



Copyright © 2022 by Cherkas Global University
All rights reserved.
Published in the USA

European Journal of Contemporary Education
E-ISSN 2305-6746
2022. 11(1): 110-122
DOI: 10.13187/ejced.2022.1.110
<https://ejce.cherkasgu.press>

IMPORTANT NOTICE! Any copying, reproduction, distribution, republication (in whole or in part), or otherwise commercial use of this work in violation of the author(s) rights will be prosecuted in accordance with international law. The use of hyperlinks to the work will not be considered copyright infringement.



Empowering Intercultural Communication Competence for Foreign Language-Majoring Students through Collaboration-Oriented Reflection Activities

Hong-Thu Thi Nguyen ^{a,*}

^a Hanoi Law University, Vietnam

Abstract

The changes in educational theory and practice have been made to be compatible with the global and integrated context of nations. In teaching a foreign language, intercultural communication competence (ICC) has been considered an imperative factor influencing the 21st century learners' academic achievement. Consequently, a great number of teaching approaches have been endorsed to facilitate students to enhance ICC. This paper focuses English major students' evaluation of the significance of collaboration-oriented reflection activities (CoRAs) in the ICC course; examines the influence of CoRAs on students' intercultural communication motivation and practice; and explores students' beliefs about the feasibility of collaboration-oriented reflection activities in overcoming the challenges of learning the ICC course. A mixed-research method was implemented with the research instruments, such as questionnaires, interviews, paper-based tests and performance-based tests. The results indicated that collaboration-oriented reflection activities brought about various benefits. Integrating collaboration-oriented reflection activities into teaching culture had positive effects on students' intercultural communication motivation and competence. From the qualitative data, participants manifested that applying CoRAs in the course was and will be feasible, effective and prospective despite the challenges they had to encounter. Accordingly, exhaustive solutions for teachers and students were recommended to fulfill the course properly.

Keywords: collaborative learning, intercultural communication competence, learning motivation, reflective learning, teaching and learning culture.

1. Introduction

In the context of integration and globalization, a comprehensive understanding of different cultures is currently in demand, and ICC are an indispensable component in international

* Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: nguyenthithongthu2607@gmail.com (H.-T. Thi Nguyen)

communication situations. Consequently, teaching and doing research on how to address the issues of ICC has become a priority concern for educators and researchers. With numerous different ideologies, beliefs, norms, and values clashing on a daily basis, the situation, if not properly comprehended, could give rise to a wave of conservatism or even isolationism. Acknowledging the prevalent impact of IC on a massive scale, culture-related subjects have been integrated into the curriculum of tertiary academic institutions, and strategies for improving ICC have been explored to equip students with more knowledge and skills in different intercultural settings. The pressure to be exposed to cultural diversity and engaged in the multicultural community has urged educators to explore efficient culture teaching approaches.

In 21st century education, students are expected to go beyond the basic knowledge in textbooks to be involved in experiences and practical activities. Students tend to absorb a great amount of knowledge about the target culture; however, to achieve competence in IC, they must be engaged in the in-action reflection activities that are built on collaboration. To improve ICC, intercultural awareness or knowledge is insufficient. It is vital to get students involved in performance, such as group work, interaction, and cooperation. Recognizing the prominence of teaching intercultural communication in collaborative reflection education, the researcher presents this study with the aim of elucidating effective ICC teaching and learning approaches through collaboration-oriented reflection activities (CoRAs).

This paper focuses on English major students' evaluation of the significance of CoRAs in ICC course, examines the influence of CoRAs on students' intercultural communication motivation and competence, and explores student beliefs about the feasibility of collaboration-oriented reflection activities in encountering the obstacles of learning IC and improving ICC. This study proposes several solutions and recommendations to help learners develop their ICC effectively. Based on the aims of the study, three questions were emphasized to guide the research process:

1. What are English-majoring students' evaluations of the significance of collaboration-oriented reflection activities in the ICC course?
2. How do collaboration-oriented reflection activities influence students' IC learning motivation and ICC?
3. What are students' beliefs about the feasibility of collaboration-oriented reflection activities in overcoming the challenges of learning ICC course?

Intercultural communication competence

Despite the differences in how to express and explain the definition of intercultural competence, numerous scholars have consented that ICC is one's effective and appropriate interaction ability in particular intercultural settings on the basis of intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Griffith et al., 2016; Jackson, 2018), in which communicators express a willing attitude to be involved in cross-cultural situations, sufficient cultural knowledge (Alred et al., 2003), self-awareness (Phipps, Gonzalez, 2004), and the ability to address issues relevant to different cultures effectively and flexibly (Guilherme, 2002; Sercu, 2005). In the same way, Byram (2000) identified critical understanding and awareness of our 'own and of other cultures as the prominent features of ICC (Byram, 2000). Meanwhile, Crahay (Crahay, 2005: 5) defines competence in a simple way, saying that it is "an integrated network of items of knowledge, which can be activated to accomplish tasks". Stone (Stone, 2005a) acknowledged ICC as "intercultural effectiveness" that indicates "the ability to interact with people from different cultures to optimize the probability of mutually successful outcomes" (p. 338). Similarly, Chao (Chao, 2014) described ICC as the most influential factor in foreign languages, in which communicators execute communication behaviors effectively to negotiate in a culturally diverse environment.

To evaluate ICC, a wide range of models of ICC have been built based on the major components. The most common ICC model comprises three components, comprising knowledge, attitudes and skills, which are expanded to include the following five elements: attitudes (*savoir être*), knowledge (*savoirs*), interpreting and relating skills (*savoir comprendre*), discovery and interaction skills (*savoir apprendre/faire*), and critical cultural awareness/political education (*savoir s'engager*) (Bryam, 2008; Fantini, 2009; Griffith, 2016). The development of ICC should be a critical combination of the above elements, since positive attitudes can help a person explore his/her own culture and surrounding cultures. Consequently, one's knowledge, skill of interpreting, discovering, analysing, and critical awareness will allow him or her to cope with multicultural

differences to effectively and appropriately interact with others in a globalized community. Apart from attitude, intercultural communicative competence includes knowledge of how society functions about other people, how other people perceive us and skills to interpret this knowledge. One should possess skills to acquire new knowledge and operate it in real time and interaction. Kosareva et al. (2019) recommended a model of ICC with the components, consisting of world knowledge, foreign language proficiency, communication competence (Szczurek-Boruta, 2015), cultural empathy, approval of foreign people and cultures (Lambert, 1994). Fantini (2011) also stressed awareness as an important dimension of intercultural communicative competence. Respect for human dignity and equality of human rights is the democratic basis for social interaction. One must possess the ability to value and evaluate in other cultures, as well as in one's own. As cultures change, human diversity, cultures and lifestyles expand. Wiseman (2001) suggested that intercultural communication competence is comprised of knowledge, skills, and motivation needed to interact effectively and appropriately with persons from different cultures. Chao (2014) and Byram (2000), emphasized the importance of language (linguistic competence), identity and cultural understanding in the conceptualization on in his model of intercultural communicative competence. Accordingly, a comprehensive definition of intercultural communicative competence should include the social context and nonverbal dimensions of communication.

With the aim of orienting to globally integrated education, intercultural competence has been pervasively proposed into EFL classrooms (Liaw, 2006, Spitzberg, Changnon, 2009). Consequently, a variety of intercultural communicative competence models have been recommended for teaching to foster students' ICC (Deardorff, 2006; Spitzberg, 2000; Stier, 2006). In a study on intercultural performance by teams, Schneider and Romberg (2011) recommended a three-phase intercultural model comprising three factors: intercultural awareness (not only full intercultural understanding but also acceptance ability of different cultures), a shared performance system (a set of acceptable common behaviors), and intercultural communication (skills to communicate effectively in particular intercultural situations). Meanwhile, Garson (2016) recommended a model of intercultural communication skills with functional abilities to understand other intercultural views, adaption ability to their own behaviour, conflict-solving ability in communication, recognize the right to different values, norms of behaviour (Byram et al., 2002) which is becoming most popular. These factors, together with tolerance ability in communication provide a basis for professional development, preparation for better living condition, obtaining achievements, and generating opportunities for professional self-realization (Liu et al., 2015).

Reflection in Learning and Teaching

It is acknowledged that reflection is a "meaning-making" process through which learners set goals, applying previous knowledge or theory into practice, taking future action for changes, improvement and development, and making meaning implications in real life because it is transformative (Ash, Clayton, 2009; Rodgers, 2002). To emphasize the prevalent role of reflection, Ash & Clayton (2009) revealed that without reflection, plain experience only helps learners generate stereotypes, explore superficial solutions to drastic problems and make inaccurate conclusions with limited data. The authors asserted that integrating critical reflection in the learning process gives students more opportunities to question issues, encounter challenges, and clarify correlation as well as contrast in theory with practice that reinforce critical evaluation and knowledge transfer (Ash, Clayton, 2009: 27). Tsuei et al. (2019) asserted that the key component education is the application of reflective practice to improve the incorporation. Reflection has been implemented to boost deeper learning, to make practice meaningful, and provide an autonomous learning process. Similarly, reflecting on action means the interrogation about and looking back on what we have done to uncover unexpected outcomes that are likely to occur in the future (Cook, 2016).

Akbari (2007) categorized reflection into 2 types: the type associated with "conceptual problems" and the one pertaining to "practical problems". He also argued that reflection emphasizes such retrospective memory rather than anticipatory reflection and imagination (Conway, 2001; Freese, 2006).

The impact is said to be the highest if the process incorporates collaborative learning and collective construction of knowledge and meaning. In a close investigation into English language

learning, Mason & Rennie (2006) manifested that if there is an incorporation in collaborative learning and collective construction of knowledge, the impact of reflection on academic outcomes is higher. Elif Burhan (2015) indicated the same opinion that in essence, reflection is an embedded and collaborative process.

The most common categorization is subdivided into three interrelated chronological categories: reflection-on-action, reflection-in-action, and reflection-for-action (Wilson, 2008; Farrell, 2012). These are mostly applied in professional process. Reflection-on-action illustrates the examination and observation of previous performance and experiences to determine the gaps, washback and encounters that hinder the outcomes, to evaluate the results and make appropriate changes for the future. On the other hand, reflection-in-action is generated in the progress of the present action. It is called active reflection, conscious thinking and modification while on the job (Farrell, 2012). Meanwhile, reflection-for-action is known as an anticipatory reflection that occurs before the performance to take the possible problems or situations into consideration. Accordingly, through reflection, practitioners diagnose the strengths and weaknesses and assess the effectiveness of the strategies or techniques used to moderate the performance (Pedro et al., 2012).

Collaboration in Learning and Teaching

Collaborative learning has recently been pervasive in educational environments, from primary school to higher academic institutions. Researchers have taken more interest in defining, featuring and exploring the significance of cooperative learning. Yuan & Wang (2006), based on the A collaborative learning perspective on EFL large class, defined learning requiring a cooperation with the group-working ability, contribution, and responsibility of the members to achieve the ultimate academic targets.

Several researchers have emphasized the major elements of CL, including positive interdependence, team formation, accountability, social skills, and structuring; working ability in heterogeneous groups and in positive interdependence, accountability, purposeful learning ability, cooperative skills (Harman, 2004); group goals, individual accountability, equal opportunities for success, team competition, task specialization, and adaptation to individual needs (Gillies, 2007).

From the various classifications, the authors agreed that in CL, it is imperative to require students to work together effectively for shared academic achievement. Active and positive contributions and accountability are highly evaluated. All the members must be held liable for their performances and the common results. In addition, they must try to create incentives for others to speak out because the core value of collaboration is unit and efficacy. Furthermore, Olivares (2007) acknowledged the critical role of sufficient social skills in CL that can control and moderate the relationship among the members of each group. One more factor affecting the effectiveness of CL is team reflection, through which groups receive feedback from the other members to make assessments or self-assessments and then make suitable changes to fix the drawbacks and improve future performance (Jarvis, 2004). The main factors and fundamental principles of CL are explored in the study by Gillies (2007). Jin (2004) took the essential role of culture in CL into serious consideration as teaching language cannot be separated from teaching culture and the efficiency of collaborative learning is embedded in shared culture (Alptekin, 2002). They recommended particular strategies to resolve encounters learners face, covering mediating cultural barriers, participating in debates with teachers and classmates to express viewpoints and defend against issues.

Collaboration-oriented Reflection Activities Integrated in ICC Course

Collaboration-oriented Reflection Activities or collaborative reflection activities are comprised of the tasks relevant to reflection practice in groups in learning process to develop a cohesive learning community (Onyura et al., 2017). Similarly, Steinert et al. (2016) argued that CoRAs consist of collectively reflecting efforts to provide the feedback in the aim of making learning better and build a collaborative learning community. The individual pre-reflection is defined as prerequisites for group reflection. In learning languages, instructors ask students brainstorm together on what they implemented in the past, reflected and explored the strategies to reconstruct understanding and make more changes for development. The collaborative reflection is evaluated as the greatest value if participants generate peer supported prereflection. CoRAs could be:

Writing diary from the real experiences and seminars. Students in each group reflected their experiences related to ICC occurring in their life or or the stories told by the others. They clarified what happened, how the communicator reacted in each intercultural situation, your reflection about their actions, behaviors and performance, your recommendations for the issues. Writing diary may be implemented through notebooks, posters, videos or online.

Writing journals on webs. Google-sites was built to be functioned as boards, e-portfolios or virtual classrooms that featured students' work and assignments, presented the findings on particular research, listed course materials with links, posted videos and classroom activities and held quizzes or competitions.

Involving discussion and problem-based tasks. Using Skype and Zoom in the classroom facilitated students to make unlimited interactions. The teacher might take students to many new destinations around the world with various experiences and virtual trips. Through Skype and Zoom, students can be involved in the discussion and problem-based tasks relevant to intercultural situations with many peers, teachers and experts from a variety of nations.

Using social networks as online learning community. Students created their accounts on social networks to directly or indirectly invite others to visit their homes for discussion and together build an intercultural communication community. After each week, each group reported what activities their group and the members of the community did, highlighting the significance and influence of the activities on ICC learning achievement.

Using blogs, Facebook or websites as e-journals. Students were encouraged to write journal entries via blogs, Facebook or websites that prompted students to upload their knowledge, news, and presentation and to share with peers. Through blogs, students empowered their critical and analytical writing skills as journalists.

Creating games and quizzes to build a "academic playground". On each group's web, blog or Facebook students proposed the quizzes, games hold as a competition for everyone to join in the questions about culture awareness and intercultural situations. The visitors or viewers who left the correct answers were awarded a prize from the host team.

Assessing the others' achievements and self-assessing their performance over the weeks. At the end of each week, students had a chance to visit the pages created by the other students or groups and make the assessment by leaving the comments or score for the groups' performance. Simultaneously, each student looked back to their product to have reflection and self-assessment.

2. Methodology

Participants

The participants were selected with as many matching demographic categorizations as possible within the allowed context of the research. A total of 122 participants were involved in the research, of whom there were 42 boys (33.9 %) and 82 (66.1 %) girls. their ages rank from 20 to 23. They had finished language-skill courses such as grammar, listening, speaking, reading and writing and were learning specialized subjects. The ICC course was followed by the British-American Culture course. They were third-year students of a foreign language faculty at a foreign language university in Vietnam. Their English proficiency level must reach B2 to have sufficient conditions for graduation. At that time, only approximately 50 % of students had B2 degrees according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

The sample size in the experimental research was limited in the number of students who were enrolled in the classrooms of ICC course at a university in Vietnam. The research questions mostly focus on these students' perspectives, evaluation and academic performance. Thus, 122 participants were justified to be sufficient to guarantee the desired level of accuracy and validity (Maxwell, Kelley, 2011). 62 students in the experimental group and 60 ones in the control group was meaningful to eliminate errors and to collect the best results. The number of participants in each group was approximately equal, so the sample size was reasonable to be used in the research.

Data Collection Instruments

Consequently, questionnaires, interviews, and tests were applied to collect data. This data collection instrument allows for a wider range of subjects to be addressed by a larger number of participants and eases the process of information gathering. The content of the questionnaire was

designed by the researcher with previous studies in mind, as well as the goal of the current research. The questionnaire comprises questions divided into 4 parts:

-Part 1: Background information (6 items)

-Part 2: English major students' evaluations of the significance of collaboration-oriented reflection activities in ICC (16 items)

-Part 3: The influence of collaboration-oriented reflection activities on students' IC learning motivation and ICC (15 items)

To measure students' ICC, the author created paper-based tests and performance-based tests constructed on the combination of ICC models Chao (2014) to propose a four-criteria model with the following components: culture knowledge, intercultural communication awareness, IC skills, and behavioral performance.

The questionnaire consists of opinion-based questions aimed at determining how the participants perceive the statements given within the questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 5 options based on 5 Likert scales: Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree and Strongly agree or *very low; low; neutral; high; and very high*.

Interviews: The writer posed questions to interview students about the challenges of learning ICC course and the feasibility of collaboration-oriented reflection activities in improving ICC (2 questions).

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection procedure is embedded in the course schedule. It lasted 15 weeks for 45 credit periods. A total of 122 students enrolled in the ICC course were divided into two classes: control and experimental classes. In the control class, students were taught in the traditional methods with the primary support of textbooks. In experimental classes, students are instructed in a blended teaching approach with the integration of CoRAs in the course.

Stage 1: Pretests to measure intercultural awareness of the control and experimental classes before invention of using CoRA to guarantee that the knowledge of students from two classes are equal.

Stage 2: Integrating collaboration-oriented reflection activities (CoRA) over the course of experimental classes.

Stage 3: Posttests comprise paper-based tests in which students answer the questions relevant to intercultural knowledge and performance-based tests in which students were involved in the intercultural situations to solve problems.

Stage 4: Conduct the survey and interviews to measure students' evaluations of the significance of CoRAs, the effect of CoRAs on students' ICCs, and students' viewpoints about the application of CoRAs. Teachers scored students' tests based on the criteria of ICC as shown in and made the comparison between two classes, plus the scores from performance based on CoRAs.

At the beginning, the researcher employed printed copies of the questionnaire to conduct the survey.

Data analysis

The main method of data analysis in the research is the quantitative method through the use of questionnaires and qualitative method from the interviews. The quantitative data were analysed with the assistance of descriptive statistics IBM SPSS 25.0 software. The demographic information of the participants was analysed based on a frequency descriptive test. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was implemented to explore the satisfactory reliability of the dependent variables. To identify the significance of collaboration-oriented reflection activities in the ICC course, a frequency test was applied. To evaluate the influence of collaboration-oriented reflection activities on students' ICC, a paired-sample test was implemented to compare the effects between two classes. Since the means of two populations are compared with the sample size less than 30, then T-Test and paired-sample test are utilized.

The qualitative data about student beliefs about the challenges of learning ICC course and the feasibility of collaboration-oriented reflection activities in improving ICC were treated by means of the coding technique "Auto-Coding", which selects the specific text passages, classifies and encodes the passage with codes. The data collected from the interviews were organized and arranged based on the repetition of indigenous categories or specialized vocabulary; key words in context; compare

and contrast, metaphors, and analogies to be grouped into codes and common themes (Gibbs, 2010; Bernard, Ryam, 2010).

3. Findings

Cronbach's Alpha and EFA

Cronbach's alpha value of the variables in the questionnaires are at 0.83 (>0.7) on average. 3 variables are excluded with values less than 0.7. This indicated that the variables left have enough reliability for the treating other data in the next steps (Ozkip, 2009, Hair et al., 2012; Hair et al., 2017). These findings made a good unidimensionality validity for variables to ensure proper data treatment for the research questions. The results of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) for variables are analyzed as follows (Observable variables excluded in the previous Cronbach Alpha step will not be included for EFA testing): The KMO value is >0.5 that indicated the correlation coefficient between the variables with the correlation coefficient of the partial variables, which guarantee the suitability of factor analysis EFA. This result is a sufficient condition for factor analysis to be appropriate.

English-majoring Students' Evaluations of the Significance of Collaboration-oriented Reflection Activities in the ICC Course

The results from Table 2 indicate that collaboration-oriented reflection activities in the ICC course brought about many benefits. Particularly, a number of participants highly appreciated that CoRAs are beneficial for inspiring collaboration and cooperation, with the highest mean value (M = 4.00, SD = ,769). Successively, the significance of CoRAs is presented in broadening students' cultural knowledge, promoting students' ICC, enhancing students' critical reflection, increasing self-evaluation and assessment ability, upsurging student learning motivation, and enhancing interaction among students, with mean values above 3.5 at M= 3,73 (SD = ,862); M = 3,76 (SD = ,936); M = 3,61 (SD = ,857); M = 3,80 (SD = ,935); M = 3,70 (SD = 1,051); M = 3,65 (SD = ,995); M = 3,60 (SD = ,987) respectively.

Table 1. Students' evaluations towards benefits of CoRA

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Broadening students' culture knowledge	1	5	3,73	,862
Reinforcing students' communication skills	1	5	3,44	,954
Promoting students' ICC	1	5	3,76	,936
Boosting critical thinking skills	1	5	3,02	,863
Enhancing students' critical reflection	2	5	3,61	,857
Improving students' language proficiency	2	5	3,34	1,029
Developing students' problem-solving skills	1	5	3,02	1,029
Making positive changes in attitudes to other cultures	1	5	3,64	1,094
Inspiring collaboration and cooperation	2	5	4,00	,769
Improving group-working skills through teams	2	5	3,14	,826
Increasing self-evaluation and assessment ability	1	5	3,57	,891
Upsurging student learning motivation	2	5	3,80	,935
Enhancing interaction among students	2	5	3,70	1,051
Making students more confident	1	5	3,65	,995
Rising students' creativity	1	5	3,39	,904
Making students more interested in the course	2	4	3,60	,987

0–1.79 very low; 1.8–2.59 low; 2.6–3.39 neutral; 3.4–4.19 high; 4.2–5.0 very high

In addition, participants highly approved CoRA because they reinforced students' communication skills (M = 3,44; SD = 0.954) and increased self-evaluation and assessment ability. Students also admitted that involvement in the activities made them more creative, with a mean

value of 3,39 (SD = ,904). Meanwhile, an average proportion of participants (M = 3.02) agreed that CoRA could facilitate students to promote critical thinking skills and problem-solving skills. These rank the last orders of all benefits students acknowledged in the survey with M=3.02 (SD = 0,863; SD = 1,029).

The influence of collaboration-oriented reflection activities on IC motivation and ICC

The correlation of collaboration-oriented reflection activities and IC motivation

The influence of collaboration-oriented reflection activities on IC motivation is illustrated through the correlations among CoRAs, engagement in intercultural communication activities, and willingness to solve IC-related problems. The data are treated and investigated by means of a linear regression test. The value Sig. (0.00) in ANOVA test is smaller than 0.05, which reveals that that the variables meet the requirements for linear regression test.

Table 2. The correlation of collaboration-oriented reflection activities and IC motivation

Model	Coefficients					Collinearity Statistics	
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
	B	Std. Error	Beta				
Engagement in CoRA	2,256	,252		8,969	,000		
Willingness to solve the IC-related problems	,261	,058	,360	4,487	,000	,912	1,096
IC Engagement time	,286	,073	,379	3,907	,000	,621	1,610

Table 2 indicates the correlation effects among the three variables: engagement in CoRAs, IC learning motivation, and willingness to solve the IC-related problems. Obviously, when the values of Sig. are below 0.05, three variables that are valid and are included in the linear regression model are correlated from one side. The coefficients ViF of the variables are less than 2, so no multicollinearity occurs. That Beta regression coefficients higher than 0.0 indicates the one-way impact of the independent variable on the dependent variables. Of the two correlations, the correlation between engagement in CoRAs and IC learning motivation is stronger with a higher beta value (B = 0,379) than the correlation between engagement in CoRAs and willingness to solve IC-related problems, with B=0.360. Accordingly, although engagement in CoRAs brings about positive effects, engagement in CoRAs has a greater impact on IC learning motivation than willingness to solve IC-related problems. This result can be taken for granted in an IC learning environment with few chances to involve students in IC-related problems.

The influence of collaboration-oriented reflection activities on ICC

Table 3. ICC in control and experimental classes

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Culture knowledge	General cultural knowledge	,197	1,195	,153	,503	,109	1,286	60	,203
	Specific cultural knowledge	1,115	,950	,122	1,358	,871	9,161	60	,100
	Intercultural knowledge	,820	1,057	,135	1,090	,549	6,057	60	,000

intercultural communication awareness	Respect	,590	1,283	,164	,919	,262	3,593	60	,001
	Empathy	1,000	1,080	,138	1,277	,723	7,231	60	,000
	Tolerance for Ambiguity	,672	1,165	,149	,971	,374	4,506	60	,000
IC skills	Interaction Management	,475	1,233	,158	,791	,160	3,011	60	,004
	intercultural problem-solving skills	1,213	1,185	,152	1,517	,710	7,997	60	,000
	interpersonal harmony and mediation	,656	,929	,119	,894	,418	5,514	60	,000
Behavioral performance	effective communication strategies	,852	1,108	,142	1,136	,569	6,008	60	,000
	English proficiency	1,197	1,077	,138	1,473	,921	8,676	60	,000
	appropriate interactive behaviors	,508	1,135	,145	,799	,218	3,498	60	,001

As shown from Table 3, the values Sig. 2-tailed tests of all variables are lower than 0.05, excluding two variables of general cultural knowledge and specific cultural knowledge, which indicates that there are differences between the results of the control and experimental classes in the items of intercultural communication awareness, IC skills, and behavioral performance. The greatest difference is clearly shown in the elements: effective communication strategies (with the Confidence Interval of the Difference is between 1,090 and 549); intercultural problem-solving skills (1,517 higher and 0.710 lower); and Intercultural knowledge (1,136 higher and 0.569 lower). In contrast, general and specific cultural knowledge, which was represented in the written test, was the same in both classes. Students in the control and experimental classes revealed their general cultural knowledge equally. This might be explained by the fact that although the students in control classes had fewer chances to be engaged in collaboration-oriented reflection activities, they spent more time reading the materials about other cultures and countries. Consequently, knowledge about culture was learned properly in classes. However, it is clear that because there was little intercultural interaction or engagement in intercultural communication in fact and in the virtual environment, the intercultural communication awareness, IC skills, and behavioral performance of the students from control classes was worse.

Student Beliefs about the Feasibility of Collaboration-oriented Reflection Activities

When inquired about the feasibility of collaboration-oriented reflection activities in overcoming the challenges of ICC course with the questions “How do you think about the feasibility of collaboration-oriented reflection activities?” and “Do you think the implementation of the CoRAs in the ICC course can facilitate students in facing the challenges?”, most interviewees consented that extra experiences through CoRAs are beneficial for their development in cultural knowledge and ICC. L. A said, “Actually, the subject would have been the same as the other theoretical ones we had ever learned without the activities that prompted our reflection on the what we absorbed through involvement in performance-based activities in groups. We had many chances to develop intercultural knowledge and skills. It is useful, so it is vital to get it pervaded in all subjects”. CoRAs are highly evaluated thanks to their prevalence in enhancing IC skills and awareness. Similarly, H.G. expressed, “To optimize the benefits of intercultural communication, CoRAs require us to make most of the online experience via the Internet network. The practical experience combined with the study of documents helped us soon have both a knowledge base and realistic views of culture around the world.”. Additionally, many students acknowledged that they had meaningful and exciting experiences through the CoRAs in collaboration with our teammates. We empowered our strength through team activities. Our mates shared with us the obstacles in learning ICC – a difficult-defined subject by previous learners. Through CoRAs, we not only read, understand but also see that they are embarked into the other intercultural situations. From that, we realized that an empathy, a tolerance and sharing towards different cultures was born in our hearts. We had a comprehensive look at the world without prejudice or stereotyping” H.K. expressed.

Regarding the tasks assigned in CoRAs, students revealed that they had more opportunities to get closer to other cultures and build an intercultural community. L.D. manifested “In the

modern technology era, there are many ways for a person to improve intercultural communication ability, which can be done in many ways, such as participating in social networks and communicating more often with travelers or partners from different countries. We were acquainted to be involved in a multicultural communication environment and felt confident to solve situations. Practice makes perfect, so some webpages or online communities were built to support our learning ICC". H.M. acknowledged: "The key to improving intercultural communication competence is engaging ourselves in intercultural situations and thinking about your responses or solutions, based on the ICC improvement tools we learned. Do not let the knowledge that you have learned die. We should practice and go into real communication. Most of the most valuable lessons come from our real lives.

With the requirements of CoRAs about the provisions of materials such as videos, clips, movies, and stories on made-by-team webs, students were exposed to various sources to learn. This was implemented successfully and brought about certain significance. Many students indicated that watching movies is an effective and entertaining way to gain more knowledge of intercultural communication. By observing their basic language and actions, learners could have a better understanding of the norms, values, identity and social practice of people from different cultures. Posting the images, videos and real material on our webs contributes to providing viewers' intercultural knowledge and skills. Meanwhile, K.H. confessed that: That teachers asked us to write down the stories occurring in our experiences with the other from various culture in e-portfolios such as Facebook and Blog is also an easy and comfortable way to improve ICC skills. Additionally, extracurricular activities such as competitions, seminars and webinars that involved people introducing their understanding about IC were beneficial and valuable to learners.

4. Discussion

The quantitative survey revealed some highlighted points of English-majoring students' evaluations of the significance of collaboration-oriented reflection activities in the ICC course. Most of the participants expressed their positive perceptions of CoRAs in learning ICCs. CoRAs brought about the noticeable benefits that are relevant to reflection in IC activities, collaboration-based tasks, and skills development. Obviously, the majority of English major students acknowledged that CoRAs play an extremely important role in improving culture and enhancing ICC. This is confirmed by the results analysed in the interviews and open questions. Additionally, a large number of students in this survey chose the options "Strongly Agree" và "Agree" to express a high evaluation of the prevalent importance of CoRAs. This result is in alignment with that in previous studies (Cook, 2016; Garson, 2016; Liu et al., 2015; Tsuei et al., 2019).

On the other hand, although English major students had good awareness of the roles and positions of IC and ICC in learning foreign languages, they still did not demonstrate their abilities by studying and receiving cultural information or directly participating in intercultural communication situations to raise their own ICC. In other words, the students seemed not to be absolutely conscious in actively studying the culture of other countries or nations, especially English-speaking countries. To the author's point of view, they might be missing other important elements: practice and motivation. In the survey to explore the influence of CoRAs on IC motivation and ICC, the study illustrates the results that in comparison with the control classes without the intervention, students in experimental classes had more learning motivation and performed the intercultural communication-oriented activities better. The findings are akin to the conclusion from previous studies (Chao, 2014; Farrell, 2012; Jamhoo, 2005; Harman, 2004; Olivares, 2007)

In light of the qualitative data of the students' viewpoints about the feasibility of collaboration-oriented reflection activities in overcoming the challenges of learning the ICC course. Most students expressed positive perspectives about the implementation of CoRAs. In particular, CoRAs provided students with more opportunities for practical IC learning and communication. Learners are facilitated and supported to overcome the challenges they have to face in the learning process and involvement in the intercultural community. They believed that implementation of CoRAs was and will be beneficial. The approach could be applied in practice, and foreign language learners may be easier to access new cultures. Obviously, at any age or level of study, foreign language learners can practice intercultural communication and develop ICC in many different ways. More importantly, some of the given solutions in this study are similar to the opinions of

Galante (2015) that incorporating intercultural knowledge into the EFL curriculum is crucial to assist learners in efficiently gaining proficiency in ICC for effective and appropriate intercultural communication.

From the experience of integrating IC into the curriculum and applying CoRAs in the course, the authors offered recommendations as follows:

- Teachers should regularly facilitate students' interaction and communication with students in the class and participate in intercultural community activities; create many interesting practical activities throughout the learning process, such as role plays, competition, games, seminars, talk shows, or intercultural experimental trips to encourage students to be involved in communication activities; and develop intercultural communication competence.

- Assessment types of this subject should be reformed to be adaptive to open teaching and learning approaches. There should be more diverse assessment forms to expose comprehensive evaluation to learners in terms of knowledge and skills, including written tests combined with performance on stage to solve intercultural situations, virtual cultural trips, competitions, movies and stories.

- Teachers should advise learners to form open thinking, objective attitudes and respect for other cultures. Teaching is not only for knowledge and skills but also for morality and attitudes.

- Collaboration-oriented activities should be placed in a prior position to empower learners' autonomy, activeness, creation, critical thinking, management skills, and responsibility.

- Information technology (IT) should be thoroughly applied in teaching IC. Learners will be exposed to a wide range of significant advantages and convenience thanks to assistive IT tools. What students learn will go beyond the four walls of the classroom with the assistance of IT.

It is not easy to integrate IC and ICC into training and practice in schools in Vietnam. Many difficulties were found and received with high agreement from people answering the questionnaire. It must be acknowledged that each learner's ICC is the reception and performance of cultural knowledge throughout a long and continuous process, requiring learners to always strive and strive to cultivate and learn. Therefore, the difficulties that learners often face when learning foreign languages or when using foreign languages to communicate with foreigners are diverse and quite complicated. Similarly, the causes of those difficulties also come from both subjective and objective factors.

5. Conclusion

This study enlightens English major students' evaluation of the benefits of collaboration-oriented reflection activities in the ICC course, examines the influence of collaboration-oriented reflection activities on students' IC motivation and practice, and explores student beliefs about the challenges of learning ICC and the feasibility of collaboration-oriented reflection activities in improving ICC. A mixed-research method was implemented with the research instruments, such as questionnaires, interviews and tests. The results indicated that collaboration-oriented reflection activities brought about various benefits in the ICC course. Integrating collaboration-oriented reflection activities into teaching culture had positive effects on students' intercultural communication motivation and practice. Although several challenges still existed, students believed in the feasibility of collaboration-oriented reflection activities in improving ICC. Accordingly, comprehensive solutions for teachers and students were recommended.

There is little room for doubt that the occurrence of intercultural communication events is ineluctable due to the interaction and integration amongst people on a global scale. Along with intercultural communication, cultural barriers serve as a deterrent to the success of communication. Hence, the magnitude of gaining intercultural communication competence is apparent. Throughout the paper, various aspects, an overview of intercultural communication competence, a brief introduction of the intercultural communication concepts, and the analysis and discussion have been covered in depth. Moreover, several valuable suggestions were made to overcome existing cultural barriers in the story and to offer practical recommendations to learn intercultural communication competence effectively. Taking everything into consideration, there is no denial of the significance of ICC in a joined-up world like today. Due to some reasons, the paper bears the limitations in research scope that will be expected to be addressed in the next coming study.

References

- Akbari, 2007** – Akbari, R. (2007). Reflections on reflection: A critical appraisal of reflective practices in L2 teacher education. *System*. 35: 192-207.
- Aldred et al., 2003** – Aldred, M.J., Savarirayan, R., Crawford, P.J. (2003). Amelogenesis imperfecta: a classification and catalogue for the 21st century. *Oral Dis*. 9(1): 19-23. DOI: 10.1034/j.1601-0825.2003.00843.x
- Alptekin, 2002** – Alptekin, C. (2002). Towards intercultural communicative competence in ELT. *ELT Journal*. 56(1): 57-63.
- Allen, Meyer, 1991** – Allen, N.J., Meyer, J.P. (1991) A Three-Component Conceptualization of Organizational Commitment. *Human Resource Management Review*. 1: 61-89. DOI: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/1053-4822\(91\)90011-Z](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/1053-4822(91)90011-Z)
- Ash et al., 2009** – Ash, S.L., Clayton, P.H. (2009). Generating, deepening, and documenting learning: The power of critical reflection in applied learning. *Journal of Applied Learning in Higher Education*. 1(1): 25-48.
- Bernard, Ryan, 2010** – Bernard, H.R., Ryan, G.W. (2010). Analysing qualitative data: Systematic approaches. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Burhan, 2015** – Burhan, E. (2015). EFL teachers' reflective practice via online discussions. Bilkent University.
- Byram, 2000** – Byram, M. (2000). Assessing intercultural competence in language teaching. *Sprogforum*. 18(6): 8-13.
- Byram et al., 2002** – Byram, M., Gribkova, B., Starkey, H. (2002). Developing the intercultural dimension in language teaching. A practical introduction for teachers. Strasbourg, FR: Council of Europe.
- Chao, 2014** – Chao, T.C. (2014). A diary study of university EFL learners' intercultural learning through foreign films. *Language Culture and Curriculum*. 26(3): 247-265.
- Cook, Artino, 2016** – Cook D., Artino, A. (2016). Motivation to learn: an overview of contemporary theories. *Med Educ*. 50: 997-1014. DOI: <https://doi.org.10.1111/medu.13074>
- Crahay, 2005** – Crahay, M. (2005). Psychologie de l'éducation [Educational psychology]. Bruxelles. [in French]
- Deardorff, 2006** – Deardorff, D.K. (2006). Identification and Assessment of Intercultural Competence as a Student Outcome of Internationalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education*. 10: 241-266. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315306287002>
- Farrell, 2009** – Farrell, T.S.C. (2009). Teaching Reading to English Language Learners: A Reflective Guide. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.corwinpress.com/booksProdDescnav?prodIdDBook230708&>
- Freese, 2006** – Freese, A.R. (2006). Reframing one's teaching: Discovering our teacher selves through reflection and inquiry. *Teaching and Teacher Education*. 22: 100-119.
- Garson, 2016** – Garson, K. (2016). Reframing internationalization. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*. 46(2): 19-39.
- Gibbs, 2010** – Gibbs, G. (2010). Dimensions of Quality. The Higher Education Academy.
- Gillies, 2007** – Gillies, R.M. (2007). Cooperative learning. Integrating theory and practice. USA: Sage Publication.
- Griffith et al., 2016** – Griffith, R.L., Wolfeld, L., Armon, B.K., Rios, J., Liu, O.L. (2016). Assessing intercultural competence in higher education: Existing research and future directions. *Research Report ETS RR*. 2: 1-44. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/ets2.12112>
- Guilherme, 2002** – Guilherme, M. (2002). Critical Citizens for an Intercultural World: Foreign Language Education as Cultural Politics. *Multilingual Matters*.
- Harman, 2004** – Harman, B. (2004). Collaborative learning. In S. Stein & S. Famer (Eds.), *Connotative learning*. The trainer's guide to learning theories and their practical application to training design. USA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company. Pp. 77-90.
- Jackson, 2018** – Jackson, J. (2018). Interculturality in international education. Routledge.
- Jarvis, Atsilarat, 2004** – Jarvis, H., Atsilarat, S. (2004). Shifting paradigms: From a communicative to a context-based approach. *Asian EFL Journal*. 6(4): 1-23.
- Jin, 2004** – Jin, K.S. (2004). Coping with cultural obstacles to speaking English in the Korean secondary school context. *Asian EFL Journal*. 6(3): 1-11.

Kane et al., 2001 – Kane, M.J., Bleckley, M.K., Conway, A.R., Engle, R.W. (2001). A controlled-attention view of working-memory capacity. *Journal of experimental psychology. General.* 130(2): 169-83.

Liaw, 2008 – Liaw, S. (2008). Investigating students' perceived satisfaction, behavioral intention, and effectiveness of e-learning: A case study of the Blackboard system. *Computers & Education.* 51: 864-873. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2007.09.005>

Liu et al., 2015 – Liu, S., Volčić, Z., Gallois, C. (2015). *Introducing intercultural communication. Global cultures and contexts (2nd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mason, Rennie, 2006 – Mason, R., Rennie, F. (2006). *Elearning: The Key Concepts (1st ed.)*. Routledge. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203099483>

Maxwell, Kelley, 2011 – Maxwell, S. E., Kelley, K. (2011). Ethics and sample size planning. In *Handbook of ethics in quantitative methodology*. Routledge.

Olivares, 2007 – Olivares, O.J. (2007). Collaborative vs. cooperative learning: The instructor's role in computer supported collaborative learning. In K. L. Orvis & A. L. R. Lassiter (Eds.), *Computer-supported collaborative learning: Best practices and principles for instructors*. New York: Information Science Publishing. Pp. 20-39.

Onyura et al., 2007 – Onyura, B., Ng, S.L., Baker, L.R., Lieff, S., Millar, B.A., Mori, B. (2017). A mandala of faculty development: using theory-based evaluation to explore contexts, mechanisms and outcomes. *Adv Health Sci Educ Theory Pract.* 22(1): 165-186. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10459-016-9690-9>

Pedro et al., 2012 – Pedro, J., Abodeeb-Gentile, T., Courtney, A.M. (2012). Reflecting on Literacy Practices. *Journal of Digital Learning in Teacher Education.* 29: 39-47.

Phipps, Gonzalez, 2004 – Phipps, A., Gonzalez, M. (2004). *Modern Languages: Learning and Teaching in an Intercultural Field*. SAGE Publications: London.

Rodgers, 2002 – Rodgers, C. (2002). Defining Reflection: Another Look at John Dewey and Reflective Thinking. *Teachers College Record.* 104(4): 842-866.

Sercu, 2005 – Sercu, L. (2005). Foreign language teachers and intercultural competence. An international investigation. *Multilingual Matters*.

Stier, 2006 – Stier, J. (2006). Internationalization, intercultural communication and intercultural competence. *Journal of Intercultural Communication.* 11: 1-12.

Spitzberg Changnon, 2009 – Spitzberg, B.H., Changnon, G. (2009). Conceptualizing Intercultural Competence. In: Deardorff, D.K., Ed., *The SAGE Handbook of Intercultural Competence*, Thousand Oaks, Sage, 2-52.

Stone, 2005a – Stone, P.R. (2005). Consuming Dark Tourism – a call for research. *Review of Tourism Research.* 3(5): 109-117.

Tsuei et al., 2019 – Tsuei, S., Lee, D., Ho, C., Regehr, G., Nimmon, L. (2019). Exploring the construct of psychological safety in medical education. *Acad Med.* 94(11): 28-35. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1097/ACM.0000000000002897>

Steinert et al., 2016 – Steinert, Y., Mann, K., Anderson, B. (2016). A systematic review of faculty development initiatives designed to enhance teaching effectiveness: a 10-year update: BEME Guide No. 40. *Med Teach.* 38(8): 769-786. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2016.1181851>

Wiseman, 2001 – Wiseman, M. (2001) *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology. Book review.* 45(5): 634-653.

Yuan, Wang, 2006 – Yuan, X., Wang, J. (2006). A collaborative learning perspective on EFL large class meaning negotiation. *Sino-US English Teaching.* 3(2): 13-16.