INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE PROJECTS WITHIN ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA CONTEXTS

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ABSTRACT: *Highlighting the essential role intercultural communication plays as an integral component of effective communication skills in a globalized world, the current paper portrays an intercultural communication competence project the main aim of which is to augment students' communication skills in English as a lingua franca, whilst targeting both intercultural communication competence and electronic communication. The research project lasted for over three academic years in a row, involving two universities in Dubai and Bonn. Utilizing modern communication tools synchronously and asynchronously, the participating students engaged in intercultural communication online for nine weeks each academic semester. Throughout project implementation, the participating students used self-created texts, audio and video posts. To measure project effectiveness, the researcher administered a questionnaire the results of which indicated subjects' positive attitudes towards the intercultural communication competence project as a means for fostering intercultural communication, enhancing language mastery, and enriching technology literacy.*

INTRODUCTION

Characterized by the expansion of knowledge and technological revolution, the current era necessitates the enhancement of a formula capable of keeping pace with recent developments, in order to ultimately direct them towards distinction for all. Successful university education, therefore, involves much more than enabling students to master basic knowledge. What is it then that would contribute significantly to quality university education? Obviously, a variety of factors are involved such as acquisition of effective communication skills.

Emphasizing the essential role intercultural communication competence plays as an integral *ingredient* of communication skills, the current paper reports on a research project the aim of which is to augment students' communication skills in English as a lingua franca, whilst at the same time focusing on both intercultural communication competence and electronic communication. The research was conducted for over three academic years in a row at a private university in Dubai where the researcher works, involving one hundred and eighty students who registered for the course Communication Skills; a university requirement course which all students are required to study. To discuss areas of relevance to the main points delineated throughout this paper, part two reflects on scholars' opinions and researchers' studies within the field of communication skills in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. Part three sheds light on intercultural

communication within English as a lingua franca contexts and part four explains ten assessment measures which can be employed to examine intercultural communication competence worldwide. Part five proceeds to describe the research study in relation to aims, implementation, and findings. Next, part six pinpoints a number of points concerning intercultural communication competence projects, and part seven concludes with recommendations for researchers to take into consideration.

Communication Skills in the EFL Classroom

The communication process begins when the sender has an idea. The form of the idea may be influenced by complex factors surrounding the sender. These factors include, amongst others, the sender's background, mood, culture, physical surrounding, and the context of the situation itself (Al-Alami, 2013). The way a professor greets people on campus, for example, depends on a number of factors such as culture, type of relationship, and so on. As far as the EFL classroom is concerned, it would be necessary to develop students' communication skills so that in the long run they will be able to use English appropriately, fluently, and accurately. This entails that the procedures, activities, and tasks a teaching practitioner performs in the EFL classroom, are geared towards promoting communication skills on the part of students. This part of the paper presents a number of scholars' opinions on communication within EFL contexts and reports on some previous research projects conducted within this field.

To start with, it is essential to bear in mind that communicative language teaching has evolved over the past several decades in response to changing views on the nature of communicative language use and the abilities that underlie it. Stelma (2010) mentions that describing communication as the aim of language teaching since the 1970s has involved the development of communicative competence definitions. It is worthwhile mentioning that societies constantly change, and so do ways of communicating. The principal goal of language teaching may constantly be subject to change. For EFL instructors, three issues would help decide the limitations and appropriateness of communicative language teaching. These are: what communication processes learners require, what kind of communicative competence learners need, and what characteristics-if any-communication activities conducted in class share with real life communication situations.

 Communicative language teaching requires that we need to present language which is solidly contextualized, and sensitize learners to the ways in which the discourse presents its context (Gilmore, 2007). However, since each culture is unique, each classroom is also unique not only all over the globe but also within the same country. This requires the need to adopt an eclectic approach, in order to meet students' needs. According to Leung (2005), it is necessary for EFL teaching practitioners to take notice of real-world cultural, social and language developments in contemporary conditions, as well as re-engage with a set of ethnographic sensitivities and sensibilities.

Savignon (2002) argues that communicative language teaching is not exclusively concerned with oral communication. Communicative language teaching should also focus on reading and writing skills. Additionally, communicative language teaching is not excluded to conducting pair and group activities. Kleinsasser and Sato (1999) believe that communicative language teaching is

derived from a multi-disciplinary perspective that includes at least language, psychology, philosophy, culture, sociology, and education research.

Focusing on various activity types and interaction patterns, Kwon (1999) explored the effectiveness of the opportunities provided for high school EFL students to gain communicative competence inside and beyond the classroom. The aim of the study was to describe and analyze the activity types and the patterns of interaction within the activities. The analysis of interaction patterns within the activities showed that several characteristics were associated with the opportunities that enabled students to acquire communicative competence such as group discussion, cultural awareness, autonomy, and two-way communication. The following situations, on the other hand, seemed to block the students from developing communicative ability: a focus on form rather than content and context, teacher-regulations, limitations placed on the suggested topics of interaction, and passive participation. This study revealed that the pattern of interaction within the activity influenced a student's development in becoming communicatively competent. Instructors therefore need to consider both interaction and activity types in theory as well as in practice.

As seen by Shih (1999), communicative reading and writing tasks involve exchanging information and opinions through the written medium, in situations with which readers and writers are not personally acquainted, and in situations with which they are. In communicative approaches, skills and linguistic knowledge are developed in accordance with the purpose of tasks and the type of texts. Language teaching can be reactive as well as predictive.

In Lynch's view (1996), instructors should utilize tasks which aim to encourage the active negotiation of meaning. Such tasks provide students with opportunities to practice the strategies they need for solving problems in real-life situations, and give them a realistic view of what to expect in real-life encounters. To ensure effective negotiation, tasks should encourage two-way communication channels. By including interaction tasks in which students can take the communicative initiative, we can provide them with a richer experience of speaking. The key to successful interaction is flexibility, which results from a combination of adequate command of the language, and confidence from practice in dealing with comprehension problems.

According to Hutchinson and Waters (1993), the communicative approach is mainly concerned with three sets: language use, learning process, and the context in which teaching and learning processes take place. Communication is usually based upon interaction, performance, purpose, and context. The language forms used in real life situations vary in accordance with features of role, status, and formality. Roughly speaking, Hutchinson and Waters believe that the following principles underlie a communicative approach to foreign language teaching:

- People learn best when they are interested in and can identify with the content of what is being taught.
- A major role of education is to enable all learners to achieve their maximum potential. Amongst the best means to attain this is to emphasize learners' successes rather than their failures.
- No two learning situations are the same. The content of any lesson; therefore, is best negotiated between the teacher and the learner.

- A crucial aspect of any kind of teaching a foreign language is the social context within which it occurs.
- Integrating the language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing should be stressed.

Talen (1989) suggests that the development of communicative competence in EFL instruction requires tasks and activities in the classroom that would approximate the real communicative situation and problems students encounter in foreign language communication. The traditional approach within which communication drills are viewed as operations on the language rather than activities in the language should be abandoned, and drills need to be constructed that view language as a pragmatic medium for achieving a communicative goal.

Communicative competence, Gisele (1983) explains, is comprised of the following elements: situational competence which refers to one's ability to decode the specific social, cultural and psycho-cultural context; interaction competence which includes the ability to understand and practice the interactive rituals appropriate to the culture; linguistic competence which represents mastery of the grammatical and phonological system; and interpretive competence which refers to understanding the communicative intentions of participants involved in real-life communication situations. Emphasis, according to Gisele, should be placed on the interpretive aspect of communication.

The development of communicative competence in EFL instruction requires tasks and activities in the classroom that would approximate the real communicative situations and problems students encounter in real life situations. For EFL learners to acquire adequate communicative competence, Jakobovits (1982) argues, instructors should use authentic materials which will lead to such a desirable outcome. For language use to be authentic, instructors need to provide students with authentic tasks to perform inside and outside the classroom.

For EFL learners, acquiring a repertoire of communication skills is a challenge as they have to meet audience expectations, using proper English fluently. The instructor's role, accordingly, is to employ a variety of communicative tasks and activities, so as to achieve effective learning outcomes.

Intercultural Communication within English as a Lingua Franca Contexts
An essential component of communication skills, intercultural communication competence influences communication outcomes (McCroskey, 1982; Wiseman, 2002). Communication skills manifest themselves in one's ability to perform appropriate behavior, whereas intercultural competence in itself reflects one's ability to exhibit his/her knowledge of cultural norms and conventions within genuine communication situations.

Relying on the context itself, some scholars define intercultural communication competence by focusing on knowledge; motivation and cultural awareness, some by emphasizing behavioral and communication skills, and some by prioritizing interpersonal skills; cultural empathy; and effectiveness (Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005; Gudykunst, 1995). Intercultural communication competence is reflected in the extent to which one is able to communicate successfully with people of other cultures, without any prejudices (Rathje, 2007). Deardorff (2006) asserts that intercultural

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communication is a sustainable process taking place throughout one's life. This entails that people should keep fostering their intercultural communication competence over time to ensure being inter-culturally competent. Intercultural communication competence is essential in today's globalized world as people may be constantly engaged in intercultural exchanges. People who promote their awareness of and sensitivity towards cultures other than theirs gain knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to communicate appropriately within different intercultural encounters. Straffon (2003) argues that cultural sensitivity is an integral part of intercultural communication competence. Cultural sensitivity requires recognizing and respecting cultural differences. Furthermore, cultural sensitivity involves cognitive, behavioral, and affective learning processes.

Relating the discussion to language and culture, it can be claimed that language plays a significant role in terms of culture construction and emergence of culture change (Kramsch, 1996). Language is considered an essential feature of culture. Foreign language acquisition, therefore, requires sufficient knowledge about the target culture since language and culture go hand in hand (Citron, 1995). Language and culture are so intricately related that it is difficult to become aware of the expectations and assumptions we hold (Kramsch, 1998). A number of scholars (Council of Europe, 2008), for example, explain that cultural awareness helps language students to avoid stereotypes, through openness to otherness whilst exploring the target culture. Mao (2009, p. 145) argues that the major aim of including culture in foreign language teaching is to 'nurture learners' intercultural competence as a communicative function of language. Similarly, Pollak (2009) thinks that intercultural communication competence plays a significant role in terms of communication.

In a nutshell, intercultural communication can be defined as a form of communication the aim of which is to exchange information amongst varied cultures. Intercultural communication competence reflects our knowledge and ability to successfully deal with intercultural encounters. Intercultural communication has sometimes been used to synonymously with cross-cultural communication. This way, it seeks to analyze how people from different cultures act, interact, and perceive life around them.

Intercultural Communication: Assessment Measures
Assessment of intercultural communication aims to measure people's knowledge, skills and attitudes in intercultural encounters. There are numerous assessment tools which emphasize different elements of intercultural communication; for instance, autonomy, interpersonal skills, intercultural sensitivity, cultural empathy, emotional stability, intercultural communication skills, open-mindedness, resilience, social initiative, perceptual acuity, and effective teamwork performance (Brinkmann, 2011; Trompenaars and Wooliams, 2009). It is worth mentioning that intercultural communication assessment tools can be employed for different disciplines and contexts (Chiu et al, 2013). This part of the paper discusses ten tools that have been created to examine intercultural communication. The ten assessment tools are presented below according to alphabetical order rather than any other considerations.

First, Arasaratnam's intercultural communication competence instrument which can be used to assess competence level in intercultural encounters, focusing on affective; cognitive; and behavioral dimensions (Arasaratnam, 2009). Motivation, empathy, interaction involvement, and attitude towards other cultures are important elements of this item. Second, the cross-cultural

adaptability inventory which measures our readiness to communicate with people from other cultures as well as our ability to adapt to other cultures. As seen by Davis and Finney (2006), the cross -cultural adaptability inventory enables us to understand the qualities that can develop cross-cultural effectiveness. Nguyen et al (2010) point out that this inventory has four main domains; namely, acuity, openness, autonomy, and flexibility. Third, the culture shock inventory which measures a number of specific human traits that are related to intercultural sensitivity. The culture shock inventory examines one's experience with people from other cultures, including factors such as those of openness to new ideas and beliefs, specific culture knowledge, and language skills (Earley and Petersob, 2004). Fourth, the intercultural adjustment potential which measures our ability to adjust to new cultures. The scale here is comprised of four dimensions that are felt to be important in terms of intercultural adjustment: critical thinking, flexibility, emotion regulation, and openness (Kim, 2001). Fifth, the intercultural competence profile which measures our qualifications for international assignments, enabling us to assess our current intercultural competence as well as our organization's intercultural competence (Trompenaars and Woolliams, 2009). Sixth, the intercultural competence questionnaire which identifies four areas of intercultural communication; namely, intercultural uncertainty, interpersonal skills, intercultural empathy, and team effectiveness (Matveev and Nelson, 2004). The questions the intercultural competence questionnaire includes are related to the four areas mentioned above and are intended to ensure provision of unbiased answers. Seventh, the intercultural development inventory which measures our tendency and attitude towards cultural differences. Hammer et al (2003) state that the intercultural development inventory's items assess five main points: marginality, reversal, minimization, acceptance and adaptation, and defense and denial. Researchers use this inventory to measure intercultural communication competence in a variety of contexts and fields such as education, overseas programs, government agencies and so on (Altshuler, Sussman & Kachur, 2003; Greenholtz, 2000; Hammer, 2011). Eighth, the intercultural readiness check which can be used to examine one's ability to establish effective work relationships with people of different cultural backgrounds. The intercultural readiness check, according to Brinkmann (2011) amongst other researchers, incorporates six areas: establishing intercultural relationships, maintaining intercultural communications, managing of conflict, forgiveness, sensitivity, and leadership. Ninth, the intercultural sensitivity inventory which measures our ability to identify and acknowledge cultural differences within intercultural encounters. The intercultural sensitivity inventory is concerned with four areas of intercultural competence: respect; realization; recognition; and reconciliation, each highlighting one's ability to appropriately modify his/her behaviors when moving from one culture to another (Bhawuk & Sakuda, 2009). Tenth, the multicultural personality questionnaire which can be used to assess multicultural effectiveness, including five dimensions: social initiatives, emotional stability, open-mindedness, flexibility, and empathy (Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven, 2001).

Taken in sum, the ten tools of measuring intercultural communication competence described above can be implemented in different contexts and for a variety of purposes, depending on situations and circumstances. They are not excluded to communication within a foreign language context, and are not intended to be merely used for pedagogical purposes either.

The Current Study

Part five describes the study the author of this paper has conducted on intercultural communication competence projects, delineating aims; implementation; and findings.

Aims

To augment EFL students' communication skills through targeting intercultural communication competence and electronic communication, the author of this paper initiated an intercultural communication project to her students at the university where she works, in collaboration with an instructor teaching at a university in Bonn, Germany. Logically speaking, electronic communication involves technology literacy. Intercultural communication competence, on the other hand, is concerned with the ability to exchange meaningful information across cultural boundaries, whilst minimizing antagonism and preserving mutual respect (Byram, 1997; Wiseman, 2002).

Implementation

The intercultural communication competence project discussed in this paper requires active involvement in online communication activities and collaboration with students from partner classes who can be based in geographically distant places, under the supervision of instructors. By the end of the academic semester, the participating students were expected to develop their communication skills in EFL through promoting intercultural communication competence, upgrading electronic communication skills, enhancing the four language skills of listening; speaking; reading and writing, and enriching knowledge of vocabulary; grammar and structure in the English language. It is worth mentioning that the students at both universities in Dubai and Bonn were non-English language majors, who were taking a *Communication Skills* course as a university requirement during project implementation.

Online communication included, but was not limited to, Facebook, Skype, Google+, email exchange, and YouTube. The proposed topics for discussion were culture, education system, and student life. For over three academic years in a row (2014-2017), the project was conducted for nine weeks each semester. The total number of the participating students from the university where the researcher works is one hundred and eighty students. To ensure that students' interest was retained whist communicating with their project's partners online, the author of this paper and her project's partner in Germany *matched* the students, assigning partners of the same language proficiency level so that they would get engaged in genuine conversations with ease and enthusiasm. As soon as the project had commenced each semester, online communication activities started to take place. The participating students got involved using self-created texts, audio and video posts.

All the participating students were required to document their experience through using a weekly log where they noted down what they had been doing with their partners, on a weekly basis. Below is a list of the activities the participating students had to perform every week.
Week 1: Ice breaker-Students from both universities had class discussions about how they perceived their own life style/culture/study program and so on.

Week 2: Students from both universities had a class discussion about the exchanged information of partners' university from previous week. Students received name and contact details of their partner students.

Week 3: Each student prepared a slide show of a day in their life and shared it with his/her project's partner.

Week 4: Students from both universities had a class discussion about their intercultural communication competence projects and created a list of points to consider when collaborating with someone from a different country, such as setting a clear time schedule with deadlines.

Weeks 5-8: Students from both universities worked on their projects virtually, focusing on communication across cultures. The medium of the collaborative work was a combination of PowerPoint slides, blogs, images, and essays.

Week 9: In class, students presented their projects offering general debriefing of experiences gained and lessons learned.

To examine the effectiveness of the intercultural communication competence project as judged by the subjects, the author distributed a ten-item questionnaire towards the end of each academic semester. The questionnaire is a five-scale measurement tool where the value *1* reflects a respondent's strong agreement and the value *5* reflects no opinion. Table 1 below reveals the results in percentages.

Table 1
Subjects' opinions of the intercultural communication competence project

Item	(1) Strongly agree	(2) Agree	(3) Disagree	(4) Strongly disagree	(5) No opinion
1. I think the intercultural communication competence project is beneficial to acquiring the skill of writing in the English language.	53%	46%	0%	0%	1%
2. I think the intercultural communication competence project is beneficial to acquiring the skill of reading in the English language.	42%	55%	1%	0%	2%
3. I think the intercultural communication competence project is beneficial to acquiring the skill of listening in the English language.	41%	54%	2%	0%	3%
4. I think the intercultural communication competence project is beneficial to acquiring the skill of speaking in the English language.	55%	43%	2%	0%	0%
5. I think the intercultural communication competence project is a meaningful means for enriching knowledge of grammar, structure and vocabulary in the English language.	45%	53%	0%	0%	2%
6. I think the intercultural communication competence project is beneficial to acquiring intercultural communication.	70%	30%	0%	0%	0%
7. I feel the intercultural communication competence project has made me motivated to learn English.	47%	50%	1%	0%	2%
8. I feel the intercultural communication competence project has developed my electronic communication skills.	56%	41%	1%	0%	2%
9. I think the intercultural communication competence project has augmented my communication skills in the English language.	62%	48%	0%	0%	0%
10. I would recommend this project to other students.	56 %	43%	0%	0%	1%

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FINDINGS

Table one presents subjects' responses to the questionnaire distributed for study purposes. As far as improving language skills is concerned, 53% of the subjects strongly agreed that the intercultural communication competence project was beneficial to acquiring the skill of writing in the English language, 42% of the subjects strongly agreed that it was beneficial to acquiring the skill of reading in English, 41% of the subjects strongly agreed that it was beneficial to acquiring the skill of listening in English, and 55% of the subjects strongly agreed that it was beneficial to acquiring the skill of speaking in English. Commenting on the extent to which the intercultural communication competence project was viewed as a meaningful means for enriching knowledge of grammar, structure and vocabulary in the English language, 45% strongly agreed. When asked about the intercultural communication competence project in relation to promoting intercultural communication, 70% strongly agreed. Relating the discussion to the intercultural communication competence project as being a motivating task, 47% strongly agreed. When it comes to its role in upgrading electronic communication skills, 56% strongly agreed. The intercultural communication project, as indicated by table one above, was considered an effective means for augmenting communication skills in English; 62% of the subjects strongly agreed. Last but not least, in response to the item enquiring about the extent to which a student would recommend the intercultural communication competence project to other students learning English as a foreign language, 56% of the subjects stated that they would strongly recommend the project to other students. It should be noted that very few students abstained from casting their opinion about few items for whatever reasons, as the table above demonstrates. Based on the statistical results indicated by table one, therefore, it would be logical to claim that the intercultural communication competence project discussed in this paper was of use and interest to the study subjects.

Intercultural Communication Competence Projects within English as a Lingua Franca Contexts: Points to Consider

Intercultural communication competence projects are technology-enabled, requiring the: engagement of students in online intercultural exchange, interaction, and collaboration with peers from partner classes in other countries. Within EFL contexts, intercultural communication competence projects can be conducted to allow for intercultural dialogues, enhance language mastery, improve communication skills, and enrich technology literacy.

Intercultural communication competence projects do not aim to find a way to reach other cultures' consensus about a particular issue. Instead, they help in providing participants with chances to see the world from others' perspectives. Furthermore, intercultural communication competence projects provide students with opportunities to be aware of the existing differences in the world, both culturally and linguistically.

Utilizing online facilities, partner students interact to upgrade electronic communication skills. The Internet can function as an effective educational, communicative tool. There are four main ways in which the Internet can be used inside and outside the language classroom. These are: searching for; receiving and retrieving information, publishing and providing information, talking to others, and collaborating with others via different means such as joint projects which involve

learners in two or more classrooms that may be thousands of miles apart. An intercultural communication competence project can take place online through Facebook, Skype, Google+, email, YouTube and so on, exposing students to authentic uses of language for various communication purposes. It should be mentioned in this context that technology use in EFL instruction needs to emphasize active communication, whilst utilizing scenarios for interaction that are frequent, interesting, and genuine (Wu, Yen & Marek, 2011).

Despite promising outcomes, intercultural communication competence projects are not *problem-free*. Partner students may be different in terms of study motivation and objectives. Yet, it is the instructor's role to seek points of common interest between partner students such as hobbies and common age group's interests. In some other cases, there are foreign language learners who are not linguistically advanced enough to get involved in intercultural communication competence projects. It is still the instructor's responsibility to be sensitive and empathetic while handling this issue. Diagnostic assessment of students' weaknesses, delivery of purposeful activities, and setting of remedial action plans will assist in overcoming different barriers. Another factor that may lessen the effectiveness of intercultural communication competence projects is erratic reply. Sending emails to a project's partner can be an inspiring activity, but to ensure that a partner student will reply consistently is not always guaranteed. The partner instructors should therefore monitor and supervise what is taking place, how and why. Assigning office hours to meet students, highlight all related issues, and discuss collaboratively what can be done to make the most of intercultural communication competence projects can help in attaining the target.

To ensure that students' interest is retained and that they receive the maximum value from intercultural communication competence projects, the instructor needs to make sure that each student understands the project's requirements, and that the assigned activities are neither too demanding nor too time- consuming. Instructors should provide students with opportunities to self-reflect on their progress throughout the project, whilst building behaviors and mindset to promote intercultural communication competence.

On a final note, instructors should no longer be considered answer providers, but rather suppliers of information sources. All the way through, instructors should be critically aware of the connections amongst language, culture, technology, and the means by which each can supplement and nurture the others.

CONCLUSION

Effective intercultural communication manifests itself in the extent to which one is able to communicate with people of other cultures, manipulating appropriate language in spoken and written discourse. The use of English as a lingua franca requires acquisition of intercultural communication competence in order to communicate successfully across diverse cultures. Logically speaking, successful intercultural communicators can adjust to the situations they find themselves within, with tenacity and skill.

Commenting on EFL university contexts where students need to embrace the twenty-first century skills such as communication, it would be supportive and stimulating to assign students a variety of intercultural communication competence projects. As discussed earlier, intercultural communication competence projects can be defined as an inspiring learning springboard, the aim of which is to equip participants with the ability to employ communication skills: linguistic; intercultural; electronic; and social, in authentic communication situations. Intercultural communication competence projects which involve two partner classrooms as a minimum can be seen as fruitful linguistic and cultural sources since they pave the way for students to acquire linguistic knowledge and cultural awareness amongst other areas.

There are different measures which can be used to assess people's intercultural communication competence (see part four for details). Each aims to assess specific areas based on identified purposes and contexts. It has to be borne in mind that all assessment measures should testify to eclecticism when it comes to selecting the most effective one to apply.

Research into intercultural communication competence projects within English as a lingua franca context is relatively new. According to Guth and Helm (2012), there are a number of issues which require thorough investigation within this field such as the collaboration nature between the respective instructors while designing, applying, and assessing a project. Relating the discussion to the limitations of the current study, the project was excluded to the researcher's and her project's partner's institutions. Moreover, the number of subjects has not exceeded three hundred and fifty participants from the two institutions. Lastly, the researcher relied on one measurement tool: a ten-item questionnaire examining subjects' attitudes towards and satisfaction with the intercultural communication competence project. Neither *tailored* tests nor internationally standardized measures were implemented.

Therefore, the researcher recommends that research on large-sized samples from different institutions be conducted to examine if there is a direct nexus between openness to linguistic and cultural patterns and the ability to learn a foreign language. Additionally, if objective assessment is to be ensured, foreign language scholars should consider initiating a transparent assessment tool, geared towards measuring intercultural communication competence within English as a lingua franca contexts.

To conclude, in a world of global communication, one studies and works alongside individuals from varied linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Miscommunication and misunderstanding may and can arise, but the beneficial outcomes of such encounters are yet to acknowledge. We learn from mistake, gain from experience, and grow as healthy individuals through intercultural communication.

Acknowledgement

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