cases that have difficulty in real-time communication due to time differences, creating a web blog and exchanging comments in a group project can be a useful way to set up interactive international collaboration. These types of networking tools can inspire the digital generation to learn new language and culture. Given the nature of our globalized society, it is important for institutions to provide environments that foster online collaboration efforts between institutions. This is especially true for liberal arts schools where sociocultural ideas are of value, and there is an acute need to develop various platforms and pedagogical resources to facilitate online collaboration in foreign language classrooms.

Constructing and sharing human and intellectual resources among the liberal arts institutions would make it possible to create a successful and sustainable model in curriculum for online intercultural collaboration that can contribute to enhancing intercultural communicative competence.

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