

Telecollaboration and Intercultural Communicative Competence: Revealing Students' Experiential Insights in Saudi Arabia and the U.S.

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Abstract

As several intercultural communicative competence studies integrated telecollaboration, this practice has become popular in academia and other relevant disciplines such as bridging cultural differences. Nevertheless, most of such research has been conducted in South Asian countries such as China, Japan and Taiwan, as well as in North America and Europe, with the focus mainly on European languages, specifically English. The driving force of this research was because there has been a rapid increase in the number of learners of English and Arabic as foreign languages, who have rarely interacted together, either because of an existing limited understanding or narrow cultural awareness of each other's cultures and perhaps languages. Accordingly, the researcher presented a comparative analyses of language learners' insights prior to and after their engagement in a telecollaborative experience. The research indicated that, in the past, there have been limited studies conducting similar investigations of those two settings, due to the tremendous differences in both the languages and cultures. The findings have shown the necessity of participants to understand each other's needs and interests to result in successful telecollaboration during ICC process.

Keywords: telecollaboration, Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), insights, and cultural awareness, American and Saudi higher education students

1. Introduction

Many areas of investigations regarding students' insights concerning intercultural communicative competence via telecollaboration still remain unexplored (Uzum, et al., 2020; Veronica, et al., 2021). This research was conducted to find out the initial and follow-up perceptions of participants taking part in the experience of telecollaboration for intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in two contexts: in Saudi Arabia and the United States. Such experience aims to explore the insights gained by participants because of this experience, by specifically focusing on the effects of cultural and linguistic exchanges among learners of English and Arabic as a foreign language through telecollaboration. The significance of the current research was to develop an awareness of intercultural knowledge and language skills, particularly academic writing skills, in two target languages: English and Arabic, as well as for participants to acquire authentic information from native people about friendships, daily routines, food and national days in each context. It was hoped that this interaction would lead to more communication than can be established face-to-face. As indicated earlier, this research explored learners' initial and follow-up perceptions concerning this experience. Therefore, the research answers the following research questions:

RQ1) How do the participants (in Saudi Arabia and the US) perceive the telecollaborative-oriented intercultural communicative competence experience via shared Google Drive folders (initial perceptions)?

RQ2) How did the participants (in Saudi and the US) observe telecollaborative-oriented intercultural communicative competence experience via shared Google Drive folders (follow-up perceptions)?

2. Literature Review

The interest in telecollaboration has spread across the globe, owing to the unprecedented growth in technologies and social networking tools. Telecollaboration has become popular for meeting the requirements of citizens around the globe in the twenty-first century. Although definitions of telecollaboration may differ, they generally refer to the application of social networking tools, applications, or software for the practice of first, second or foreign language learning (Belz, 2003) and it is frequently used for promoting practices related to learning a new language and its culture. Helm (2015) confirmed that telecollaboration may share the following features 'bilateral, bilingual, bicultural exchanges lasting more or less one semester' (p: 204).

Therefore, telecollaboration is considered an interactive experience that often results in a cultural exchange, as participants are exposed to various cultural practices and social norms of two or more communities, thus gaining an understanding of them. O'Dowd and Ritter (2006)

indicated that telecollaboration is commonly used for collaborative purposes and cultural exchanges. They also showed that telecollaboration seeks to employ social tools among language learners in remote areas for the purpose of promoting collaborative work and intercultural exchange, thus overcoming geographic, cultural, and linguistic boundaries. It has been claimed that it would be beneficial to integrate telecollaboration into the curriculum of language teaching programs (Sadler & Dooly, 2016). Indeed, research on telecollaboration offers insights into linguistic gains, student dynamics, instructors' roles, communication breakdown, and intercultural competence (Guth & Helm, 2010; O'Dowd & Dooly, 2020). This is consistent with Müller-Hartmann and Kurek (2016) who argued that telecollaborative-oriented language learning programs enable individuals to be 'autonomous developers of intercultural contexts' (p: 133).

One clear asset of telecollaboration is its ability to promote oral/written intercultural communicative competence (ICC), since it is centered on implementing online-based applications or computer-mediated communication tools for second or foreign language learning (Lewis & O'Dowd, 2016; Thorne, 2016; Çiftçi & Savaş, 2018). Despite the many definitions given in the literature, Byram's (1997) definition is considered as one the most-cited definitions of ICC; which focuses on five elements: 'attitudes', 'knowledge', 'skills of interpreting and relating', 'skills of discovery and interaction', and 'critical cultural awareness/political education'. Yang and Zhuang (2007) reported that ICC comprises knowledge competence, practical communication competence, acculturation competence, and global consciousness systems.

In fact, the relationship between telecollaboration and ICC is so evident since the former can lead to increased intercultural competence among learners including second language learners. Toscu and Erten (2020) have shown the necessity of integrating telecollaboration into language learning programs for educators, planners, and institutions to promote outcomes related to ICC. Meleady et al., (2020) have also explored the role of intergroup contact and ICC during telecollaboration. The researchers explored that positive is associated with enhancements in ICC, and that higher intercultural competence was linked with a decrease of negative contact in the future.

There are several studies which have presented practices that develop telecollaborative-focused ICC through guided collaboration and use informal resources on social media using digital tools (Helm, Guth & Farrah, 2012). Furthermore, reflective practices, peer exchanges and producing portfolios are commonly practiced in this experiential process of learning (Müller-Hartmann & Schocker, 2013). Other studies have mostly focused on the participants' perceptions concerning the assessment of ICC in a telecollaborative exchange. For instance, in her Spanish-American telecollaborative project using blogs, Lee (2020) has found that participants showed a great amount of curiosity towards the other (target) culture and gained innovative cultural knowledge along with advanced critical cultural awareness. Oskoz and Gimeno-Sanz (2019) also reported on the positive implications of engaging different language learners in telecollaboration. They declared that it helps language learners to become aware of different discursive styles and practices in both cultures, thus facilitating successful intercultural communication.

3. Methodology

This research, which is part of a larger project, investigated the impact of telecollaborative-oriented intercultural communicative competence among Saudi and American university students, including the influences of communicative writing and shared feedback when learning English and Arabic on the participants in both settings. Although the study had a limited scope and time period, it has provided a general outlook of the relatively recent impact of this area and pertinent emerging issues in a rapidly evolving field that has a history of approximately twenty-five years (Lewis & O'Dowd, 2016). It addressed the students' experimental insights regarding the process of implementing telecollaborative-oriented ICC using shared Google Drive folders.

The participants of this current research were selected from four different institutions in Saudi Arabia and the US based on their willingness and choice to be volunteers in this research. The entire participants. As far as the participants from Saudi Arabia are concerned, they were English language major students in their fourth year at the College of Arts, while the participants in the US were third and fourth-year students learning Arabic as a foreign language, with different specializations such as Psychology and Liberal arts. The research samples were purposively chosen to only include learners of English and Arabic as a foreign language. There were thirty-seven (male and female) participants in total, all of whom were divided into pairs and trios (i.e. every student from Saudi has to work with one or two students from the US), which resulted in twenty-one groups.

To investigate this, the research adopted a qualitative approach and data were collected mainly from initial and follow-up views by the participants and such views were dealt as self-reflections which expressed by each participant individually. This method was used, because according to Dishon et al. (2017), self-reflective reasoning is a crucial component for the development of the self. In fact, self-reflection increases the level of self-awareness and consciousness about a given practice, which, in turn, may help the participant identify their strengths and weakness in that area. Based on Lewis and O'Dowd (2016), such research topics should be analyzed using an open-ended methodology as it provides greater potential for interpretation, hence, this methodology was applied. To do so, the researcher assessed the participants' experimental experience by analyzing their initial and follow-up perceptions by comparing the participants' initial and follow-up insights; including whether there are positive or negative changes after accomplishing the written tasks.

The nature of tasks assigned was varied, with each lasting for four weeks. Such writing tasks were part of free writing, using guided questions and main ideas. The decisions relevant to the tasks and the topics were suggested by experts in this field. Gonzalez-Lloret and Ortega (2014) provided a more explicit explanation of how to create meaningful tasks using various modes of technology and online tools. They argued that meaningful tasks are those which can help students to reduce fear of failure, embarrassment, or losing face which they can also raise students' motivation to take risks and be creative while making meaning related to language learning. There were four tasks

in this project included: 1) relationships and friendships, 2) learning practices and daily activities, 3) food and cooking, and 4) national ceremonies and special days. In this research, shared Google drive folders were used as the medium of interaction among the participants in both contexts. As far as the data analysis is concerned, an abbreviation was used to report the findings (consisting of the first two letters from the first and last name of each individual participant).

4. Findings

The general investigation of the Saudi participants' perceptions before the participation in the research project revealed a limited awareness and inadequate knowledge concerning some aspects of American culture. For instance, one of the participants stated '*I know a little about their habits and cultures which I acquired from watching movies and series ... I think there are some concepts which are not clear to me which need a little clarification to avoid misunderstanding*'. Another participant confirmed '*... my knowledge of the American culture is shallow in general, but I am improving as American arts such as movies and songs is emerging*'. Nevertheless, their knowledge improved immensely after experiencing the reciprocal telecollaboration. The study revealed deeper details concerning the variations of American culture which depends on the location and where individuals originally come from.

To answer the first and second research questions, the findings were based on their initial and follow-up self-reflections. In fact, although a few reported negative experiences, they were not because of the nature of telecollaboration, having to share written texts or provide each other with feedback in their native language, but rather because the participants stopped interacting and lost contact and with their peers in America, which did not last for as long as had been hoped. Similarly, the American participants expressed a readiness to begin telecollaboration, to exchange written texts and self-reflections because of their interest in discovering more regarding each other's cultures. The initial perceptions demonstrated that the participants had a surface level of awareness regarding the similarities and differences between the two cultures. However, it is important to note that the American participants were still not fully aware of Saudi culture or even common aspects of it. The findings also indicated that none of them had had the opportunity to visit Saudi Arabia before or had telecollaborated, in other words, virtually communicated, previously with peers in Saudi Arabia, in order to explore any interculturality-related topics.

The in-depth qualitative analysis of the initial and follow-up perceptions of Saudis and Americans led to the exploration of the emerging themes, as follows: contributions of exchanging shared writing; similarities/differences between Saudi and American/American and Saudi cultures; motivations for learning American English by Saudis/Saudi Arabic by Americans and thoughts for broader awareness about the American/Saudi culture. Furthermore, as the process of analysis continued, the following themes were discovered as follow-up perceptions: influences of interaction with a native speaker of English/Arabic; lessons learnt regarding American English/ Saudi Arabic culture; and facets of comparisons between Saudi and American/American and Saudi cultures. Further examples, including details and interpretations will be presented below.

Initial perceptions among Saudi Participants

The data shows that most of the participants already had positive insights concerning shared writing, including exchanging academic texts. They assigned great value to its role in assisting them to develop a better understanding of the other culture, specifically the American culture in this context, and its related facets. This was frequently repeated, as shown below by BU (anonymous name):

...many Saudi scholars who are studying abroad need to reinforce shared communication to be aware and familiar enough with other's society... telecollaborative-based shared writing helps better to understand the foreign society and its culture

A similar idea was suggested by IA (anonymous name), who emphasized the importance of exchanging shared texts to reveal more about speaking and writing in the target culture.

Yes, I believe that communication, whatever it may be, would contribute to the process of understanding the new culture ... in terms of the way they speak, or the expressions that are used during writing.

One participant confirmed the benefit to exchange shared writing to boost reciprocal comprehension and intercultural competence between Saudi and American cultures.

... exchanging shared writing online would contribute to a greater understanding regarding the two cultures ... many people from the Arabic society need to learn more about the American culture.

AA (anonymous name) also claimed that exchanging shared writing would increase learners' knowledge, including their familiarity with the two languages (Arabic and English), and highlighted the importance of having a native speaker of each language to help the other.

... shared interactive writing is a great idea to share information and knowledge in both cultures where the participants know the purpose of this writing, and to understand the culture of the other person. Writing is not only words... it is subtle meaning of ideas, which may not seem clear to other learners of the language... there is a need for someone from the same cultural background. Here it's fundamental to have such [an] exchange with people from the target culture.

In addition to increasing the mutual understanding of the two cultures, one participant referred to the exchange of shared writing as an avenue to expand connection with others around the globe, as expressed by MA:

There is no doubt that shared writing would contribute to the enhancement of the relationship with various individuals – from both cultures – as a result of the direct contact with each other.

A few participants specified specific similarities between the Saudi and American cultures. One aspect raised was related to food, which was found to be a crucial cultural component in both cultures, as indicated by ND.

Perhaps one of the similarities is the love of American people of various types [of] food, as Saudis do, where they both consider it as a major part of their social life and collegial gathering...

The motivation to attain more information regarding American English, particularly from an authentic source, was stated as being a target to acquire more vocabulary and to increase linguistic competencies and communicative skills, as expressed by ND.

Since I was a child I love[d] English language and I want to know more about how English is used in America and enjoy learning new words and this was my most important motivation. The other motivation is that I do not want to rely on someone else to explain things to me when I want to communicate with native speakers...

Follow-up Perceptions among Saudi Participants

As a result of the interactive writing and corrective feedback received from a native speaker of English from the US, the participants in Saudi reported positively on their perceptions after this experiment. For example, AB described the impact of this experience, which he perceived as similar to practicing English in an English-speaking country.

This experience was very useful, since the instructions were given by a native speaker of English; it was like practicing the language abroad with English native speakers.

The benefit of this experience was also indicated by BM, who explained how it had helped her to enhance her linguistic skills in general, but particularly writing skills.

It was excellent exercise ... it increased our understanding towards English language and its culture ... it also helped us to learn new English vocabulary and to strengthen our comprehension competencies, as well as writing skills.

This experience was impactful for some individuals such as ND, as he had never done a similar practice before. He commented on how the interactive writing process had been successful and without creating major problems between participants.

Frankly, I had a great time. For the first time, I had the chance to communicate with a native speaker of English for academic and educational purposes. Such communication was smooth and there was no tension or anxiety about making mistakes and the responses for correction were achieved with full respect.

DB also remarked on the impact of interaction with a peer from the US, who helped this participant to identify several mistakes related to writing and to correct them.

It was fun to communicate with someone from another culture and to share information with her. My colleague notified me a lot about my mistakes which I was unfamiliar with.

The Saudi participants gave examples of information which they learnt about the American culture as a result of this process of interactive writing and shared corrective feedback. BM reported on what she had learnt from the interculturally-oriented interaction.

I learnt about the traditions of food in America. American food is as varied as the people in the world. Americans love snacks and do not like bread at all, although it is a basic meal for Arabs,... it is an important and necessary partner in all dishes and meals... yet Americans don't prefer to eat bread.

It is obvious that such practice enabled some participants such as AA to gain a greater knowledge of the features of American culture, including what the most popular types of sport are there.

We learned a lot and it happened what I expected and mentioned in the initial questionnaire. There was a lot of negative stereotypes which I received from media ... one of the things that most attracted me is the interest of many Americans to join private universities rather than governmental [ones]. Their favourite sports are American football and basketball and they are not so much interested in soccer as we are. Also, many of them rely heavily on junk food...

Based on this experience, MO gave a detailed description regarding his cultural and linguistic development during his experience of communicating with a person located in the US, who obviously came from a different culture.

I do not know whether I was lucky or just a coincidence, but Sheila, the person who I was interacting with, had a great disciplinary sense of dealing with my mistakes without feeling ashamed or embarrassed... I have always believed that Americans are not open, or they hardly accept different cultures, and if they encounter another culture, they may not become interested in knowing more about it... perhaps this type of interaction will be a motivation and a way to spread awareness about accepting and sharing the cultures of others...

Nevertheless, a few participants specified specific similarities between the Saudi and American cultures. One aspect raised was related to food, which was found to be a crucial cultural component in both cultures, as indicated by ND.

Perhaps one of the similarities is the love of American people of various types [of] food, as Saudis do, where they both consider it as a major part of their social life and collegial gathering...

A similarity between the two cultures is related to the system of education, as referred to by MJ. However, this participant also highlighted

some cultural differences including major celebrations in both cultures.

Yes... they are learning at universities and schools which are closely similar to our system of education, but they have a difference concerning mixed education and they have different celebrations such as thanksgiving, whereas in Saudi culture that is stemmed from Arabic culture have two main events...

Initial Perceptions among American Participants

The analysis of the initial perceptions among Americans concerning the process of exchanging shared writing was prescribed as positive, as shown earlier with the Saudi participants. Many participants expressed their enjoyment during this practice as it helped them to become more familiar with different facets of Saudi culture as OT expressed.

I feel like I don't know much about Saudi culture actually which is why I'm really interested in participating in this research. I know some things about Arabic culture like how important the family is and how important the value of hospitality is ...

Another participant also commented on the benefits of exchanging shared writing to improve their understanding of Saudi culture, as IW stated:

I feel like I have learned a lot about customs in the middle east in a very broad context. I think that this shared writing will contribute to a better understanding of what lives in Saudi are actually like, because I will be hearing a real person's story. I feel like this will make me think more about my own culture and Arabic culture in Saud.

Moreover, LM provided an interesting reflection of the shared writing experience, stating it made a positive contribution to increasing learning about other Arabic cultures, including Saudi culture, and how each is unique, despite the similarities.

I began studying Arabic last year, and by way of my language learning, I have been able to learn about various Arabic cultural aspects. I've learned that Arabic cultures differ from country to country, especially in language, although there are some similarities with regard to food, dance, and media across the region.

This previous example supports what was stated by YM, confirming that this experience of exchanging shared writing was seen as a stimulus to truly thinking about and analyzing the similarities and differences between Saudi, and other cultures.

I do not know a lot about Arabic culture other than what we have learned in class, through some of the Arab films I have seen, and the Egyptian dialect course I am taking now has informed me more about different aspects of Arabic culture. I definitely think sending and receiving shared writing will contribute to a better understanding of the other cultures such as Saudi by exposing me to the culture through a native and comparing their experiences to mine...

The perceptions considering whether there are similarities or differences between the two cultures have revealed numerous results from the Americans' perspectives as SE stated:

I think similarities would be in common core values; respect for elders, women, and children, a general trend for wanting justice ... However, there would definitely be differences in cultural values and how one perceives them. For example, American hospitality may be perceived as rude towards Saudi and the vice versa.

LM particularly stressed the fact he noticed more differences between the two cultures, including differences in language, food and other cultural practices.

... I believe that there are multiple similarities ... but also some differences ... although there are many Arabic speakers in the United States, and likewise many English speakers in the Arab world. Additionally, traditional foods differ, among other cultural practices. However, I believe that respect and familial ties are ubiquitous; although these particular cultural aspects might be more pronounced in Arab world, I feel that they are essentially universal.

Several participants placed great emphasis on the role of immersion with Arabic native speakers from Saudi Arabia, since they could help them by explaining interculturally-related issues which may seem subtle, as shown by AS.

I think the best thing is to live immersively in a part of the Arab world such as in Saudi Arabia and experience the culture firsthand. Short of that, increased exposure to Arab culture through outlets beyond the generally-unsympathetic media (like Arab, food, music, television, written material, migrants themselves, cultural events, etc.) can be very enlightening.

Follow-up Perceptions among American Participants

The participants 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. AS provided his feedback about the unexpected rewarding of this experience.

.... 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.

Another impact of interaction with a native speaker of Arabic increased the mutual benefits among the group members, as they were able to learn a great deal simultaneously, as expressed by YM.

It was very helpful in reading her work to then model it in my own writing. Of course my grammar is not as perfect, but I am trying

and it will definitely improve after this process. It was also interesting to read her reflections of my work in addition to reading their own work in English. Similarly to me, her grammar wasn't perfect but she was able to successfully get her point across.

Similarly to YM, OT commented on the shared gain for the entire group as a result 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 even though that I could see where they might struggle with similar things like I do in Arabic (prepositions, definite vs. indefinite nouns, etc.).

As there were several learning situations that involved dealing with Saudi Arabic native speakers, SE stated her interest in working together with someone from another culture and the fact she could do so successfully without any major problems.

I would find it easy working with someone belonging to Arabic culture when working on a team project involving communication since my partner excelled in this ... my partner displayed a high amount of charisma and warmth, even if it was simply through text. I feel like her genuine and honest efforts in learning English.

Based on dealing with individuals from a different culture, LM stated that the experience had proven that cross-cultural communication is powerful to solve problems and to clarify misunderstanding.

I think that family values differ. Within American culture, individualism is emphasized, and often people have little regard for connection and togetherness within familial structures. Because of these differences, there might be some misunderstandings. Overall however, I believe in the power of language as a means of cross-cultural communication.

The American participants revealed their thoughts about Arabic/Saudi culture as a result of this process of interactive writing and shared corrective feedback. AS reported on what he specifically learnt from this interculturally-oriented interaction, despite his familiarity with parts of Arab culture.

Although I was already rather familiar with many aspects of Arab culture, I learned about Saudi-specific culture. For instance, I learned about the regional variations in cuisine as well as the national holiday celebrating Saudi Arabia's unification.

Another participant, OT, mentioned he had acquired further knowledge concerning the main celebration in the Arab world and how people prepare for it, including information regarding how some Saudi dishes are made.

Yes, I learned some new things about Arabic culture. I learned about Eid traditions and responsibilities, such as preparing breakfast for the family and praying. I also learned about Saudi cuisine and the national dish ... and how each family adds their own flair to it.

Furthermore, LM stated that she had learnt about some cultural practices which are highly valued in the Saudi culture such as the deep respect for parents.

I learned that there is deep respect for parents, and that friendships are highly regarded. Additionally, I discovered that personality traits are important within friendships. I found that this differed somewhat with the United States.

The American students also reported their perceptions regarding their interaction with their peers from Saudi Arabia. As a result, AS emphasized how significant telecollaboration is in terms of correcting each other's writing and facilitating reciprocal understanding.

The interpersonal, interactive aspect of this study (and especially the fact that my partner was doing the exact same assignments I was) has given me a greater understanding than if I had simply read the same information in a book somewhere.

The American participants identified the similarities and differences between Saudi and American cultures. For example, AB provided a detailed comparison of the two cultures inferred from this process of telecollaboration.

There were a lot of similarities and when I read my partner's essays, I immediately started thinking of analogs here in the U.S. For instance, the daily schedule of a student, how holidays are celebrated, and the importance of family life all were familiar to me...

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This research was undertaken to investigate English and Arabic language learners' experiential insights concerning telecollaborative-oriented ICC and whether such an experience could lead to developmental knowledge of self, others, and/or more awareness of cognitive and communicative skills. The findings showed that, overall, telecollaboration is a unique learning practice that learners should try at least once during their studies at university. This finding is consistent with the results of a previous study by Angelova & Zhao (2016), who argued that telecollaboration plays a role in creating enjoyable intercultural experiences. The results also demonstrated that the language learners' wider acceptance and broader awareness of the other culture was due to the increase in their understanding, which occurred during this interactive process of mutual communication. This result supports the findings of Helm, et al. (2012), who realized that such a practice that involves collaboratively complex digital engagement is both thought-provoking and motivating for learners, often causing them to become more open minded.

Both the Saudi and American telecollaborators described how their initial optimistic perceptions had been confirmed during their follow-up evaluation. As the participants began to really consider the culture they encountered, and its related features, they became more able to differentiate between the similarities and differences of each setting, particularly with regards to aspects that might sometimes be misunderstood or misinterpreted. In addition, they learned how to deal with them appropriately. Every effort was made to help the

language learners become adjusted to this practice. Consequently, it was found that providing language learners of both contexts with more opportunities for developing cultural awareness, whilst also increasing their ability to use telecollaborative praxis, is hugely paramount, as expressed by Cappellini & Hsu (2020). Although the majority of learners of English/ Arabic as a foreign language reported that they felt they had positive perceptions after this experiment, there were still a few opposing voices regarding telecollaborative-based ICC practice. This was not because a minority of learners in both settings (in Saudi and the U.S.) failed to build a rapport with their peers and were or being unable to communicate satisfactorily with the other groupmates but because they desired to know each other more including understanding each other's needs and interests.

There could be several reasons for this, for example, Chen and Yang (2014) found that only one third of their telecollaborative participants considered such online intercultural communicative tasks commitments stressful whereas the remaining were prepared to succeed. The findings also showed that the most salient challenge is reaching a mutual agreement regarding what goals and objectives to set, owing to the contextual, cultural and linguistic differences between both sides, as absolute consensus is often rare (Angelova & Zhao, 2016; Bueno-Alastuey & Kleban, 2016). Other difficulties related to this topic include a lack of participation, lack of collaboration, scheduling problems and dealing with the emerging socio-institutional problems properly that effective ICC and intercultural pragmatic competence demands (Chun, 2011; BuenoAlastuey & Kleban, 2016; Lewis & O'Dowd, 2016).

The limitations to the current research being conducted was that it involved using one written-oriented social networking tool, specifically shared Google Drive folders; where implementing more tools. In fact, using more than one written-based social networking tool such as microblogging (Twitter), blogging, or wikis could reveal more findings. Using digital tools could motivate the participants to express more exchanges between the telecollaborators or may result in different perceptions. In fact, further exposure to oral intercultural communication is needed, because although written telecollaboration has been shown to be effective, oral communication would have contributed to creating more spontaneity and more immediate communication.

Therefore, telecollaboration-related research is vastly promising. Based on the results and the conclusion, telecollaboration seems to be a beneficial tool to be implemented, providing it is done so at the right time and place. Its considerable number of positive uses and consequences suggest its integration into mainstream language education (O'Dowd, 2011; Sadler & Dooly 2016) would be worthwhile, and it could be incorporated into syllabus design, as well as form part of pre-service language teachers' training planning and their in-service continuous professional development, as highlighted by Canto, et al. (2013). The recommendation of the current research suggests further investigation of longitudinal perspectives relevant to ICC components, linguistic competence, digital literacy, and/or learner autonomy.

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