



**TELECOLLABORATIVE DIGITAL STORYTELLING: A TASK
FOR ENHANCING YOUNG EFL LEARNERS' INTERCULTURAL
COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE**

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Dedicated to my father, Fani Nazlı

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**TELECOLLABORATIVE DIGITAL STORYTELLING: A TASK
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COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE**

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ABSTRACT

With the world modifying into a co-dependent universal system, the position of the English language has commenced to evolve into a global lingua franca as an agent for cross-cultural interaction (Graddol, 2006). In consequence, the purpose of foreign language learning has shifted from mere development of learners' language skills to advancement of their intercultural communicative competence (ICC). The present study recognized the importance of enhancing learners' ICC and aimed to offer a classroom-based telecollaborative implementation to enhance young language learners' ICC through intercultural exchanges of digital stories. With this purpose, it forged a collaborative partnership between a Portuguese and a Turkish secondary school on the eTwinning platform. It selected 15 young learners from each partner school via the Purposive Sampling Method. The Pedagogy of Multiliteracies proposed by Guth and Helm (2010) was utilized to design the project plans, and the students were assigned to exchange intracultural and intercultural digital narratives for 7 weeks. The current study employed the sequential explanatory mixed methods research design and derived its data from both the quantitative source of IS-15 Scale (Wang & Zhou, 2016) and qualitative sources of learner diaries, semi-structured interviews, and research journals in this process. Moreover, it triangulated Byram's (1997) Multidimensional Model of Intercultural Communicative

Competence (MMICC) and Bennett's (1986) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity as its theoretical basis and analysed the data in line with Tecedor and Vasseur's (2020) Assessment Guideline. The analyses revealed that the Portuguese and Turkish young learners achieved to enhance their knowledge, attitudes, skills, and critical cultural awareness, which yielded significant improvement in their ICC. Furthermore, they indicated that the learners demolished their ethnocentric orientations and developed higher ethnorelativist perspectives. Contingent with the findings, the study offered implications for teachers, learners, and policymakers to incorporate telecollaborative exchanges into curricular activities.



Key Words: İntercultural Communicative Competence, Intercultural Sensitivity, Telecollaboration, Digital Storytelling

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**UZAKTAN İŞBİRLİKLİ HİKAYE ANLATIMI: YABANCI DİL
OLARAK İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRENEN ÇOCUKLARIN
KÜLTÜRLERARASI İLETİŞİM YETERLİLİĞİNİ GELİŞTİRME
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ÖZ

Küreselleşme ile birlikte, İngiliz dili, kültürlerarası bir etkileşim aracı olarak geçer dil konumu elde etmiştir (Graddol, 2006). Bu nedenle, yabancı dil öğreniminin amacı, yalnızca öğrencilerin dil becerilerini geliştirmekten kültürlerarası iletişim yeterliliklerini (KİY) geliştirmeye doğru bir değişim göstermiştir. Bu çalışma, öğrencilerin iletişim becerilerini geliştirmenin önemini kabul etmekte ve kültürlerarası dijital hikaye anlatımı tekniğiyle küçük yaşta dil öğrenenlerin becerilerini geliştirmek için sınıf tabanlı bir uzaktan işbirliği uygulaması sunmayı hedeflemektedir. Bu hedef doğrultusunda, eTwinning platformunda Portekiz ve Türkiye'deki iki ortaokul arasında bir proje ortaklığı kurulmuştur. Amaçlı Örneklem Yöntemi yoluyla her ortak okuldan 15 öğrenci seçilmiştir. Proje planlarını tasarlamak için Guth ve Helm (2010) tarafından önerilen Çoklu Okuryazarlık Pedagojisi kullanılmıştır. Bu pedagoji doğrultusunda öğrencilerden 7 haftalık süreçte yabancı partnerlerine dijital hikayeler aracılığı ile kendi kültürlerini tanıtmaları ve onlarla birlikte dijital hikayeler tasarlamaları istenmiştir. Mevcut çalışma, sıralı açıklayıcı

karma yöntem araştırma tasarımını kullanmış ve verilerini hem nicel bir kaynak olan IS-15 Ölçeğinden (Wang & Zhou, 2016) hem de nitel kaynaklar olan öğrenci günlükleri, yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler ve araştırma dergilerinden elde etmiştir. Ayrıca, bu çalışma Byram'ın (1997) Çok Boyutlu Kültürlerarası İletişimsel Yeterlilik Modeli (ÇBKİY) ve Bennett'in (1986) Kültürlerarası Duyarlılığın Gelişimsel Modelini (KDGM) birlikte kullanmış ve verileri Tecedor ve Vasseur'un (2020) Değerlendirme Kılavuzu doğrultusunda analiz etmiştir. Nitel ve nicel analizler, Portekizli ve Türk öğrencilerin bilgilerini, tutumlarını, becerilerini ve kültürel farkındalıklarını geliştirmeyi başardığını ve kültürel iletişimsel becerilerini geliştirdiğini göstermiştir. Son olarak bulgular, öğrencilerin etnik merkezci yönelimlerini yaktığını ve etnik göreceli bakış açısı geliştirdiğini belirtmiştir. Bulgulara bağlı olarak, çalışma öğretmenler, öğrenciler ve yöneticiler için uzaktan işbirlikli değişimleri müfredat etkinliklerine dahil etmeleri için öneriler sunmuştur.



Anahtar Kelimeler: Kültürlerarası İletişim Yeterliği, Kültürlerarası Duyarlılık, Uzaktan işbirliği, Dijital Hikaye Anlatımı

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AGFI	Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index
AIC	Akaike Information Criterion
BIC	Bayesian Information Criterion
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CMC	Computer-Mediated Communication
Df	Degrees of Freedom
DMIS	The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity
DST	Digital Storytelling
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
EFL	English as Foreign Language
ELF	English as Lingua Franca
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as Second Language
FLE	Foreign Language Education
GFI	Goodness-of-Fit Index

ICC	Intercultural Communicative Competence
IFI	Incremental Fit Index
IMICC	The Integrated Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence
IS	Intercultural Sensitivity
IS-15	Intercultural Sensitivity Scale
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
MMICC	Multidimensional Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence
NFI	Normed Fit Index
NNFI	Non-normed Fit Index
RFI	Relative Fit Indices
RMSEA	The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
TLI	Tucker-Lewis Index
χ^2	Chi-square
χ^2 / df	Normed Chi Square

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

The present chapter introduces the background of the study first. Then, it presents the problem statement, the purpose of the study, and the importance of the study. Followingly, it offers the assumptions, limitations, and some operational definitions.

1.2 Background of the Study

Foreign Language Education (FLE) field has embraced controversial views on the role of language education throughout the years. Previously, some scholars acknowledged that learners must primarily focus on morphological, syntactic and semantic features of languages in order to prevent misunderstandings in communication. However, raising students who have cross-cultural awareness and competence through global experience has come into prominence in academia over the last few decades (Addo & Castle, 2015). Contemporary approaches have attempted to underline the significance of cultural knowledge and awareness to understand diversity and reduce the communication gap between interlocutors. Therefore, the interactionist view which builds on the meaning produced through authentic social dialogues has gained momentum in this field.

Until the 1970s, language and culture were distinguished as separate areas of foreign language teaching and learning expertise; and language competence was prioritized over cultural competence (Hinkel 2001; Thanasoulas 2001). Culture was solely perceived as a component of understanding authentic literary texts and taught under the influence of the Grammar Translation Method which places restricted emphasis on communicative

purposes. (Kramsch, 2013). However, the term 'Communicative Competence', which was first defined by Hymes (1967) then developed by Canale and Swain (1980), rendered a paradigm shift in the field of language education in the 70s and 80s. The communicative competence framework of Canale and Swain (1980) comprises four main competences namely grammatical competence, strategic competence, discourse competence and sociolinguistic competence. In this framework, real communication is an exploitation of grammatical features (grammatical competence) to exchange and negotiate information between interlocutors through sociocultural rules (socio-linguistic competence), non-verbal and verbal strategies (strategic competence), and cohesion and coherence principles (discourse competence). In line with the Communicative Competence Theory, the rise of communicative language pedagogy in EFL and ESL fields necessitated the integration of cultural elements into syntactic patterns; therefore, scholars became more interested in cross-cultural pragmatics and the sociolinguistic appropriateness of language use.

In the 21st century, globalization and the proliferation of online intercultural exchange technology have affected the stance of culture in language education (Risager, 2006). Although some scholars raised concerns over students' acceptance of culture-integrated language lessons since they perceived them as a means of acculturation and showed resistance stating that language classrooms are for learning the usage rather than learning about values, history and culture (Chavez, 2002; Kramsch, 2011); others pointed out that language learning is a genuine attempt beyond gaining linguistic knowledge; thus, culture is a prominent element of language education (Byrnes, 2002; Pulverness 2002; Kramsch, 2013). Language knowledge includes the perception of not only the significance of transcultural interaction but the function of social and cultural situations in the meaning-making process as well (Pegrum, 2014). In fact, systematic exposure to the target language via cultural input regarding historical experiences, arts, literary productions, values, belief systems, and behavioural and social lifestyles of L2 communities attaches meaning and worth to the educational processes. Therefore, postmodern teaching approaches internalize language learning as a social practice to hold authentic cross-cultural communication between interlocutors. (Oakley, Laurison, O'Brien, & Friedman, 2017). For this reason, the emphasis of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) on EFL education through telecollaborative projects has gained attention over the last decades.

The postmodernist perspective in the 21st century detaches from the understanding respecting unilateral teaching of the culture of a single L2 community whose language is instructed in educational institutions. In other words, foreign language knowledge ceases to include the sole comprehension of the culture belonging to native speakers of that language. The modernist view postulating that culture pertains to the property of native representatives of a national cohort who embodies the target language within their constitution is questioned by languages such as English which is attributed as the *lingua franca* of the world. English language knows no societal boundaries and is utilized as a global medium of transcultural interaction (Seidlhofer 2013). Therefore, it is not only used to establish communication with native speakers of the English language but selected as an interactive instrument by non-native speakers to share a common ground to exchange knowledge as well. To this end, contemporary foreign language education perceives culture as a social semiotic structure which is communicated between native and non-native interlocutors of a language in a reciprocal fashion. Now, nations situated in geographically dispersed locations exploit languages like English as a common language to hold intercultural communication on virtual intercultural exchange platforms; therefore, they attach significance to learning about one another's cultural identity and tendencies to interpret the messages in conversations. Hence, ICC which refers to the capability of communicating with members of other societies and cultures through a foreign language (Byram, 1997) has gained momentum in the literature over the last decades.

Although ICC has been attributed importance in the literature and endeavoured to be incorporated in foreign language education curricula and classes across countries, most of the previous studies concentrated on enhancing intercultural awareness, sensitivity, and communicative competence of students in high school or university context through online technological exchanges (Chun, 2011; Hibbs, 2016; Hirotsu & Fujii, 2019; Solomon, 2019; Stockwell, 2016; Yang, 2018). However, the number of studies exploring the influence of telecollaborative practices on young learners' identity-construction, self-representation, and ICC remains insufficient in the academic field (Widodo, 2016). Moreover, digital storytelling (DST) is referred to as a component of verbal communication which prompts young learners to be active participants in the learning process (Elenein, 2019). It is also defined as a collective medium which necessitates the presence of narrators and an audience (Elenein, 2019). According to Norrick (2000), DST familiarizes unknown topics for young learners and forms dynamic communication

between them. However, even though DST has been valued and embraced by EFL instructors across nations due to its creation of reciprocity between learners and contributions to young learners' communication skills and learning psychology, the researcher has identified paucity in research to measure the effectiveness of the medium on young learners' cross-cultural communication skills through the implementation of multicultural telecollaborative projects. Therefore, the present study aims at contributing to the literature and suggesting a classroom-based practice to enhance young learners' ICC via telecollaborative DST.

1.3. Problem Statement

Globalization which refers to the unification and intercommunication of people, organizations, and communities worldwide (Wolf, 2014) has led to the emergence of social situations in which foreign language learners are obliged to communicate in a common language with the members of not only native but also non-native communities. With the world modifying into a co-dependent universal system, the position of the English language has commenced to evolve into a global lingua franca as an agent for cross-cultural interaction (Graddol, 2006). In consequence, the purpose of foreign language learning has shifted from mere development of learners' language skills to advancement of their ICC.

Byram's (1997, 2008) ICC model is constructed upon the juxtaposition of communicative competence and intercultural competence. According to Marczak (2014), the former refers to the improvement in learners' language-oriented competences to enable them to hold effective communication in line with sociolinguistic norms and rules whereas the latter involves affective, cognitive, action-governed, and educational elements to sustain operative intercultural communication. Based on the competences, ICC refers to the ability to launch proper and efficient communication in multicultural circumstances through exerting appropriate knowledge, attitudinal posture, and competences (Deardorff, 2006). Learners may possess advanced linguistic proficiency in the target language; nevertheless, they will remain unable to transmit their messages or interpret the meaning conveyed during the intercultural interplay if they do not possess cross-cultural awareness and knowledge. To this end, the more desired consequence of foreign language education is enabling learners to maintain the connection between their own cultural identities and

conversational meanings transmitted by the members of other cultures (Byram, 1997). Briefly, learners are expected to regulate effective communication with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds in the common language by triangulating their own cultural selfhood with the cultural norms of interlocutors through the strength of their ICC. Therefore, it prevails of significant importance for educational institutions to take action towards enhancing their learners' ICC from the earlier stages of formal training.

Even though importance is attached to the development of learners' ICC in this globalized world, and theoretical models have been proposed by senior researchers, there remains a practical gap in the literature. Most of the researchers have demonstrated a tendency towards measuring learners' cross-cultural sensitivity, intercultural awareness, and transcultural communication abilities through synchronous or asynchronous virtual intercultural exchange mediums in secondary or tertiary education contexts. However, the scholarly attention attributed to young learners regarding this subject matter is rather scarce in the ELT field. Moreover, although research volumes have commenced utilizing DST in the language learning process, the studies have primarily concentrated on the development of young learners' main and sub language skills (Sever, 2014; Ozer, 2016, Ucar, 2016) disregarding its possible strength to improve young learners' ICC via telecollaborative practices. DST directly correlates with 21st-century skills which are identified with the ubiquitous operation of technologies and multimedia materials (Sevilla Pavon & Nicolaou, 2017). It prompts learners to exert collaborative effort, resort to computer or mobile technologies, communicate their values and experiences, and develop social skills. In this respect, DST may act as a potent online intercultural exchange vehicle to promote young learners' ICC. As a consequence, the present study intends to offer a classroom-based practice to improve young learners' ICC through telecollaborative digital story productions for the aim of pioneering more academic endeavours on the subject in the Turkish EFL context.

1.4. Purpose of the Study

Individual development is a social process in which knowledge is built through bilateral communication (McKinley, 2015). Every individual is a social entity who constructs connections with the growing number of social associations, which form a personal identity in a collective fashion. Therefore, the primary purpose of the contemporary

language teaching pedagogy is to concentrate on improvement in learners' reciprocal recognition and indulgence, veneration for individuality and cultural variety through potent transcultural interaction (Council of Europe, 2001). In fact, it is a prerequisite for the recent foreign language education methodology to support the holistic development of learners' self-identity and character in the light of their enhancing cross-cultural experience.

Foreign language learners do not develop independent behavioural, attitudinal, and interactional systems in their cognition when they learn a novel language. On the contrary, they promote their ICC and evolve into plurilingual agents (Council of Europe, 2001). Chen and Starosa (1996) describe ICC as learners' capability to interpret culture-driven messages and to distinguish speakers' various individual characteristics in a social setting. Through transcultural communication in the foreign language, learners improve their linguistic skills and cultural understanding simultaneously and promote intercultural awareness and sensitivity. It renders them to adopt a fortified multifaceted self-identity, to promote the capacity of their mental faculty for continuous second language acquisition, and to develop acceptance and willingness towards intercultural experiences. Through ICC, learners not only improve their language skills but acquire a potent intercultural identity to decipher conveyed meanings and hold healthy relationships based on the genuine understanding of all interlocutors during cross-cultural communications.

The aforementioned arguments propose that linguistic knowledge does not suffice foreign language learners to clearly comprehend the verbal messages during authentic social interplays in this globalized world. Therefore, the role of ICC has come into prominence in foreign language teaching pedagogy. However, there remains a paucity in research to comprehend communicative needs and develop ICC, awareness, and sensitivity of young learners in the global extent even though the significance of the medium is well established in the literature. For this reason, this study derives its motivation from the scarcity of classroom-based virtual exchange practices concerning the development of the ICC of young learners and aims to offer telecollaborative DST medium as a cross-cultural instrument to enhance learners' ICC by assisting them to understand of their own identity, develop their knowledge of and attitude towards cultural differences across nations, and improve their interactional skills. Digital stories familiarize the uncharted contents and messages in young learners' minds. In this regard, the present research intends to benefit

from the facilitative function of DST as a virtual intercultural exchange practice and enable young learners to develop multicultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity (IS), and effective intercultural communication skills via telecollaborative digital story productions.

RQ1: To what extent telecollaborative DST exchanges foster the ICC of Turkish and Portuguese EFL young learners?

RQ1.1 To what extent does telecollaborative DST contribute to Turkish and Portuguese EFL young learners' own cultural identity and broaden their intracultural knowledge?

RQ1.2 What ICC domains (knowledge, attitude, skills of relating/ interpreting, skills of discovery/ interaction, and critical cultural awareness) do Turkish and Portuguese EFL young learners demonstrate through telecollaborative digital story exchanges?

RQ1.3 To what extent do Turkish and Portuguese EFL young learners develop these ICC domains through telecollaborative digital story exchanges?

RQ2: To what extent telecollaborative DST exchanges foster the IS of young learners?

RQ2.1 What perspective (ethnocentric or ethnorelative) do Turkish and Portuguese EFL young learners demonstrate towards the target culture prior to telecollaborative digital story exchanges?

RQ2.2 To what extent do telecollaborative digital story exchanges contribute to Turkish and Portuguese EFL young learners' IS from ethnocentric perspectives to ethnorelative perspectives?

RQ2.3 What perspective (ethnocentric or ethnorelative) do Turkish and Portuguese EFL young learners demonstrate towards the target culture after telecollaborative digital story exchanges?

1.5. Importance of the Study

In the contemporary world, the presence of approximately 6900 languages worldwide has brought about the inevitable necessity to establish cross-border communications with nations and cultures (Grein & Weigand, 2007). It is now disputed in the literature that cross-cultural diversities in this borderless world demand competence to mediate cultural variations in a proper fashion through employing language rules or pertaining efficiently to

otherness (Byram, 1997; Mirzaei & Forouzandeh, 2013). In this regard, the position of the English language has been upgraded from a mere foreign language of nations to a global lingua franca worldwide to address the requirement for a shared interactional medium across borders. The coined term English as Lingua Franca (ELF) has contributed to the shift from the understanding of interacting with only the native speakers of the English language to the perspective of using English as a common means of communication to form dialogues with non-native speakers of the language. This radical transition in perspective has been accompanied by the enhanced significance of development in learners' ICC to equip them with IS and knowledge to hold effective interaction with individuals accommodating across borders.

With the emergence of the ELF term and ICC concept, L2 researchers have commenced demonstrating interest in the cooperation between language and culture, suggesting that language reflects cultural matters in words and is actively constructed through cultural elements (Kramsch, 1998; Mirzaei & Forouzandeh, 2013). Therefore, its importance has been communicated in the ELT literature over the years (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2009; Neuliep, 2012; Teven, Richmond, McCroskey, & McCroskey, 2010). However, although Turkish researchers have acknowledged the prominence of ICC-oriented instruction in their respected studies (Atay, Kurt, Camlibel, Ersin, & Kaslioğlu, 2009; Eröz, 2020; Penbek, Yurdakul, & Cerit, 2009; Tuzcu Eken, 2018), the research volumes concentrating on ICC of younger students appear insufficient in the Turkish context (Güven, 2015). In a broader sense, notwithstanding the academic consensus respecting the significance of ICC integration to curricular plans and educational practices, its implementation to classroom activities and assessment procedures have remained scarce not only in the Turkish context but in other EFL contexts as well (Mirzaei & Forouzandeh, 2013). Therefore, the present study endeavours to address the practical gap not only in the Turkish context but in the global EFL literature and develop a classroom-based telecollaborative DST implementation to develop young learners' ICC through virtual DST exchanges. Moreover, this academic endeavour is significant since it aims at not only exposing young learners to the big C culture of the nations (e.g. holidays, art, cuisines, and celebrations), but also the small c culture of individuals (e.g. values, behaviours, and attitudes).

The enhanced importance of ICC has rendered researchers to utilize several Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) instruments such as telecollaboration mediums to

contribute to their students' intercultural posture. Nevertheless, the number of studies employing DST as an online transcultural exchange tool between nations is relatively limited in academic studies worldwide. To local context, the reporting of studies centering on the interchange of telecollaborative digital stories for young learners' ICC is insufficient in Turkey as well. According to Robin (2016, p. 18), DST triangulates the story narration process with the multimodality of technological instruments. It performs a critical role to reflect on experiences and acquire information from other producers' knowledge. It occupies learners with productive communication which assists them to build and rebuild their perceptions through scripts (Sola, 2016). Even though DST is a beneficial instrument for young learners to guide them to manifest their cultural identity and individual tenets via narrations, the previous research has interrogated its effectiveness on young learners' main and sub language skills, neglecting its possible potency for intercultural communication. In this respect, the current study is prominent for its effort to exploit DST as a virtual cross-cultural exchange vehicle to improve young learners' intercultural knowledge, awareness, and sensitivity.

1.6. Assumptions

Following the research's objectives and questions, the present study has been conducted at two state secondary schools located in Turkey and Portugal. This research has been implemented on the assumption that all participants have taken voluntary participation in the study. From this point of view, it is presumed that all research participants have performed their digital story assignments in accordance with a pre-determined schedule and through collaboration and sustained effort. It is also hypothecated that all research participants have understood all of the scale and interview questions and provided honest responses to them. The other conjecture in this study is the fact that all data collection instruments in the study have yielded accurate and reliable results due to their pre-analysis for validity and reliability.

1.7. Limitations

The universe of this research is all young learners studying in 5th-grade classrooms at state schools in Turkey and Portugal. The first limitation arises from the qualitative nature and small sample size of the study. In this study, the sample group is composed of 30 young learners selected from two secondary schools located in rural regions of Turkey and Portugal. Moreover, the study employs a mixed-methods methodology and triangulates qualitative data with quantitative data. However, the inclination of this research lies in the qualitative analysis since quantitative data have been utilized to support research findings. According to Smith and his colleagues (2009), qualitative research should be interpreted via theoretical judgements rather than generalization. Based on the aforementioned arguments, the research findings cannot be attributed to the whole universe due to the restriction in the number of participants and qualitative base on the thesis. The second limitation; on the other hand, is contingent on the intervention period. The current study has offered a 7-week digital story exchange program for young learners. Byram (1997) states that learners' self-development regarding their ICC is a lifelong process. To this end, the 7-week DST intervention provides a limited perspective for young learners' ICC improvement. In this respect, the researcher recommends longitudinal studies on the subject for further research in the field.

1.8. Operational Definitions

Lingua Franca (LF) is identified as a shared language utilized as a communication medium between communities who own different national languages (Mufwene, 1998)

English as Lingua Franca (ELF) refers to the employment of the English language among interlocutors who possess different mother tongues and select the language as the interaction medium for intelligible communication (Seidlhofer, 2013, p. 7).

Communicative Competence (CC) stands for the ability to negotiate on and execute acceptable social demeanours through the use of proper structures and sociolinguistic rules and necessitates active participation of the individual in the articulation of the target language (Canale & Swain, 1980)

Intercultural Competence (IC) refers to "an ability to interact in native language with people from another country and culture, drawing on knowledge about intercultural

communication, attitudes of interest in otherness and skills of interpreting, relating and discovering" (Byram, 1997, p.71).

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is the ability to be conscious of your own culture and humanity, to develop a capacity to inquire about the social conditions in your and others' contexts, and to be capable of interacting with other cultures effectively (Byram, 1997).

Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) is described as the practice of generating, interchanging, and comprehending the input, which assists to encipher, decipher, and convey messages through various digital technologies (December, 1996)

Telecollaboration, Virtual Exchange, or Online Intercultural Exchange (OIE) refers to the use of virtual interaction mediums to gather language learners accommodating across borders in order to enhance their target language proficiency and ICC through cooperative effort (O'Dowd, 2013)

Digital Storytelling (DST) is the unification of the traditional storytelling approach with digital multimodal components (Fokides, 2016, p. 100). It merges the art of narration with multimedia materials consisting of written documents, visual components, voice recordings, music, and video elements (Robin, 2016)

Big C culture is "synonymous with a general knowledge of literature and the arts" (Kramsch, 2013). It is concerned with literary productions, history, music, and art of nations.

Small c culture / Little c culture refers to not only the reflection of culture on individuals' behaviours and point of views conveyed through language, but acceptable cultural demeanours of non-native individuals in a host society as well (Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993).

Young Learners (YL) indicate the learner group whose ages range between 7 at which they start their primary school education and 12 at which they move onto their secondary school education (Read, 2011).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The current chapter begins with defining the concept of culture and describing the role of culture in FLE. Followingly, it proceeds with designating the notion of ICC and elucidating its historical background and frameworks constructed on it. Then, it prescribes telecollaboration and explicates its goal framework, pedagogy, and models. Afterwards, it introduces the medium of DST and discusses its historical background and advantages and disadvantages. Finally, the chapter is concluded with the related studies conducted in the literature.

2.2 Defining Culture

The concept of ‘culture’ has an extensive meaning, which may encompass nearly all facets of human life (Sasani, 2018). Therefore, scholars from different academic backgrounds have endeavoured to generate definitions to describe the notion effectively. Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) revealed more than 160 formulations for the concept of ‘culture’ at the beginning of the 1950s, and the number of definitions has increased in the literature dramatically ever since. There exist two opposing perspectives of culture labelled as essentialist and non-essentialist perspectives. From the essentialist mindset, culture is characterized as a tangible social occurrence that mirrors the inherent nature of a certain population (Holliday, 2000). The essentialist view is nation-specific; hence, it aims to

elucidate human behaviour via nationwide culture (Wang, 2018). For instance, it claims that Turkish people have a particular behaviour or habit because they were born and raised in Turkey. On the other hand, the non-essentialist mindset holds a more flexible and active understanding of culture and evaluates the term from a more generic point of view. It construes 'culture' as a dynamic notion exploited by various individuals at separate time frames to correspond to objectives of identity, diplomacy, and knowledge (Holliday, 2000). As opposed to its essentialist counterpart, this view does not correlate individuals' actions with their belonging to a certain nation. It concentrates on how individuals exploit culture in accordance with their own purposes and how they blend in a community (Wang, 2018). Since the world is investing in intercultural dialogue more often than before nowadays, many countries are transforming into multicultural and heterogeneous entities. In this respect, the essentialist view falls short of defining the term 'culture' thoroughly with its culturist stance, and the non-essentialist perspective gains more approval in the academic community worldwide.

The essentialist and non-essentialist dichotomy has led to the proposition of numerous comprehensive definitions of the concept. Bowers (1992) perceives the concept of culture as a hereditary treasure in which people carry common memoirs, symbols, figures of speech, proverbs, and legends. Kramsch (1998) describes the term as belonging to a discourse community that possesses collective social centres and experiences, and joint aspirations. The researcher (2012) highlights that culture must be regarded as a form of understanding, which is associative, historical, and language-governed. Similarly, Ting-Toomey (1999) defines it as a compound reference frame that includes motifs of established practices, doctrines, values, rules, and messages shared by representatives of a social group in differing extents. Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino and Kohler (2003) broaden this definition and state that culture is not only an intricate pattern of thoughts, acts, attitudes, judgments, customs, habits, ceremonies, and living styles of individuals who compose a cultural population, but a sophisticated system of handicrafts they created and organizations they built as well. Correspondingly, Spencer-Oatey (2008) points out that culture is a vague series of beliefs and moral principles, personal orientations, convictions, protocols, agendas, and behavioural practices, which remain prevailing among a social group and affect each representative's own way of acting as well as their understanding of others' ways of acting. As it is seen, the definitions of 'culture' share

common terminologies in FL literature. However, no joint resolution exists for the single definition of the term in the academic community (Sewell, 2005).

The lack of common consensus of a single definition stems from the complexity of the concept. Hence, Weaver (1993) introduces *the iceberg theory* in order to provide a visual illustration for the concept of culture and facilitate its comprehension (Liu, 2019). Weaver (1993) associates culture with an iceberg whose small fraction is above the waterline and discernible to the human eye whereas whose larger fraction is below the waterline and unobservable. In this model, the invisible fraction of the iceberg lays the foundation of culture. According to Weaver (1993), the visible part is labelled as surface culture that consists of tangible and explicitly studied elements of culture such as art, cuisine, music, and fashion whereas the invisible part is defined as deep culture that consists of abstract and implicitly acquired elements of culture such as beliefs, values, attitudes, and opinions. In other words, surface culture concentrates on human behaviour while deep culture is concerned with affective and cognitive factors (Güneş & Mede, 2019). Zelenková (2012) argues that deep culture holds more significance since its factors drive the interactional behaviour in surface culture. One interesting facet of this model is the illustration of the language factor in both surface and deep culture fractions. The rationale behind this bi-categorical illustration is that culture is not only physically perceived by communicators during interactions but used as a vehicle to uncover the deep features of culture such as attitudes and viewpoints as well (Szuba, 2016). The cultural iceberg model of Weaver has led to the emergence of the Big C and small c dichotomy in EFL literature. Big C culture projects with surface culture in the iceberg analogy and represents a series of evidence and data pertaining to traditions, celebrations, geography, literature, history, and pedagogics (Lee, 2009). It is the conventionally lectured culture of a nation in order to sustain its continuum (Kramsch, 2012a). Small c culture; on the other hand, overlaps with deep culture in the model and embraces unperceivable components such as native speakers' demeanours, attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives (Kramsch, 2012a). This culture is articulated through actions, written and spoken utterances, and proper language management; hence, it determines the admission of an individual into a new social group (Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993). As it is portrayed in the iceberg analogy, deep and surface fractions of the iceberg are interrelated; hence, foreign language instructors must engage their learners in both Big C and small c cultures for effective cultural learning.

2.2.1 Culture and Foreign Language Education

The terms “language” and “culture” have different meanings; however, there exists an inseparable and reciprocal bond between them. The former term ‘language’ indicates the symbolic portrayal of a person’s socio cultural upbringing, opinions, worldview, life orientation, and lifestyle, whereby cultural transmission occurs between generations (Jiang, 2010). The latter term ‘culture’ refers to a shared system of principles for understanding, reckoning, assessing, and behaving (Kramsch, 1998). According to Mitchell and Myles (2004), language and culture are processed jointly by reinforcing the improvement of one another. In other words, language functions as the keeper and transmitter of culture (Liu, 2019). Therefore, it allows people to become a member of a cultural group, define and negotiate on its culture, and communicate with interlocutors belonging to that culture (Liu, 2019). On the other hand, culture tailors language by providing context for individuals to form relations and enabling them to attach deeper meanings to its signs, symbols, and expressions. Risager (2005) coins the term “*languaculture*” to emphasize this bilateral relationship between the terms. According to her (2007), language and culture have neither essentialist dichotomous orientation nor conflicting relationship but possess close and inextricable connection. In this respect, foreign language education should incorporate cultural dimension into its educational policy in order to eliminate the peril of converting learners into ‘*fluent fools*’ (Bennett, 1997, p. 16) who have thorough linguistic knowledge but become unsuccessful to grasp the philosophical and communicative magnitude of the language (Liu, 2019).

The method of integrating cultural dimension into foreign language curriculum has been a debated issue among scholars and educators for years. The perspective has witnessed a radical development from modernist orientation to post-modernist orientation with the contributions of academia through the years. The foreign language education field initially embraced the modernist perspective of culture. Prior to the 1970’s, culture was limited to fine arts and literature; hence, it was explicitly instructed in foreign language classrooms to render learners to translate foreign literary documents into their own language with excellence. However, in the 70s and ’80s, the term ‘culture’ broadened its meaning and was used synonymously with the lifestyle and daily actions of national communities, which were congregated by shared pasts, recollections, and ambitions (Kramsch, 2012a). Therefore, it was considered as the arbitrary constituent of language education. In this

period, foreign language learners acquired the target language via indirect exposure to the target speech community (Kramsch, 2012a). Specifically, they received pragmatic formal training on culture in order to adjust or travel to a country. The conflict resolution after the Cold War and the acceleration of globalization induced the incorporation of intercultural dimension into FL instruction in the 1990s (Liu, 2019) and led to the transition from modernist to post-modernist mindset. Language teachers were expected to bear both the target culture and their students' heritage culture in mind (Kramsch & Zhu Hua, 2016) and to shape their teaching practices accordingly in this decade. Consequently, the impact of multiculturalism and the advent of computer-mediated communication in the 21st century has resulted in a paradigm shift towards postmodernist orientation (Risager, 2006). Since language learners share different viewpoints and beliefs, evaluate the social occurrences from different perspectives, and possess distinctive aspirations, post-modernist perspective views culture as not a country frontier entity, but a dynamic irregular measure. In this perspective, language learners and native speakers interpret the meaning of events collaboratively and construct their understanding together through intercultural dialogue. Therefore, both parties experience transformations in their cultural boundaries and learn how to decentre from their own selves to understand others.

Modernist perspective has embraced the static view of culture whereas post-modernist perspective has adopted the dynamic approach in foreign language instruction. The static view regards culture as factual information about and tangible outputs of a country that are processed by learners (Kramsch, 1993). This view considers culture and language as unrelated constructs (Piątkowska, 2015). It only presents cultural information to FL learners and overlooks the progressive nature of cultures (Ho, 2009). On the other hand, the dynamic view associates culture with a series of traditions which individuals occupy themselves in collaboratively (Kramsch, 1993). This view emphasizes the interdependence of culture and language as opposed to its static counterpart. The static view prevails in knowledge-based and contrastive approaches of cultural learning whereas the dynamic view is highlighted in more contemporary post-modernist approaches labelled as communicative language teaching (CLT) and intercultural communicative competence (ICC). These cultural learning approaches are explained below.

Approaches with modernist perspective and static view:

- *Knowledge-based approach* views culture and language as two isolated spheres of foreign language education. This approach attaches more significance to language competence than cultural competence since it regards cultural learning as a vehicle to enhance learners' understanding of the target language. Knowledge-based approach contributed to the formulation of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) in foreign language education with its hypothesis that individuals learn the target language culture so as to give meaning to its literary works (Thanasoulas 2001).
- *Contrastive Approach* focuses on drawing FL learners' concentration on similarities and differences between their heritage culture and the target culture (Thanasoulas 2001). This approach attempts to improve learners' target culture proficiency via getting them to analyze the relations and assisting them to forge a bond between both cultures (Piątkowska, 2015).

Approaches with post-modernist perspective and dynamic view:

- *Communicative language teaching (CLT)* supports the inextricability of culture and language domains in foreign language education. This approach refuses to build its theory on the conventional four-skill framework of language learning and accentuates the role of grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competences to be communicatively competent in social interplays (Savignon, 2001). CLT attaches considerable emphasis on sociocultural appropriateness by equipping learners with the rules of proper turn-taking, effective non-verbal behaviour, and accurate intonation patterns (Savignon, 2001).
- *Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)* is a contemporary approach which aims to raise learners' awareness of the indivisible relationship between language and culture and to qualify them to interact with interlocutors worldwide (Ho, 2009). Since English language is selected as the medium of communication both among native and non-native speakers across nations, this approach does not internalize the native speaker model (Marczak, 2010). Instead, it intends to have learners acquire the intercultural competence to step out of their own reality and gain a sense of otherness for the aim of communicating with speakers from different sociocultural backgrounds effectively.

The modernist approaches have their shortcomings. Knowledge-based approach fails to recognize the intercultural dimension of communication (Piątkowska, 2015) and reduces cultural learning to fine arts and literature. Contrastive approach; on the other hand, minimizes the prominence of cultural learning since it allows only for comparison between one's own culture and the target culture and rules out the skills of assessing, negotiating, and interpreting (Piątkowska, 2015). Both approaches also concentrate on surface-level culture and ignore deep-level cultural learning, which cannot be comprehended via studying solely factual information about the target culture or only examining the contrasts between heritage and target cultures (Piątkowska, 2015). As opposed to modernist perspectives, communicative language teaching holds an interactive understanding of culture. It focuses on cultural awareness and stresses the role of sociolinguistic appropriateness in social dialogues. However, this post-modernist approach fails to satisfy the needs of interlocutors during intercultural interactions. Therefore, the current thesis focuses on ICC, which responds to the transcultural communicative needs of individuals in this contemporary globalized world.

2.3 Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)

Scholars and theoreticians have generated a wide range of definitions to describe ICC which is also known as multicultural competence, cross-cultural awareness, cultural intelligence, or global citizenship depending on the field of expertise, throughout the years (Deardorff, 2011). Byram (1997) points out that effective communication is not solely constructed on information exchange, it is based on how our utterances are perceived and translated into other cultural contexts. Therefore, Byram (1997) defines ICC as the ability to be conscious of one's own culture and humanity, to develop a capacity to inquire about the social conditions in his and others' contexts, and to be capable of interacting with other cultures effectively. Deardorff (2006) perceives ICC in a continuum and highlights that it commences with respect, openness and curiosity and includes self-consciousness and abilities to listen, examine, critique, assess, and associate with others. These abilities contribute to the development of effective communication skills and appropriate attitudes in intercultural circumstances externally, and the establishment of empathy and flexibility within ethnorelative mindset internally (Deardorff, 2006). Fantini (2006), on the other hand, defines ICC as a combination of competences required to communicate efficiently

and conveniently with people who are linguistically and culturally distinct from one's self. Ho (2009) identifies ICC as a more comprehensive approach which puts significant emphasis on awareness of the integrity of language and culture and the need for cross-cultural communication. Marczak (2010) suggests that ICC is the ability of learners to notice cultural variety, utilize communicative skills beyond their own cultural zone, and engage in intercultural communication with learners from diverse cultural backgrounds. Sun (2013) characterizes ICC as the ability to interact with people from a wide range of social and cultural backgrounds competently and judiciously. Huber and Reynolds (2014) construe ICC as the triangulation of knowledge, attitudes, skills, and critical cultural awareness which allows a person, either individually or collectively with others, to be conscious of and accept individuals being raised in different cultural systems from that of himself, to provide convenient, respectful, and meaningful responses when communicating with these individuals, to build effective and constructive accord with them, and to make sense of his own personal and culturally-shaped perspectives by experiencing the cultural differences. As it is seen, the field of Foreign Language Teaching (FLT) has recognized the significance of linguistic and cultural variances in the last few decades. Therefore, theoreticians and scholars have administered a wide range of related definitions for ICC throughout the literature. Synthesizing the definitions above, ICC will be described as the process of being aware of one's own cultural identity and cultural variances in the globalised world, developing compound attitudes of respect, tolerance, and appreciation, and exerting the rules of politeness and formality to interact accurately and conveniently with individuals from different cultural backgrounds in this study.

Although ICC has been associated with cross-cultural awareness in its broad sense, the term "culture" itself has been divided into its components and explained in detail in FLT literature to provide a broader understanding of the concept. Edward T. Hall (1976) described the concept of culture in two dimensions with Iceberg Theory and specified that the surface structure of the iceberg symbolizes conscious aspects of culture (food and sports) whereas the deep structure mirrors unconscious aspects of culture (perceptions, faith and belief). Similarly, Weaver (1993) explained culture with the same theory stating that the tip of the iceberg consists of concrete elements such as art, music and literature and represents explicitly learned culture while the submerged part of the iceberg embodies abstract features such as justice, beliefs and opinions and represents implicitly learned culture. Therefore, ICC requires more than surface-level cross-cultural knowledge such as

folk traditions and customs. It necessitates triangulation of deep and surface structure knowledge in order to adapt our actions and behaviours for our collocutors and maintain appropriate and meaningful interaction between interlocutors. As it is seen, ICC competence has been described by emphasizing personal, cultural and universal dimensions of the term and highlighting the cultural magnitude of the Iceberg Analogy in the EFL literature. However, the exponential growth in the number of definitions of ICC in literature has urged some researchers to overcome the conceptual confusion. Hammer, Bennet, and Wiseman (2003) underlined the existence of a concept error regarding the function of ICC; thus, distinguished between *intercultural sensitivity* and *intercultural competence* to amend the misconception. From their point of view, IS is the recognition and experience of cultural differences whereas intercultural competence is the skill of behaving and contemplating in an interculturally appropriate manner. IS is learners' willingness to comprehend, appreciate and acknowledge the intercultural differences (Chen & Starosta, 1998). On the other hand, communicating in an additional language, constructing a social relationship with a person, and developing effective communication although that person has a different mindset represent ICC (Douglas & Rosvold, 2018).

2.3.1. Historical Background of ICC

The literature review highlights that the initial academic productions on intercultural competence date back to the 1960s (Arasaratnam, 2016) when academicians perceived the need to communicate with a distinctive culture and experience what is unfamiliar for them (East, 2012). The term was probably introduced to academia by researchers who aimed at drawing on experiences of Westerners working overseas (e.g. Overseas Technical Operators and Peace Crop Volunteers) in the 1950s and 1960s. The studies in this era investigated the components of intercultural competence in the context of acclimatization to a foreign culture and focused on factors such as awareness, acceptance, cohesion, and adaptability (Nadeem, Mohammed, & Dalib, 2018). The rationale of these researches was to reduce the communication gap between interlocutors from diverse cultural backgrounds and to present pragmatic and permanent solutions to intercultural communication problems. The volumes of research increased in number and quality in the 1970s when Hymes' (1967) Communicative Competence theory was adapted to foreign language education contexts. Hymes' theory emphasized the social dimension of the language

acquisition process and tried to awaken a sociolinguistic interest in language use (Whyte, 2019). Hymes' propositions led to the development of the first comprehensive theory of Communicative Competence by Canale and Swain in North America and Communicative Ability Model by van Ek in Europe respectively in the 1980s (Byram, 1997). Drawing on the limitations of these frameworks, Byram (1997) introduced his ICC Model in the late 1990s by taking the intercommunication needs of individuals into consideration, and his proposition motivated other prominent researchers to contribute to the field of foreign language education with their own conceptualizations and theories in the 21st century. The present chapter details the upper-mentioned academic journey from communicative competence to ICC.

The theory of Communicative Competence was proposed by Hymes in 1967 in response to the linguist Noam Chomsky's Linguistic Competence theory. Chomsky (1965) correlated his views with Saussure's theoretical linguistic dichotomy of *langue* and *parole* and coined the concepts of *competence* and *performance* in his theory. According to the researcher (1965), linguistic competence refers to the innate language knowledge which allows individuals to comprehend and utter an absolute number of statements while linguistic performance indicates the authentic use of language in tangible circumstances. In this theory, it is impossible for linguistic performance to mirror the whole conceptual system of language owing to psychological or physiological inducements. Hence, linguistic competence is attributed more emphasis over linguistic performance. As it is seen, Chomskian competence associated language development with inborn mental systems and rejected the social sphere of language acquisition. For this reason, Hymes refuted Chomsky's theory from a sociolinguistic point of view. The scholar (1967) claimed that effective communication goes beyond the ability to exert broad grammatical knowledge and requires the knowledge of sociocultural appropriateness dependent on contexts. In fact, grammaticalness and appropriateness are acquired by language learners in a joint fashion. Thus, language acquisition relies on communicative competence which embodies the knowledge of "when and where to speak, how to address someone in what manner and what to speak about with whom" (Hymes, 1972, p. 277). Hymes' (1967) model of Communicative Competence, which was originally launched to explain the process of first language acquisition, was incorporated into the learning goals and objectives of foreign language programmes in the 1970s. However, the model remained limited in the field of foreign language education since it focused on social interaction in a monolingual group

and ignored the importance of cultural competence in transcultural circumstances (Byram, 1997).

Since Hymes' conceptualization fell short to address foreign language teaching, the notion of Communicative Competence was interpreted by Canale and Swain in North America and by van Ek in Europe in the 1980s subsequently. To begin with North American context, Canale and Swain (1980) viewed the concept of communicative competence as an abstract mechanism of knowledge and skill required to communicate meaningfully. In their theory, knowledge stands for one's cognizant and incognizant knowledge about language and its use and has three forms: knowledge of inherent linguistic rules, knowledge of language use in social interactions, and knowledge of connecting statements in cohesive and coherent fashion (Bagarić & Mihaljević Djigunović, 2007). Skill; on the other hand, signifies in what manner a person can exploit the knowledge in real-life interactions (Bagarić & Mihaljević Djigunović, 2007). Relying on the concepts and their interpretation above, the Canadian researchers developed a comprehensive communicative competence theory which consists of three communicative competences in line with grammatical competence. In their model, grammatical competence includes the knowledge of phonology, orthography, morphology, and syntax. Sociolinguistic competence refers to the utilization of appropriate sociocultural rules in accordance with different communicative functions. Discourse competence encompasses the rules of cohesion (how words and phrases are united accurately to convey meaning) and coherence (how a text is constructed to attain logical unity and organisation). In addition, strategic competence reflects the use of compensatory strategies to modify the text for the target audience and to overcome communication gaps. Canale (1983) states that their concept of communicative competence is not a model but a theoretical construct since models provide a detailed representation of how their components function together; however, their framework does not demonstrate the interactional network among its components. In the European context; on the other hand, Van Ek (1986) hypothesized that foreign language education does not merely focus on improving the communicative capacity of learners but concentrates on their social and individual growth as well. Therefore, the researcher launched the Model of Communicative Ability which consists of six competences: linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, strategic competence, sociocultural competence, and social competence. The first four competences in this model overlap with the constructs of Canale and Swain's (1980) theory even though the researchers formulated

their frameworks in an independent fashion (Byram, 1997). To begin with linguistic competence, it represents one's ability to understand and generate sensible statements formulated in line with the accurate utilization of language rules. Sociolinguistic competence pinpoints one's capacity to use language in a convenient fashion by considering the factors such as the social context of communication, the relationships between interlocutors, and their interactional objectives. Discourse competence suggests the ability to employ suitable cohesion and coherence principles to create and make sense of written documents. Lastly, strategic competence indicates the skill to use communication strategies to overcome interactional barriers. The remaining competences in Van Ek's model; however, broaden the meaning of communicative competence by concentrating on attitudinal and behavioural aspects of foreign language learning. In his model, sociocultural competence refers to the ability to be familiar with different cultural contexts and frames, and social competence means the willingness, confidence and proficiency to interact with others.

Byram (1997) selected the Model of Communicative Ability as the theoretical basis of his model of ICC due to its elaborateness. The researcher criticized Van Ek's conceptualization of communicative competence since it supported the native speaker norm in foreign language education. According to Byram (1997), Van Ek apt to perceive learners as near-native speakers since sociocultural competence requires a certain degree of closeness with the target social context. This native speaker norm not only poses an unattainable target and results in failure but also creates an improper type of competence since it pushes learners to abandon their own language to assimilate into another (Byram, 1997). Considering the shortcomings of the previous Communicative Competence theories, Byram advanced the theory of ICC in 1997. From his perspective, ICC does require neither cultural assimilation nor imitation. It requires fostering awareness of one's own culture and identity first, then developing the capacity to differentiate cultural variances and interacting with other cultures appropriately. In other words, the motive of his ICC model is to assist learners to relativize with one's own culture and develop a certain level of comprehension towards other cultures. Since Byram's framework addresses the inter communicative needs of and identity concerns in the globalized world, it has exerted significant influence on foreign language programmes and their curricular objectives over the last decades (Hoff, 2020). His model has provoked the development of

other comprehensive ICC models to respond to the complexities of cross-cultural communication in the 21st century.

2.3.2. ICC Models

The concept of ICC has been negotiated and interpreted from different perspectives over the years. It has led to the development of several ICC models.

2.3.2.1. The Behavioural Model of ICC

Ruben's Behavioural Model of ICC functions as one of the primordial theoretical frameworks to explore the concept of intercultural communication competence. Ruben (1976) begins justifying his model with the proposal that the evaluation of outcomes remains as the iterative concern of transcultural training. In fact, deciding on a suitable learning programme for learners, establishing selection measures in accordance with their intentions, and designating how the existence and non-existence of these measures can be evaluated with high validity and reliability prevail of notable importance. Once the outcomes of the assessment impact the decisions taken for learners and the assessment of the education programme itself, this concern gains even more significance. To this end, Ruben (1976) declares two competences necessary for enhancing learners' ICC levels: *verbal-cognitive competence* and *behavioural competence*. Verbal-cognitive competence represents one's ability to comprehend and define factors, measures, and concerns that should be taken into consideration to clarify and foresee competent operation in specific circumstances (Ruben, 1976). Behavioural competence; on the other hand, implies one's capability to exhibit socially convenient and effective behaviours (Ruben, 1976). However, the knowledge of interactional processes, verbal and non-verbal communication patterns, cultural norms and practices, and dialogic strategies does not directly yield the capacity to behave effectively and appropriately in dialogic exchanges. There may be observed inconsistency between verbal-cognitive competence and behavioural competence since the categories in learners' cognition may not be able to be reflected in their demeanours. In this regard, Ruben (1976) concentrates on the behavioural dimension of ICC and introduces a behavioural assessment method to evaluate the training outcomes thoroughly. His method focuses on systematized observation and investigation of learners' behaviour in consonance with 7 pre-identified measures (Ruben, 1976; Ruben

& Kealey, 1979). Ruben and Kealey (1979) state that displaying these measures in contrived or natural observations render it possible for learners to display similar demeanours in future circumstances. The predetermined measures are explained below.

- *Display of respect* refers to the skill of treating other interlocutors with respect and kindness (Ruben, 1976; Ruben & Kealey, 1979). This behavioural dimension is communicated through making eye contact, using nonverbal signals and body language accurately, setting the tone, and exhibiting curiosity towards the conveyed subject during social dialogues (Chen, 1992; Ruben, 1976).
- *Interaction posture* is defined as the skill of reacting and replying to other interlocutors in an explanatory, unprejudiced, and nonconflicting manner to sustain effective intercultural communication (Ruben, 1976; Ruben & Kealey, 1979). The non-argumentative behaving mode facilitates the construction of a positive communication climate and enhances interlocutors' attachment to the dialogue.
- *Orientation to knowledge* posits that individuals convey their reality with different terminology. However, some individuals demonstrate the tendency to regard their judgments as credible only for themselves whereas others perceive their understanding and knowledge as credible for every person (Ruben, 1976; Ruben & Kealey, 1979). This dimension presumes that when learners acknowledge that there exist different right answers and behaviours for everyone, adaptation to other cultures accelerates.
- *Empathy* indicates the ability to comprehend others' feelings, perceptions, and experiences as if these sentiments, opinions and experiences belonged to them. Individuals possess different emphatic orientations. Individuals with high empathic orientation show a deeper understanding of their partners and establish more productive communication compared to the ones with low orientation.
- *Self-oriented role behaviour* suggests that communicators operate in different roles during social interactions. They may indulge in group activities and problem-solving tasks which contain launching new ideas, asking for information, requesting an explanation, or assessing viewpoints functions (Ruben, 1976; Ruben & Kealey, 1979). They may also engage in relationship constructing tasks which include cooperation, negotiation, regulating the equality of participation and attaining resolution functions (Ruben, 1976; Ruben & Kealey, 1979). The capacity

to perform well in both role modes in equalized or periodic manner promotes the success of intercultural interactions.

- *Interaction management* represents the skill to take turns in conversations and open and close discussions through assessing conversationalists' wishes and requirements (Ruben, 1976; Ruben & Kealey, 1979; Tennekoon, 2015). Turn-taking, which takes place when the speaker and listener roles shift reciprocally and cyclically between interlocutors, acts as a significant sign of other-directedness and contributes to the success of intercultural communication (Ruben & Kealey, 1979).
- *Tolerance for ambiguity* is described as the capacity to display slight uneasiness and apprehension towards unfamiliar and obscure circumstances (Ruben, 1976). Even though most individuals respond to new situations with marginal unpleasantness, some individuals can acclimate to them with ease. Extreme uneasiness leads to aggression and resentment; thus, hamper the effectiveness of intercultural exchanges. Therefore, this dimension holds importance to maintain successful cross-cultural dialogue.

2.3.2.2. Multidimensional Model of ICC (MMICC)

Byram's Multidimensional ICC Model is constructed on van Ek's Model of Communicative Ability (1986) which is comprised of six competences: linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, strategic competence, sociocultural competence, and social competence. In this model, van Ek endeavoured to strengthen the socio-cultural domain of foreign language learning since the cultural sphere received slight attention in comparison to the sociolinguistic domain due to the influence of speech act theory and discourse analysis in the foreign language learning process (Byram, 1997). The researcher stressed not only the significance of communication skills, but also the importance of learner autonomy, understanding of sociocultural contexts, and social competency so as to sustain meaningful social dialogue between interlocutors from different sociolinguistic backgrounds. However, van Ek's framework demonstrated an inclination towards presenting the native speaker as a model for learners due to its definitions of linguistic and sociolinguistic competences. The framework encouraged learners to produce statements with conventional meaning which refers to the meaning

attached to a statement by native speakers in a regular interaction (Byram, 1997). Kramsch (1993) criticized the native speaker model in this framework by stating that van Ek's proposition endows the authority of the communication solely to the native speakers. Moreover, Byram (1997) reviewed the native speaker approach negatively by pointing out that it sets an unachievable target and imminent failure for foreign language learners. In this regard, Byram (1997) differentiated between 'being bicultural' and 'acting interculturality'. In his definition, biculturalism is the organic acquisition of one's own ancestry culture and the culture of the society they live in while interculturality is the process of converting one into a cultural negotiator through academic instruction (Awada, 2020). According to Byram (1997), the more judicious result of foreign language education is to raise learners who have the ability to mediate between their own cultural judgments, perceptions and dispositions and those of their conversationalists. Hence, interculturality lies at the heart of foreign language learning inasmuch as it prompts learners to engage in attainable learning outcomes in bilingual education (Feng, 2009).

In addition to the incongruity between 'being bicultural' and 'acting interculturality', Byram labels another dichotomy between the tourist and the sojourner in his model so as to highlight the position of interculturality in foreign language education. The tourist is someone who visits nonnative territories to enhance their understanding of foreign societies, practices, and relics with the purpose of enhancing their contemporary lifestyle without drastically changing it (Belz, 2007). However, the sojourner is a person who contributes to a community and questions its axiomatic and instinctive judgments, acts, and meanings, and whose own judgments, acts, meanings are consecutively questioned and developed (Belz, 2007; Byram, 1997) through cross-cultural interaction. While the tourist does not change through his experiences, the sojourner develops his ability to analyze and augment his own and others' status. According to Byram (1997), it is the characteristics of the sojourner that form intercultural competence which is the essential and authoritative element of the foreign language learning process. Therefore, Byram's MMICC acknowledges the overarching objective of foreign language instruction as building and retaining interplays across cultures. This multimodal model concentrates on learners' engagement in artefacts and phenomena from different cultures and their ability to intercede in transcultural exchanges effectively (Hoff, 2014). Hence, the reciprocal interaction between 'self' and 'other' constitutes the crux of this model. Byram's framework relies on the elements of the philosophical concept '*Bildung*' (Hoff, 2014)

which refers to committing oneself in a constant and lifetime course of development from unknown to known, repeating the process, and improving the knowledge of himself and the world (Gustavsson 1998). Accordingly, the notion of *Bildung* is connected to individual development through personal efforts and interactions with diverse cultural entities. Based on the *Bildung* theory, Byram's model (1997) stresses the significance of knowing one's own heritage culture and learning about other cultures respectively, mediating the conflicts between these cultures, and developing their own worldview.

MMICC regards language learning as a reciprocal, communicative, and purposeful process. It constitutes 5 factors which are addressed as '5 Savoirs': *Savoir* (Knowledge), *Savoir Comprendre* (Interpreting/Relating Skills), *Savoir s'engager* (Critical Cultural Awareness), *Savoir Apprendre/faire* (Discovering/Interacting Skills), and *Savoir être* (Attitudes) (Byram, 2008) to prompt learners to introduce and discuss on different perspectives and promote their intercultural identity. According to Byram (1997):

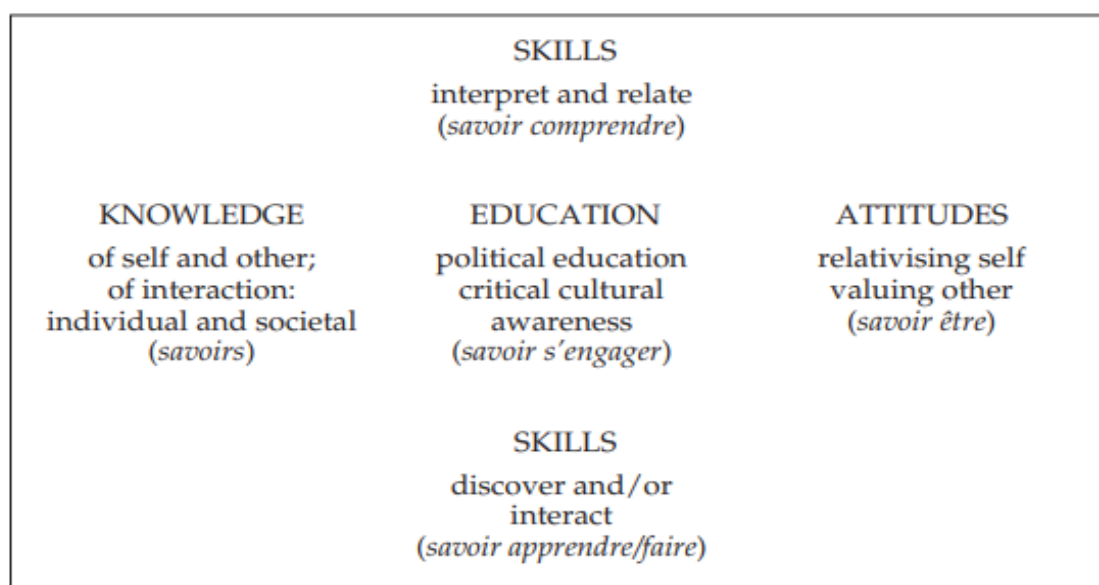


Figure 1. Factors in intercultural communication. Byram, M. (2008). *From Foreign Language Education to Education for Intercultural Citizenship*. Multilingual Matters Limited.

1. *Savoir* (Knowledge) is explained under two sub-categories as the knowledge of one's own culture and his interlocutors' cultures and the knowledge of communicational patterns. The former represents one's knowledge of theories, practices and outcomes within social groups in one's own culture; and theoretical,

practical and resultative variances in other cultures. The latter category; on the other hand, demonstrates the awareness of the rules of politeness and interactional strategies to overcome miscommunication.

2. *Savoir être (Attitudes)* stands for the interest and acceptance, willingness to adjourn scepticism and false judgments towards foreign cultures. This factor also highlights the readiness to cease belief in one's heritage culture's perspectives and practices via examining them from other interlocutors' point of views. Specifically, *savoir être* suggests one's enthusiasm to search for and seize the opportunity to employ himself in otherness. It demonstrates one's eagerness to explore different viewpoints and discuss known and unknown incidents both in one's own culture and in different cultures. Moreover, it indicates one's state of readiness to adapt to and communicate with a foreign culture and his preparedness to apply the rules of verbal and non-verbal interaction during reciprocal intercultural exchanges.
3. *Savoir Comprendre (Interpreting/Relating Skills)* signifies one's ability to scrutinize a document or a phenomenon from different cultures, clarifying it, and associating it to a document or a phenomenon in one's own culture. In other words, this component highlights the necessity of the competency to recognize monocentric viewpoints in documents or phenomena, determine the spheres of misconception and communication impairments during a social interplay and describe them in accordance with the cultural systems of the interlocutors, and arbitrate between contradictory evaluations of documents and phenomena. *Savoir Comprendre* is based on the exploitation of the existing knowledge of individuals in order to interpret the events and documents. Moreover, it is generally restrained to written endeavours since it does not necessitate a reciprocal interaction with a speaker.
4. *Savoir Apprendre/faire (Discovering/Interacting Skills)* is the ability to obtain knowledge of a culture and its customs and to use this acquired knowledge, necessary attitude, and related skills during an authentic social dialogue. *Savoir apprendre/faire* intercedes when individuals have little to no background knowledge regarding the foreign culture they are communicating with. This factor

represents one's capability to draw on 'instrumental' or 'interpretative' knowledge of values, meanings, and demeanours from documents and dialogues. Instrumental knowledge is acquired when learners are obliged to interact with a foreign culture directly through travelling or moving to the country. Interpretative knowledge; on the other hand, is gained out of curiosity and interest towards a foreign culture without forming any personal contact with the members of the country.

5. *Savoir s'engager (Critical Cultural Awareness)* is defined as one's ability to analyze one's own heritage culture and other cultures with regard to specific evaluation principles. In other words, *savoir s'engager* requires learners to pinpoint and explain the implicit and explicit notions in documents and phenomena both in their ancestry culture and foreign cultures, to carry out a critical examination of these documents and phenomena, and to communicate interculturally on the basis of explicit evaluative principles. Byram (1997) posits that learners with critical cultural awareness become conscious of the probable disagreement between their own point of view and the perspectives of their culturally distinct interlocutors and determine a joint set of evaluative principles to analyze the documents and phenomena in both cultures. According to the scholar, these learners are still capable of mediating between both cultures in the face of a failure to determine evaluative criteria.

Even though the MMICC is not constructed upon a hierarchical structure, the first two constituents of the model, *savoir (knowledge)* and *savoir être (attitudes)*, are prerequisites for the development of the remaining factors in the framework. Moreover, learners' demonstration of the traits defined in the aforementioned *knowledge, attitudes, interpreting / relating skills, and discovering / interacting skills* sections launches the threshold level of ICC. That is to say, the unobservance of these traits signifies that learners lack a measurable level of intercultural competence (Tecedor & Vasseur, 2020). Although knowledge and attitude components in the model act as preconditions for the promotion of the skills necessary for intercultural encounters, these components do not have a straightforward cause and effect relationship. On the contrary, there remains an interconnection between knowledge, attitude, and skills components. That is, the improvement in knowledge and attitude contributes to the development of related skills while the development of skills enables learners to acquire more sociolinguistic and

cultural knowledge and adopt a more positive attitude. Moreover, the continuous interaction between the first four factors in the framework heralds the development of the final factor, critical cultural awareness (Tecedor & Vasseur, 2020). Byram (1997) states that the knowledge, attitude, and skills constituents can be improved through reflecting on personal experience without any formal instruction; however, the critical cultural awareness factor necessitates a systematic process of reflective practice (Tecedor & Vasseur, 2020).

2.3.2.3. The Developmental Model of IS (DMIS)

The Developmental Model of IS (DMIS) was developed by Milton J. Bennett in 1986 via constructivist grounded theory methodology. This hierarchical model formulates its theory via cognitivist and constructivist psychologies; therefore, it regards the intellectual growth of learners more than their attitudinal or behavioural development (Kuusisto, Kuusisto, Rissanen, Holm, & Tirri, 2016). It estimates that learners build on their knowledge and experiences in their cognition actively through their perception, and more advanced cognitive categories generate more elaborate experiences (Bennett, 2017). Notably, they form the categories of ‘*self*’ and ‘*other*’ in their minds through their multicultural interaction experiences. These categories appear in a continuum. In fact, learners primarily construct monocultural categories in which one’s self is realized as the only means of reality and otherness is overlooked, however, they move towards more ethnorelativist categories in which the concepts of otherness are attached to one’s self as their interactions with other cultures increase. The motion from monocentricism to ethnorelativism is achieved by developing learners’ cognition towards otherness (i.e. *IS*). *IS* refers to one’s ability to move beyond his ancestry culture and communicate with interlocutors from different socio-cultural backgrounds (Sinicrope, Norris, and Watanabe 2007). It indicates one’s capacity to process and distinguish opposing cultural perceptions (Hammer et al., 2003). According to Bennett (2004), *IS* is of significant importance to raise intercultural competent individuals inasmuch as the enhancement in learners’ *IS* yields to their development of intercultural competence, which represents one’s ability of thinking and behaving appropriately during transcultural interactions.

DMIS was proposed in order to identify the following phases in cross-cultural training courses (Bennett, 2017). The researcher aimed not only to discover the progression of

intercultural competence development but to launch a meaningful theoretical framework to clarify the competence acquisition process through offering various phases in a continuum as well. According to Bennett (2017), establishing a theory would render the diagnosis of learners' current competence level and the development of these levels to the following stages feasible. Therefore, he introduced a sequence of stages in the DMIS so as to enable educators to determine their learners' present sensitivity levels and adapt materials in line with their sensitivity levels to enhance their competences to the next stages in the continuum (Bennett, 1986). The rationale behind Bennett's sequential developmental model proposition lied in *the phenomenological approach of learning* (Bennett, 1986). Phenomenology of learning hypothesizes that learning cannot be purely limited to the learning goals and curricula since learners' personal experiences also impact their development of new skills and competences (Küpers, 2012). Drawn on this definition, Bennett highlighted two important points in intercultural learning. The first point was concerned with the subjective responses of learners towards the same phenomenon. Learners are inclined to produce different reactions and assign diverse meanings to the same educational content. The second point; on the other hand, was related to the promotion of necessary skills, attitudes, and understanding. Intercultural education requires each learner to acquire new knowledge, competencies and attitudes (Bennett, 1986) to allow them to communicate effectively during authentic transcultural meetings. The points determined through the phenomenology of training were specified in DMIS. Designating stages in a hierarchical organization, this model allowed instructors to pinpoint the sensitivity levels of learners, choose suitable learning materials, and put these materials in a logical order to assist the progress towards higher sensitivity levels (Bennett, 1986)

Having cognitive constructivist orientation, the DMIS determines six stages of IS with incremental order and attaches certain cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioural characteristics to each stage in the continuum (Garrett-Rucks-2014). All six stages in the model include a mindset with consecutively higher competence to process cultural variations. The former three stages in the model named *Denial*, *Defense*, and *Minimization* in succession are labelled as ethnocentric perspectives whereas the latter three stages titled *Acceptance*, *Adaptation*, and *Integration* in sequence are defined as ethnorelativist perspectives. Ethnocentrism indicates the way of thinking in which individuals perceive their own cultural principles as the finest of reality and evaluate others' cultural norms with reference to theirs (Berry, Poortinga, Breugelmans, Chasiotis,

& Sam, 2011; Munezane, 2019). Ethnorelativism; on the other hand, represents the point of view in which individuals unconsciously welcome cultural variations and evaluate their own vision of the world on the basis of these variations (Çiftçi, Karaman & Daloğlu, 2020). Gaining intercultural understanding adheres to the development from ethnocentric mindset to ethnorelativist mindset, which means stepping out from one's monocultural zone, perceiving events from others' viewpoints, and cultivating empathy towards and awareness of transcultural exchanges with nonnative communities (Rantz & Horan, 2009). The ethnocentric and ethnorelativist stages in the model are expressed as below.

Ethnocentric perspectives:

- *Denial* takes place when learners experience the absence of any form of physical or social interaction with members of nonnative communities. In this stage, learners do not come across any cultural differences; therefore, they cannot build cognitive categories in their minds (Bennett, 1986). Respectively, they perceive their own worldview as the sole reality since their own worldview remains unquestioned by other worldviews. According to Bennett (1986), parochialism is a prevailing mode of denial since learners with the parochial mindset are unable to notice and segregate cultural differences due to their limited engagement with foreign cultures. For example, learners in the denial phase may fail to distinguish between Asian countries and attribute all Asian traditions to Chinese or Japanese cultures.
- *Defense* is the stage in which learners regard cultural differences as a threat to their own existential reality. In other words, learners with defensive orientation otherize people with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Since cultural differences must be noticed so as to label them as threatening, the defense stage implies an advancement over the denial phase (Bennett, 1986). Defense stage is observed in two forms. The first and most common form occurs through despidement for the target culture. In this form, learners attribute unwelcome features to the target culture, condemn its concepts and practices, and believe in the superiority of their own culture. The second form of Defense is named *Reversal* where the target culture is considered superior to one's heritage culture (Paige, Jacobs-Cassuto, Yershova, & DeJaeghere, 2003). In Reversal, learners idealize the target culture while expressing continual negative criticism.

- *Minimization* occurs when learners begin to concentrate more on similarities rather than differences between their own culture and the target culture. Inasmuch as cultural differences are recognized, but not adversely assessed in this stage, minimization highlights advancement above defense and denial stages (Bennett, 1986). Minimization contains two dimensions: physical universalism and transcendent universalism. Physical universalism assumes that human behaviour is essentially inborn; hence, cultural varieties are mostly the modifications of definite basic principles. Individuals supporting this standpoint presume that certain behavioural standards are adequate to maintain effective social interactions. Transcendent universalism; on the other hand, opines that people are the outputs of an individual ultimate law. The overt instance of this standpoint lies in people's sacred belief that all humans are created and blessed by a divine entity, God. Both minimization dimensions notice cultural differences; nevertheless, they respect them as insignificant to sustain interactions.

Ethnorelativist perspectives:

- The *Acceptance* stage demonstrates a shift from monoculturalism to ethnorelativism. In this stage, learners view cultural differences as indispensable in social interplays; thus, these differences are valued and respected. In addition, learners do not assess the cultural variations between their ancestry culture and the target culture in this phase. They simply understand the existence of differences between both cultures and exhibit curiosity towards them to broaden their intercultural knowledge.
- *Adaptation* occurs when learners accept the cultural variations and develop a feeling of empathy towards other cultures. In this stage, they begin to see events from others' viewpoints and comprehend the emotional states of other interlocutors as though they were the other person. Moreover, adaptation also takes place in the mode of *cultural pluralism* (Bennett, 1986). In this more advanced version of adaptation, learners acquire the ability to move into multiple considerably thorough world perspectives. For example, A British man who has inhabited in Spain for years may acquire the ability to fit into the Spanish frame of mind.

- *Integration* refers to the synthesis of one's own worldview with other worldviews. Learners with integration orientation understand and interpret cultural differences, acclimate to them, incorporate them into their own self, and express themselves from multiple world perspectives.

Intercultural awareness and transcultural interaction do not directly result in improvement in learners' ICC (Bennett, 2011). However, the hierarchical structure of the DMIS allows instructors to promote the classroom content so as to foster learners' IS (Bennett, 1993). In this framework, educators are offered a task-oriented guideline that contains suitable activities for the aforementioned stages and further recommendations to challenge learners to advance to the next stage in the continuum (Mellizo, 2017). Specifically, the guideline advises the implementation of cultural awareness tasks in the denial stage of the model in order to help learners create acquaintanceship towards the target culture. In the denial stage, it prescribes the utilization of activities that enhance the commonality of both cultures so that learners can focus on the good characteristics of the target culture and break down their prejudices against it. It proposes educators resort to simulations and personal reflections in the minimization phase to facilitate their acceptance and veneration of the target culture. Discussions on cultural norms are suggested in the acceptance phase in this guideline to assist learners to develop the feeling of empathy and attain the level of cultural pluralism. Provision of intercultural communication opportunities is recommended in the adaptation stage of the model. Learners are encouraged to participate in multicultural discussions or carry out interviews with their culturally distinct partners with the aim of enabling them to comprehend different worldviews and synthesize them to their present selves. And finally, it is proposed for learners in the integration phase to interact with their foreign partners in a method that both communication parties can negotiate on the meaning and produce a shared understanding.

2.3.2.4. Deardorff's Pyramid and Process Models of ICC

Internalization necessitates the production of interculturally competent individuals who possess the necessary ability, understanding, and attitude to function efficiently in transcultural interplays. Therefore, scholars and instructors have attached importance to the intercultural dimension of foreign language education in the last few years. Even though

the value of interculturality has been recognized by the academic community, scholars have failed to reach a consensus over the exact definition of ICC and provided differing definitions for the construct in the literature (Deardorff, 2006). To this end, Deardorff (2004) adopted the Delphi technique in her thesis and resorted to the opinions and definitions of 23 renowned intercultural academics so as to describe the concept of ICC in a detailed fashion, identify its components clearly, and determine valid methods for assessment. This Delphi study consisted of three cycles. In the first cycle, the selected scholars were asked to respond to two open-ended questions respecting the definition and measurement of ICC (Deardorff, 2006). In the second cycle, the researcher transformed the responses of the scholars into a Likert scale and had them evaluate all definitions and measurement methods (Deardorff, 2006). In the last cycle, the scholars were requested to express their remarks on the concluding results (Deardorff, 2006). The data analyzed indicated that scholars preferred describing the concept with general expressions rather than specific terms. Most of the definitions underscored the role of *attitude*, *knowledge*, and *skills* dimensions to promote the intercultural posture of learners. Based on the findings, Deardorff (2004) organized these dimensions into a structure and developed a comprehensive ICC framework.

Deardorff introduced two alternative versions to her ICC model in her thesis: *the Pyramid Model* and *the Process Model*. Both versions are constructed upon 5 dimensions: *attitudes*, *knowledge*, *skills*, *internal outcomes*, and *external outcomes*. Attitudes dimension includes (1) holding respect towards foreign cultures and their practices, (2) demonstrating openness to new transcultural experiences, and (3) exhibiting the sense of curiosity and discovery to overlook cultural vagueness. Knowledge dimension contains (1) gaining cultural self-awareness and comprehending how culture shapes one's identity, (2) learning beyond surface-level knowledge such as a community's cuisine and customs and acquiring deeper level knowledge including their feelings and belief systems, (3) obtaining culture-specific knowledge, and (4) adopting sociocultural awareness and grasping the cultural context the target language is used in. Skills dimension involves critical thinking skills (Deardorff, 2009) which refer to learners' capacity to receive knowledge through aural and visual channels, evaluate it, and relate it to their existing schema. The interplay between the dimensions of attitude, knowledge, and skills contributes to the promotion of internal and external outcomes in the models. Internal outcomes highlight an alteration in learners' current frame of reference. In other words, the

development in learners' attitudes, knowledge, and skills allows learners to cultivate (1) adaptability to adjust to new cultural contexts with ease and (2) flexibility to choose suitable communication modes. It also enables learners to function towards an (3) ethnorelativist mindset and (4) develop the empathic ability to perceive situations from others' standpoints (Deardorff, 2009). External outcomes; on the other hand, illustrate learners' ability to maintain competent and proper demeanour and communication in transcultural exchanges (Deardorff, 2009). Even though the Pyramid and Process Models of ICC share the same aforementioned dimensions, their methodological operation differs.

The Pyramid Model of ICC embodies a five-tier pyramid design in which the dimensions proceed from the individual degree of attitudes, skills, and knowledge to the internal and external degree of outcomes from the bottom of the structure upwards (Deardorff, 2009). In this model, the development of the latter dimensions relies on the development of former dimensions (Szuba, 2016). The attitude dimension, which is the starting point of the model, operates as the principal constituent upon which knowledge and skills are constructed (Szuba, 2016). The subsequent dimension, skills, encompasses skills to receive and process knowledge about one's heritage culture and foreign cultures. Retaining a positive attitude and enhancing skills and knowledge accordingly contribute to the generation of outcomes (Wang, 2018). Internal outcomes represent the shift in individuals' present coordinate systems. The improvement in internal outcomes does not act as a precondition to enhance external outcomes; however, it facilitates and strengthens the process towards them (Deardorff, 2006). Even though the dimensions are demonstrated on a visual pyramidal framework, they do not follow a strict hierarchical developmental pattern. Learners can enter the model from different dimensions simultaneously although attitude is the essential prelude stage (Deardorff, 2006). Nevertheless, possessing the constituents in lower dimensions promotes the advancement of upper dimensions, and acquiring more components in each dimension yields higher ICC (Deardorff, 2006; Wang, 2018). The Process Model of ICC; on the other hand, visualizes a more aggregate arrangement of dimensions to describe how ICC is developed (Szuba, 2016). This model places the dimensions on a cyclical organization and theorizes that promoting ICC is a continuous lifelong process. It also conjectures that all dimensions in the framework can be enhanced, yet the ultimate competence cannot be attained (Deardorff, 2006). This model resembles the Pyramid Model on the basis of methodological understanding. Similar to the Pyramid Model, the Process Model labels the attitudes dimension as the fundamental

beginning locus of the cycle (Deardorff, 2012). Theoretically, the cycle starts from the personal degree of attitudes and advances towards knowledge and skills and outcomes dimensions respectively (Lenkaitis, Calo, & Venegas Escobar, 2019). However, this framework does not have a rigid structural system as well. Learners can progress from the attitudes dimension to the external outcomes dimension in a straightforward fashion without achieving the other dimensions in the whole cycle. Correspondingly, they can proceed from attitudes and knowledge/skills dimensions to external outcomes dimension directly without producing internal outcomes. Nonetheless, the efficiency and propriety of external outcomes augment when all successive dimensions are achieved (Szuba, 2016).

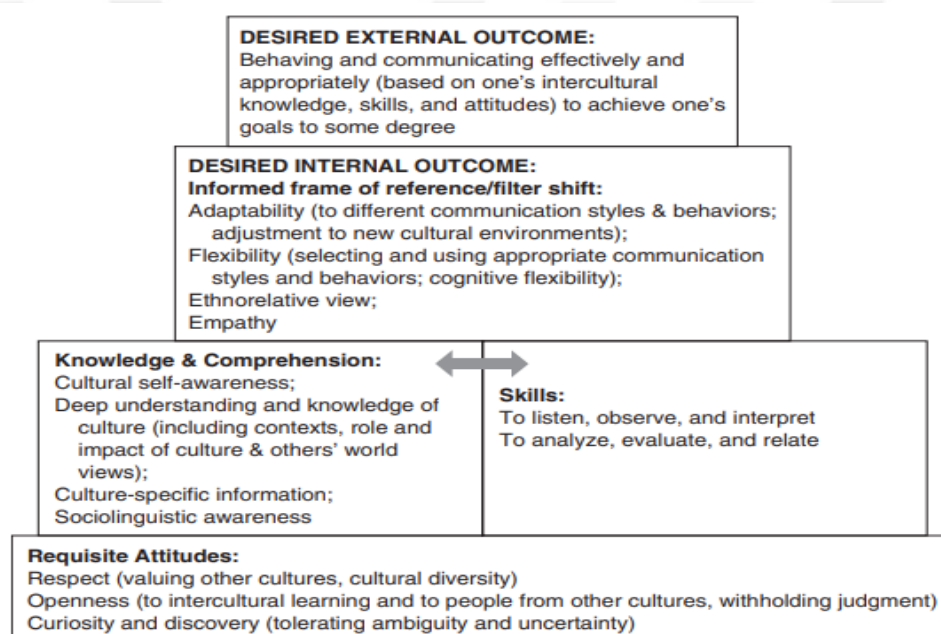


Figure 2. Pyramid Model of Intercultural Competence. Deardorff, D. K. (2004). *The identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of international education at institutions of higher education in the United States*. (Doctoral Dissertation). North Carolina State University, Raleigh.

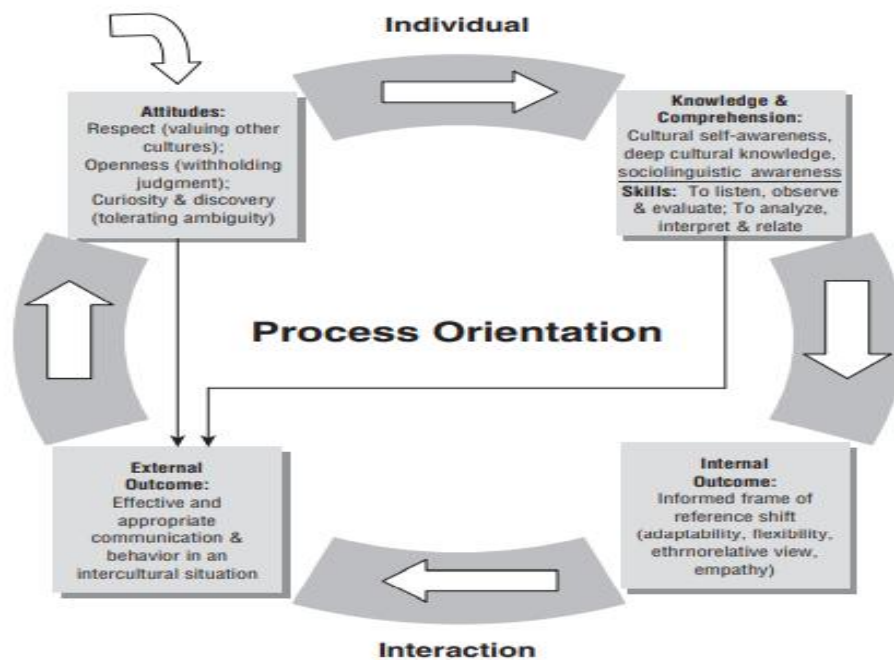


Figure 3. Process Model of Intercultural Competence. Deardorff, D. K. (2004). *The identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of international education at institutions of higher education in the United States*. (Doctoral Dissertation). North Carolina State University, Raleigh.

Deardorff's Pyramid and Process Models offer numerous advantages. First, they are potent ICC frameworks that are developed out of various acclaimed academics' viewpoints. Moreover, they define the components and expected outcomes of intercultural competence instead of merely declaring interculturally competent learners' characteristics (Szuba, 2016) as opposed to other ICC models such as Bennett's DMIS. They also render it possible to measure internal outcomes in a precise fashion since these outcomes are differentiated from external outcomes in both representations (Borghetti 2017; Ferri 2018). However, they also suffer from various shortcomings. First, the descriptions of the components within the dimensions remain limited in both models (Wang, 2018). For instance, the skills dimension includes the components of listening, observing, interpreting, analyzing, evaluating, and relating. However, it fails to prescribe what learners must observe, or how they must evaluate the received input. Second, the models neglect the impact of factors other than attitudes, knowledge, skills, internal outcomes, and external outcomes on promoting intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2018). To exemplify, language-related knowledge also plays a considerable role in intercultural competence

development. Furthermore, the frameworks describe the relationships between dimensions in either cyclical or pyramidal format; however, they remain restricted to reveal how these relationships result in modifications in learners' intercultural competence (Wang, 2018).

2.3.2.5. The Integrated Model of ICC

The Integrated Model of ICC (IMICC) is a culture-general model which is constructed upon the emic approach through the academic initiation of Lily A. Arasaratnam and the contributions of several co-authors. The emic perspective refers to an insider's point of view that emerges within the culture in which the course is regulated (Peters, 2019). Bruner (1990) points out that social circumstances must be examined in light of an insider's mindset. Based on Bruner's proposition, IMICC includes numerous culturally distinct viewers' perspectives and studies the concept of ICC from the insider's account (Arasaratnam, Banerjee, & Dembek, 2010a; Gonçalves, Arasaratnam-Smith, Rodrigues, & Carvalheiro, 2020). Arasaratnam and Doerfel (2005) state that every person represents his indigenous rearing. In other words, every individual is a member of a society in which common records of historical experiences, cultural practices, and a joint perspective of what constitutes intercultural competence are shared by each representative. Therefore, even one individual's characterization of a proficient intercultural speaker renders us to gain some understanding about the culture he grew up in (Arasaratnam, 2006). From this point forward, eliciting perspectives from individuals representing diverse sociocultural backgrounds and exploring the correspondences among them allow for the generation of a common ICC model for all cultures. To this end, Arasaratnam conducted a qualitative study, gathered the perspectives of individuals from different sociocultural backgrounds, drew out five prevalent themes in the analysis, and produced a culture-generic intercultural communication competence framework.

Arasaratnam (2004) determined the themes as *empathy*, *motivation*, *attitude towards other cultures*, *experience*, and *interaction involvement* in the analysis. The first theme, empathy is depicted as one's affective and cognitive ability to imagine himself in others' position and comprehend their feelings, viewpoints, and experiences. An empathic person has the ability to perform effective role-taking and adjust his demeanour to the context properly (Arasaratnam, 2004). The second theme, motivation is described as the willingness to take part in cross-cultural dialogues with the purpose of gaining deeper knowledge and

awareness about foreign cultures (Arasaratnam, 2004). The third theme, attitude towards other cultures (ATOC) is also labelled as global attitude or positive attitude in the analysis. This constituent indicates one's conciliatory and ethnorelativist mental outlook towards individuals from culturally distinct backgrounds (Arasaratnam, 2004). The fourth theme, listening or interaction involvement suggests one's active engagement in a conversation by listening to the other interlocutors carefully. An individual with high interaction involvement ability is capable of perceiving others' standpoints and needs accurately. The final theme, experience is defined as the previous observation of or contact with another culture. This variable includes going on a vacation overseas, participating in an international training programme, being employed abroad, or having foreign family members (Arasaratnam et al., 2010a). In this model, the interplay between the variables above determines one's ICC level which is associated with establishing efficient and convenient demeanour in cross-cultural interactions (Arasaratnam, 2006).

The original version of IMICC identified empathy and experience as independent variables, global attitude, motivation, and interaction involvement as mediator variables, and ICC as dependent variable (Arasaratnam et al, 2010a; Nadeem et al., 2018) before testing the model scientifically. The model hypothesized that broadening intercultural experience would enhance one's attitude towards other cultures and increase his motivation to engage in intercultural dialogues more often, which would result in improvement in his ICC. It also conjectured that developing empathy would yield a positive attitude towards otherness and trigger one's interest to involve in multicultural interactions actively, which would lead to enhancement in their motivation and ICC consecutively. Another presupposition was pertinent to the linear connection between empathy and ICC variables since empathic individuals, who are competent in understanding others' feelings and perspectives, may achieve harmony with their culturally distinct partners and succeed in intercultural interplays (Arasaratnam, 2006). The aforementioned hypotheses were analyzed by Arasaratnam, Banerjee, and Dembek in 2010. Their analysis produced different findings than the hypothesized model. First, the experience construct was determined as a mediator variable in the tested model in contrast to its position as an independent variable in the hypothesized model. Second, a new route drawn in the tested model demonstrated that the acquisition of an empathetic attitude strengthened the research subjects' eagerness to participate in intercultural communication and promoted their engagement in the dialogue. High motivation and dynamic interaction

involvement contributed to their intercultural communication competence respectively. Moreover, a direct relationship was revealed between empathy and ICC variables as in the hypothesized model (Nadeem, Mohammed, & Dalib, 2020). Showing empathetic disposition enabled the research participants to be perceived positively by their culturally distinct counterparts and improved the efficiency and appropriacy of the interaction. Lastly, another novel route was illustrated between empathy, global attitude, interaction involvement, motivation, and ICC variables in the tested model. The analysis reported that high empathetic orientation encouraged the production of a friendly attitude towards foreign cultures, improved the participants' enthusiasm to join intercultural dialogues, and prompted them to involve in multicultural conversations more frequently, which in turn developed their ICC.

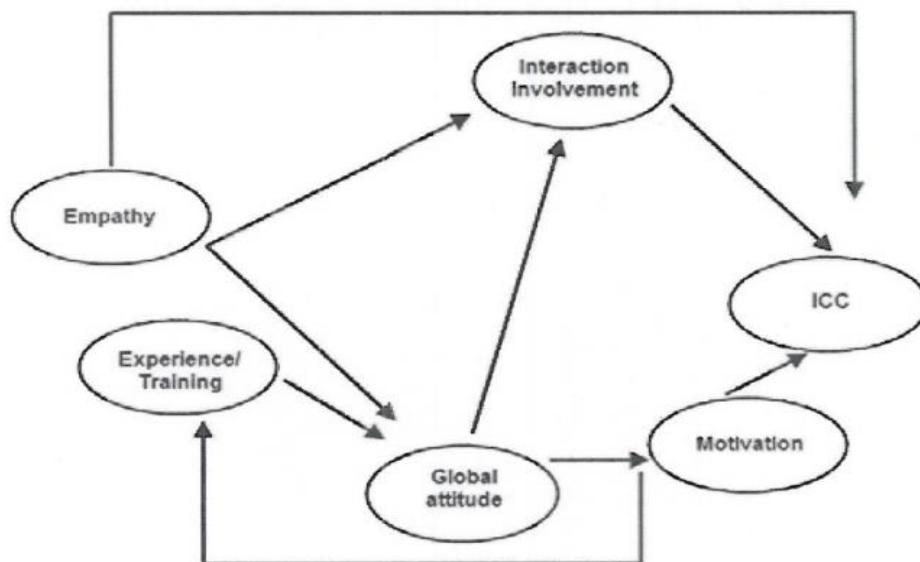


Figure 4. Proposed Model of Integrated Intercultural Communication Competence. Arasaratnam, L. A., Banerjee, S. C., & Dembek, K. (2010a). The integrated model of intercultural communication competence (IMICC): Model test. *Australian Journal of Communication*, 37(3), 103–116.

Arasaratnam (2006) highlighted the necessity to investigate the connections between variables leading to intercultural friendship in her studies. Therefore, Arasaratnam and Banerjee (2011) developed the original version of IMICC and proposed an advanced model which consists of four dimensions: *sensation seeking*, *ethnocentrism*, *attitude towards other cultures*, and *motivation*. Sensation seeking substitutes the experience

variable in the original version of IMICC since measuring the impact of individuals' experiences on their intercultural competence bore problems in the analytical procedures of the previous studies (Arasaratnam, Banerjee, & Dembek, 2010b). This new dimension is defined as a personality trait that is correlated with the desire for new experiences and the search for risky adventures (Everett & Palmgreen, 1995). Individuals with high sensation-seeking orientation demonstrate a favourable attitude towards their dialogic partners to form intercultural friendships due to their fondness for novel experiences (Morgan & Arasaratnam, 2003). Moreover, their affinity to engage in different experiences encourages them to seek more regular and intimate intercultural contact. In this regard, the sensation-seeking factor displays a positive correlation with motivation and attitude towards other cultures variables (Nadeem et al., 2018). In other words, motivation and ATOC dimensions mediate the sensation-seeking factor and contribute to learners' ICC in turn (Nadeem, Mohammed, & Dalib, 2017). The other new dimension of the advanced model, ethnocentrism refers to one's attitude of perceiving his heritage culture as pivotal to or superior over all other cultures (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003; Neuliep, 2002). Individuals with high ethnocentric mindsets are inclined to define other interlocutors' actions from their own point of view and misinterpret the messages behind them (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). Hence, ethnocentrism appears as a significant factor which functions adversely with the remaining variables and impairs the development of intercultural friendships. It triggers a negative attitude towards otherness, lessens individuals' motivation to associate themselves with other cultures, and hampers the development of their ICC. According to Arasaratnam and Banerjee (2007), the existence of an ethnocentric mindset prevents the establishment of appropriate transcultural contacts even in individuals with high sensation-seeking orientation. However, further verification is prescribed for the advanced model of IMICC in order for scholars to understand the relationships between the variables thoroughly.

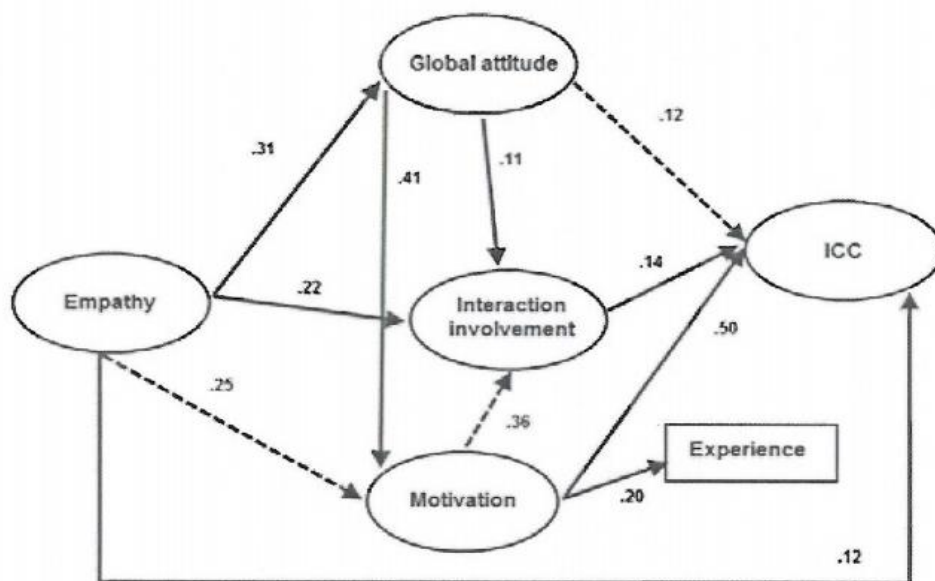


Figure 5. The Integrated Model of ICC. Arasaratnam, L. A., Banerjee, S. C., & Dembek, K. (2010a). The integrated model of intercultural communication competence (IMICC): Model test. *Australian Journal of Communication*, 37(3), 103–116.

2.4. Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)

The expeditious advancement in mobile and computer technologies in the information age has led to a thriving interest in computer-mediated communication (CMC) in foreign language education. The term, computer-mediated communication, which was introduced to the literature in the late 1980s, refers to human communication regulated through the use of cybernated systems (Castañeda, 2005; Herrings, 1996). In a more detailed sense, it stands for the codification and decipherment of the semantic and figurative systems between interlocutors via using electronic technologies such as mobile phones and computers and media such as chat rooms and internet forums in order to render them to process the received input in different formats (Bodomo, 2009). CMC embraces not only the communication between two entities but the interaction among large groups as well (Lee, 2020). Therefore, its theoretical foundation is constructed upon the Interactionist view among SLA theories since the intercommunication between learners presents input, advances outputs, and provides feedback for output improvement (Ozdener & Satar, 2008). Moreover, this computerized communication is grounded within Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) among language learning approaches inasmuch as learning

occurs by managing dialogic encounters and exploiting languages and their functions for communicative purposes in this approach (Ozdener & Satar, 2008). Computer-mediated communication is explored under two categories: text-based computer-mediated communication and video-based computer-mediated communication. Text-based CMC is defined as a communication and knowledge sharing process carried out via digital technologies in written format. This CMC mode includes simultaneous exchange tools such as chat rooms as well as allochronic mediums including e-mails and discussion boards. Video-based CMC; on the other hand, is characterized as conversation and information transmission conducted via online technologies through the use of moving pictorial materials or live visual streams. This form of CMC contains digital mediums such as videoconferencing or interactive DST.

Another binary classification in computer-mediated communication is the dichotomy of synchronous and asynchronous computer-mediated communication. Synchronous CMC stands for the mode of communication in which interlocutors interact with one another in written or spoken format simultaneously. Therefore, this CMC form encompasses both text-based chat room conversations and video interactions (Okumura, 2020). Synchronous CMC does not present the opportunity of reflecting on the produced output compared to asynchronous CMC (Branon & Essex, 2001). Moreover, the spoken or written productions are generally less structurally varied and cautiously incisive due to the limited allocated projecting time. Nonetheless, synchronous mode activates the same mental processes as face to face interaction (Payne and Whitney 2013) and contributes to the enhancement of interactional competence (Chun, 1994). It enables learners to find collaborators across borders, establish a more genuine and interactive environment, reduce the frequency of switching to the native language in dialogic encounters, and practice the target language effectively. It also assists them to build on their knowledge and understanding together with their partners and develop their intercultural competence. On the other hand, asynchronous communication refers to the form of time-delayed interaction in which the receiver replies to the sender's message at a different time zone. This CMC form is more widely utilized than its synchronous counterpart due to its considerable advantages (Johnson & Aragon, 2003). First, learners have time-related flexibility to draft, re-draft, and improve their texts, provide answers for their partners' messages, and resort to their friends' and trainers' knowledge before delivering their messages through computerized systems. Second, this CMC form decreases communication apprehension since it provides

learners with sufficient time to analyze the structural patterns and search for unknown vocabulary items. Lastly, it increases peer interaction (Zeinali Nejad, Golshan, & Naeimi, 2021) inasmuch as it allows learners to provide feedback for their partners' textual productions and stimulate meaningful confabulation on cohesion and coherence. Even though both modes differ from each other in modality and implementation, various studies have pointed to no significant difference in final learning outcomes (Koory, 2003; Nippard & Murphy, 2008; Ozdener & Satar, 2008). Therefore, the present study will incorporate DST as an asynchronous CMC tool into telecollaboration which is a synchronous CMC medium so as to benefit from the advantages of each mode.

2.4.1 Telecollaboration

The radical advancement in knowledge and implementation of digital technologies in transfrontier telecommunication and transportation has contributed to the evolution of national communities into universal entities. According to the report published by MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages (2007), it is presently inevitable for our modern society to reduce its monocentricism, disdainful attitude, and insensitivity towards otherness, to weaken its Manichaeian perspective in critiquing foreign cultures, and to meet on the common ground with the remaining social portion of the world. Moreover, with the technological development and incorporation of the English language as the global lingua franca in a large spectrum of sociocultural environments, the study of foreign languages and linguistics has commenced attributing significant importance to English language education to enhance individuals' intercultural understanding and sensitivity so that they are able to function successfully in their global communities (Dugartsyrenova & Sardegna, 2018). In this respect, scholars and educators across borders resort to *telecollaboration* projects to address the requirements of today's interrelated world and promote their learners' ICC so as to assist them to form effective multicultural relationships in pluricultural contexts.

The term, telecollaboration, which was formulated by Warschauer in 1996, is equivalent to the concept of *online intercultural exchange* (OIE) (O'Dowd, 2007, p. 4). It refers to the technology-mediated transcultural exchange launched within the body of organizations and regulated between individuals from diverse sociocultural backgrounds with the purpose of promoting their linguistic performance and ICC via systematized assignments (Guth &

Helm, 2010). It signifies the process of establishing communication and cooperation with other individuals accommodating in geographically distinct regions through the utilization of networked mediums (Chun, 2015). This technological model concentrates on involving learners in task-based intercommunication and cooperative interchange activities with project partners acquiring formal instruction in other geographical regions through virtual communication modalities under the supervision of their instructors (O'Dowd & Lewis, 2016). Contrary to most virtual learning modes which are principally contingent on the transmission of information through nonreciprocal channels such as video presentations, online virtual exchange embodies a learner-oriented, transcultural, and collaborative pedagogy in which knowledge and awareness are promoted through sociocultural dialogue and negotiation. In this regard, telecollaborative pedagogy bases its foundations on interactionist and sociocultural perspectives of second language acquisition (SLA) in which individuals occupy themselves with experiential learning via internet-governed cross-cultural interplay and interchange (Helm & Guth, 2010, p. 86). Therefore, it is frequently portrayed as ethnographic, communicative, and analytic (Belz, 2007, p. 138). It is characterized as ethnographic since learners resemble ethnographers who conduct procedures of observation, engagement, depiction, examination, and interpretation of the communicational attitudes of their online peers in appropriate and genuine contexts (Belz, 2007; O'Dowd, 2006). It is defined as communicative inasmuch as the created and analyzed discourse originates from the reciprocal actions with different interlocutors. And, it is construed as analytic considering that learners are dynamic participants in operating stages of knowledge building relying on the unification of various written documents accumulated through telecollaborative practices (Belz, 2007, p. 138).

Online virtual exchange practices have been reported to embody a wide range of advantages for learners on the basis of their linguistic proficiency, intercultural competence, and psychological development. First, telecollaboration functions as a seamless medium to accomplish the ostensible '*intercultural turn*' in FL education (Thorne, 2006) since it prompts students to establish an interactional routine with individuals from different cultural backgrounds and to acquire information from and reflect upon their online experiences in their educational setting (O'Dowd, 2015). According to O'Dowd (2007), this virtual exchange practice presents more individualized and personal cultural images for learners as opposed to the fact-based illustrations of cultural information epitomized in their course books. It allows them to build authentic social

dialogues with members of other L2 communities. These dialogues enable learners to reexamine, reflect on, discuss on, and question their initial conceptions about their own culture and foreign cultures, leading them to the development of their IS and understanding (Dugartsyrenova & Sardegna, 2018). Second, online intercultural exchange assists learners to produce authentic discourse with the collaborative endeavour of their foreign partners and practice linguistic components of the target language in a genuine context. According to Thorne (2003), students are able to receive information and feedback from their native telecollaboration partners, which facilitates the development of their linguistic and pragmatic competences simultaneously. Composing messages on telecollaboration mediums such as social networking sites produces language activities of higher quality and potency compared to conventional language exercises (Pinkman, 2005), which leads to enhanced lexical and structural proficiency in the target language. Furthermore, telecollaboration is regarded as an effective means of communication to remove socioeconomic impediments. It offers an alternative platform for disadvantaged learners who are unable to afford the transportation and accommodation expenses of travelling overseas by providing them a virtual environment in which they can organize online meetings and exchange cross-cultural dialogue. Lastly, telecollaboration exerts a positive impact on learner psychology. It performs as a legitimate channel for learners to scrutinize the target language via presenting an invaluable opportunity for them to promote their ICC which stands for the ability to interact efficiently in pluricultural circumstances and to situate oneself into a wide range of cultural contexts in decent fashion (Bennett & Bennett, 2004, p. 149). Acquisition of critical cultural awareness and sociocultural appropriateness reduces learner's communication anxiety and assists them to improve their confidence in participating in cross-cultural interplay with their foreign counterparts (Peiser, 2015)

Even though telecollaboration embodies linguistic, psychological, and intercultural advantages, the magnitude of development in learners' knowledge, awareness, sensitivity, and psychological state relies comprehensively on the effectiveness of its implementation. Telecollaborative tasks can be designed and coordinated in multifarious manners. Nevertheless, the most prosperous exchanges possess certain typical characteristics. According to Müller-Hartmann, Robert O'Dowd and their respected colleagues (2017), the minimal temporal extent of online intercultural exchanges is 6-8 weeks in order for learners to build interpersonal connections with their L2 partners. In addition, tasks should be designed in a specific structure and incremental complexity to contribute to students'

continuous intercultural development. Drawn on this conception, Belz (2007, p. 139) proposes a three-stratum hierarchical task organization model which is composed of three successive telecollaborative exercise forms: *personal relationship building*, *the exploration of linguistic and cultural rich points*, and *product-oriented intercultural collaboration* activities. The first task type in this model, personal relationship building includes learners' interchange of personal information about themselves so as to enable them to get to know one another and engage in more intimate relationships in the initial stages of telecollaborative projects. This task form assists learners to develop an empathic perspective, put themselves into their foreign partners' shoes, and present themselves effectively to those who do not possess common viewpoints and living standards with them. The second task form, the exploration of linguistic and cultural rich points contains intercultural exchange activities in which two distinct cultures or belief systems establish communication with one another in sensitive topics such as politics or traditions. The prime principle of this task form is to render learners to encounter with a wide range of cultural information and perspectives about the target culture, form connections between their national culture and the conventions of their partners' culture, and begin to comprehend the cultural similarities and differences among them in order to improve their critical cultural awareness. And, the final task design, product-oriented intercultural collaboration involves learners' collaboration with multiethnic groups with the aim of producing collective outputs. This task mode aims at promoting learners' ICC and facilitating their adoption of intercultural speaker identity.

2.4.1.1 The Multidimensional Goal Model of Telecollaboration

The fundamental rationale of telecollaboration is to juxtapose language components with cross-cultural and intracultural learning (Belz, 2007) with respect to rendering linguistic development and enhancing ICC of learners (Byram, 1997) through reciprocal and continuous interaction and engagement. Telecollaborative practices do not aim at educating near-native speakers; on the contrary, they intend to identify more reasonable and attainable objectives and raise intercultural speakers who are capable of understanding and maintaining interactions between their own selves, cultural values, acts, and meanings and those of their conversationalists (Byram, 1997). Based on the aforementioned definition, producing intercultural speakers necessitates the development of intracultural

and intercultural understanding and sensitivity of learners. Intracultural learning refers to acquiring information about one's own culture and demonstrating the skill to analyze the source of one's own judgements and demeanours. Intercultural learning; on the other hand, indicates the acquisition of necessary abilities and knowledge to comprehend cultural similarities and differences and communicate with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. According to Byram (1997), intracultural awareness strengthens intercultural learning by enabling learners to be cognizant of their own intellectual perspectives, hindering them to assimilate into the target culture, and assisting them to mediate in transcultural exchanges. With regards to the sophisticated goal orientation nature of online intercultural practices, Helm and Guth (2010) correlated Byram's (1997) MMICC and foreign language acquisition objectives of Common European Framework of Reference (2001) with the recent digital literacies and proposed a goal framework consisting of three domains: operational dimension, cultural dimension, and critical dimension.

The *operational dimension* primarily concentrates on technical features of intercultural communication respecting literacy instruments, equipment, language, and performative processes (Lankshear and Knobel 2006). However, Helm and Guth (2010) broaden the spectrum of the dimension by including the ethos sub-domain to highlight the importance of attitudes to initiate and maintain intercultural communication. The technical subdomain is progressive and functional. It focuses on skills (receptive and productive) and competences to obtain and process new knowledge (Helm & Guth, 2010). Therefore, the domain pertains to *savoir faire/ apprendre* and *savoir comprendre* in Byram's (1997) ICC Model. *Savoir faire/ apprendre* signifies the capability to obtain new knowledge about cultures and cultural operations and to utilize appropriate knowledge, abilities, and mindsets in an actual intercultural dialogue whereas *savoir comprendre* stands for the skills to understand and define a material or phenomenon from a different culture and to associate it to one's own culture. The ethos sub-domain reflects the essential attitude to participate in interactive events and perform conversational tasks efficiently (Helm & Guth, 2010). This sub-domain relates to *savoir-etre* in Byram's (1997) ICC Framework which is regarded as eagerness and tolerance towards different cultures and willingness to adjourn disbeliefs about them and beliefs about their own culture. In the realm of foreign language acquisition through online intercultural exchange practices, ethos sub-dimension is attached critical significance inasmuch as effective foreign language learning necessitates active participation and cooperation of interlocutors, and the development of

positive attitude acts as the driving force to engage learners in transcultural interplay and enable them to share their viewpoints voluntarily. The second domain in this framework, the *cultural dimension* correlates with *savoirs* in Byram's (1997) ICC Model which refers to the knowledge of not only communities and their practices in individuals' own culture and their conversationalists' nations, but regular procedures of communal and personal communication as well. Therefore, it incorporates two knowledge constituents respecting the subject and interaction methods. Lankshear and Knobel (2006) also label two knowledge constituents for the present dimension regarding convenient communication techniques in specific contexts and declarative awareness. The former manifests comprehending a material with reference to its context and providing appropriate responses accordingly (Helm & Guth, 2010). In telecollaboration, this understanding comprises paying attention to etiquette in online debates, regarding the secrecy rights of interlocutors during videoconferencing, and marking copyright issues while publishing online content on a blog. The latter; on the other hand, relates to the objectives of virtual exchanges. To exemplify, cultural and political knowledge is imperative for individuals if they discuss the current socio political issues in an online panel. The last dimension in the model, *the critical dimension*, focuses on developing the critical cultural awareness of learners. Hence, it correlates with *savoir s'engager* in Byram's (1997) ICC Framework which is defined as the ability to assess viewpoints, cultural operations and outputs analytically with reference to an explicit measure. It is significant to equip learners with the knowledge of languages and encourage them to interpret and evaluate the social norms and cultural policies so as to raise them as global citizens. As it is discussed above, telecollaborative practices aim at enhancing learners' digital competence, assisting them to acquire a positive attitude towards the target culture, equipping them with the necessary propositional and pragmatic knowledge, and expanding their critical cultural awareness.

2.4.1.2. The Pedagogy of Telecollaboration

Telecollaboration refers to internet-mediated transcultural interaction between individuals from miscellaneous sociocultural backgrounds or geographically dispersed regions so as to enhance their language proficiency and ICC (Demir & Kayaoğlu, 2021). It embodies task-based language learning (TBLL) as its methodological standpoint in which students function towards specific objectives in order to attain explicit outcomes (Müller-Hartmann,

2007). However, even though TBLL is characterized as an effective methodological choice for telecollaborative projects, the pedagogy concerning the design, organization and implementation of the tasks plays a determinant role in the effect size of the activities on the improvement of learners' language and IC competencies. For this reason, educators must follow certain principles for their online intercultural exchange projects to attain a favourable outcome.

Harris (1995) suggests a practical protocol for instructors to launch and regulate online exchange projects in accordance with the requirements of the curriculum in their country. According to her guideline, the initial stage is the goal-setting phase in which teachers identify the learning goals and objectives of a particular telecollaborative project which are parallel with the operating curriculum and syllabi in their countries. The second stage includes the selection of a flexible task structure which can be executed for different grades, proficiency levels and academic fields. The third stage is concerned with the investigation of acknowledged completed projects with the aim of elaborating on the content and design of the project. The examination of previous projects will enable instructors to observe how other educators have carried out their project activities and what problems they have encountered in the process. Therefore, it will reduce the planning time and enhance the effectiveness of the project. The fourth stage necessitates the preparation of the project's outline in detail to achieve effective implementation. It is a prerequisite for a telecollaborative project to predetermine its objectives, contributors, collaborators, activity plan, instructions for registration and regulation, a sample output students are assigned to produce, and completion and dissemination activities to meet the curricular goals and objectives in the initial phase. Once the project specifications have been identified and uploaded to an online educational platform, the fifth stage concerns the invitation of partner organizations which are potent to fulfil the prescribed tasks, produce the expected outcomes, and achieve the project's goals and objectives. After possible telecollaborators are identified in the fifth stage, the sixth stage necessitates the establishment of a telecollaboration group with the aim of informing project partners about the content, requirements, and deadline of the activities to ensure sustainability of the project. And the final stage in Harris' (1995) protocol is the implementation phase of the project activities in which learners are encouraged to communicate in the target language through exerting miscellaneous interaction techniques to obtain maximum academic benefit.

Whereas Harris's (1995) telecollaboration guideline concentrates on the pre-virtual exchange phase with the purpose of guiding teachers to set up sustainable and influential online intercultural projects, Kurek and Müller-Hartmann (2017, p. 14) contribute to the protocol further by emphasizing the significance of systematic task design in while process so as to maintain fruitful online transatlantic exchanges and overcome the intricacy of the telecollaboration contexts. According to Skehan (1998, p. 135), teachers must present the telecollaborative tasks in a sequence of complexity in order that balanced improvement can happen as the tasks which center on diverse learning objectives accompany one another in a systematized format. This task sequence is composed of three task forms which begin with *personal information exchange*, progress through *comparison and analysis tasks*, and finalize with *cooperative conducts*. The first task category, personal information exchange is utilized to create initial acquaintances between partner groups and form a positive project synergy in the initial stage of the telecollaborative practice. In this task form, learners are assigned to provide personal information about themselves including their biographies, individual interests, and regular activities and present the local culture of their nation such as weekend courses in their educational institutions as a preparatory activity. The second task category, comparison and analysis prompts students not only to interchange cultural outputs with their L2 counterparts, but also to conduct comparisons and analytical examinations of these cultural outputs adopted from both telecollaboration groups (Müller-Hartmann et al., 2017). Telecollaborators are expected to clarify the importance of their cultural outputs and practices, and then to communicate with their partners respecting the resemblances and differences between both cultures in this stage. The concluding task category, cooperative products; on the other hand, necessitates students from different sociocultural backgrounds to negotiate on task requirements, produce a tangible output collaboratively, and reflect on their experiences. All task categories of this three-stratum task sequence also follow a procedural activity cycle as pre-task, while task, and post-task activities in each virtual intercultural exchange (Leaver & Willis, 2004). The pre-task activity functions to equip telecollaborators with the necessary information, emotional state, technological ability, and linguistic knowledge for the task (Helm & Guth, 2010, p. 89). When students are equipped with the fundamental background knowledge and stimulating motivation, they carry out the target task and exchange intercultural products with one another in the "while" stage. In the final cycle, learners are assigned to reflect on their experiences on issues such as their cultural

misjudgments, communication impediments, and linguistic incompetence (Helm & Guth, 2010)

Helm and Guth (2010) unify the components of separate pedagogical theories of telecollaboration into a single system with the aim of maintaining the combination of various objectives in the different phases of online intercultural exchange projects and propose a detailed telecollaborative task framework titled as *the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies*. This comprehensive framework constitutes of four complementary elements: *situated practice*, *overt instruction*, *critical framing* and *transformed practice*. The situated practice which is the initial stage of online virtual exchange projects covers personal information exchange and comparison and analysis tasks in order to assist learners to establish connections with their L2 partners (Müller-Hartmann, 2006). Several academic endeavours highlight the urgency to occupy learners with ice-breaker exercises such as exchanging brief biographical stories so as to sustain affective attachment to the project activities (O'Dowd, 2007, p. 29). Therefore, personal information exchange tasks in this phase enable learners to familiarize themselves with others and establish reciprocal emotional bonds to pursue the remaining project activities. This task type is accompanied by comparison and analysis tasks in the situated practice stage which involve the exchange of cultural information between telecollaboration partners. Learners interchange information and outputs respecting their local and national cultures in these tasks and conduct comparisons between both cultures in order to gain intercultural understanding and awareness. Although the situated practice stage intends to enhance learners' critical intercultural awareness by encouraging them to compare their own telecollaboration outputs with their foreign partners' digital productions, this phase has restrictions since the establishment of personal contact and mere exchange of transcultural information do not directly lead to the improvement in learners' ICC (Dooly, 2008a). On the contrary, it may result in cross-cultural misunderstandings and strengthen stereotypes. In this regard, the situated practice stage is recommended to be followed by the overt instruction phase in this framework. The overt instruction stage concentrates on the position of teachers in order to stimulate students to advance their comparisons and examinations further. Furstenberg and Levet (2010) specify that the central role of teachers in virtual exchange projects is guiding learners to intensify their analyses, to reinforce their assertions with the collected evidence from the online exchanges, to examine their assertions in diverse contexts, and to reflect on their understanding. Therefore, teachers acquire the role of mentor in this process

(O'Dowd, 2007). They probe learners on how to present the sophisticated depiction of their national culture and in what manner to regulate the sensitive cross-cultural dialogue with their telecollaboration partners (O'Dowd, 2006). They provide a model of how learners can examine the communication patterns during virtual exchanges and deduce the information from their partners' textual or oral productions. They also counsel learners to revise their peers' productions prior to mailing them to their telecollaboration partners for the purpose of overcoming communication impediments and detecting probable offensive messages (Ware & Kramsch, 2005). Moreover, they are also responsible for identifying their learners' language proficiency and learning difficulties and adapting the tasks accordingly (Okumura, 2020). The critical framing, which constitutes the third stage of the present task framework, engages learners with analytical reflective practice as a post-task activity on the completion of each telecollaborative cycle. In this stage, learners pull back from their situated practice and overt instruction experiences and analyze them as an outsider (Helm & Guth, p. 96). Then, they critique and reflect on these experiences so as to comprehend the rationales behind specific utterances, attitudes, and demeanours. The final stage, transformed practice resembles the situated practice phase since learners start over their virtual exchange journey; however, they either transfer their obtained understanding and experiences to a novel intercultural context or come back to their lifeworld with broadened knowledge and worldviews (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 241). In this stage, learners collaborate and produce collective cultural artefacts via benefitting from multiple modalities. The production of these artefacts necessitates dynamic negotiation and exploitation of linguistic units and cross-cultural appropriateness rules, which contributes to the development of learners' intercultural speaker identity.

2.4.1.3. Telecollaboration Models

Three telecollaboration models including Tandem Learning, Cultura Model, and eTwinning Model are explained in the present section.

2.4.1.3.1. Tandem Learning

The introduction of the Audio-Lingual method (ALM) to foreign language education resulted in indigenous interactions of the target L2 community to be reflected in language classrooms. However, these native utterances failed to correspond with the actual language used in the target L2 communities. The native speeches presented in the tape recordings

were depleted of subjective and cultural meaning since they targeted at rendering learners to imitate the introduced conversational contents in explicit fashion through extensive repetition and memorization activities. Therefore, tandem learning emerged as a reaction to the audio-lingual method by locating native speaker governed conversations enriched in personal and cultural meanings to the center of the language learning process (O'Dowd, 2007). The Tandem learning model involves the bilateral assistance and training between two individuals, each of whom is the native speaker of the language the other partner aims to acquire (O'Dowd, 2007, p. 43). In this virtual intercultural exchange design, two native speakers of separate languages establish mutual contact in order to process one another's languages (Chun, 2015). This telecollaboration model has two operating systems as synchronous and asynchronous modes. Both modes possess long-term and short-term self-reflective accessibility. Long-term self-reflective accessibility refers to the text-based archival storage of written communication, which is attainable for examination after the intercultural dialogue is concluded (O'Rourke, 2007, p. 52). This function enables learners to review the whole communication from its beginning to its end meticulously and analyze the linguistic and cultural patterns in detail. Short-term self-reflective accessibility; on the other hand, means concurrent observability of the textual dialogue while the online communication continues between tandem partners. This mode allows interlocutors to revise their statements before sending them to their partners, to probe into their own statements scrupulously by reexamining their delivered messages, and to revise their partners' statements by checking the previous dialogic records (O'Rourke, 2007, p. 53). The synchronous mode which performs under temporal constraints involves instant messaging oriented communication which is less cautiously written, less lexically and structurally convoluted, and less metalinguistically explanatory (O'Rourke, 2007, p. 53). However, this mode resembles face to face interaction in that it enables telecollaborators to co-produce the discourse together through addressing one another's statements and responding to their expressions. Moreover, it prompts them to concentrate on the negotiated meaning, leading to higher engagement with the dialogue. Similar to the synchronous mode, the asynchronous function also has advantages. It allows learners to examine and review their partners' written productions syntactically and semantically without making haste so as to analyze the linguistic features and cultural information between the lines. It also enables learners to contemplate on their own drafts for a longer period of time, to review them multiple times, to provide comprehensive answers for their

partners' messages, and to resort to their teachers' or peers' linguistic assistance prior to delivery. Moreover, it provides learners with sufficient time and flexibility to give detailed corrective feedback to their partners' messages.

Tandem learning is not a theory-driven telecollaboration design. On the contrary, it originated from the initiations of individuals who offered their linguistic knowledge in their national language to other L2 speakers in exchange for these speakers' reciprocal language instruction in their native language. Having emerged as an unstructured strategic practice of individual learners, the tandem model has been attempted to be theorized and systematized by educators as an open learning practice in recent times (O'Rourke, 2007, p. 43). The initial systematized tandem learning project was instituted in 1992 through the collaboration between the Ruhr-Universitat Bochum and the University of Rhode Island in asynchronous mode (Brammerts, 1996) to familiarize educators with the concept of tandem learning, determine its doctrines, analyze its capacity of achievement, and provide guidance and properties for tandem cooperation. Then, institutions and educators have commenced engaging their learners in tandem partnerships where these learners are able to develop their target language proficiency with the eager explicit instruction and correction of their native partners. At present, tandem learning is incorporated into many educational institutions' curricular activities and utilized as an expansive practice by educators across borders. The systematized tandem learning model is constructed on two fundamentals: the doctrine of autonomy and the doctrine of reciprocity (O'Rourke, 2007, p. 46). Learner autonomy is described as individuals' ability of detachment, analytical rumination, attainment of individual resolution, and self-reliant operation (Little, 1991). The Tandem learning model does not stipulate a specific structural organization or suggest an interactional content. Tandem interlocutors select their conversational content, determine the profoundness level of the interaction, establish the dialogic schedule, and decide on the tasks and exercises in accordance with their personal objectives and intentions. In other words, they are responsible for organizing, managing, and monitoring each phase of tandem projects. In this respect, learner autonomy stands as the principal component of the tandem learning model. The second doctrine, reciprocity; on the other hand, represents the mutual reliance and cooperative engagement of tandem partners. According to this principle, both telecollaborators must devote balanced time for intercultural exchanges, proportioned energy to organize the tasks and activities, and corresponding effort for their own and partners' achievement (Brammerts, 1996, p. 11) in order for a tandem partnership

to attain success. Reciprocity is not only a fundamental principle of tandem partnerships but an exceptional advantage as well. The rationale is the fact that both parties adopt the role of language instructor and L2 learner at different time periods of the telecollaborative exchange; therefore, they prescribe the language and its usage in an explicit manner, which results in enhancement in learners' linguistic and IS (O'Rourke, 2007, p. 47).

The Tandem learning model serves as an effective virtual intercultural exchange design to maintain interpersonal contact with the members of a target L2 community and promote the ICC of learners. However, the present model has limitations due to the following reasons. The first problem is contingent on the dependence of this model on native-speaker instruction. In this model, native speakers are perceived as the main source of linguistic knowledge; hence, they are requested to provide metalinguistic explanations on their partners' written productions. Nevertheless, native speakers are spontaneous users of their native languages who do not possess the pedagogic expertise of language instructors. Therefore, even though their grammatical and lexical corrections are likely to be accurate, their metalinguistic explanations often remain insufficient to develop the L2 competence of learners. The second problem lies in the reciprocity principle of the model. Tandem partnerships function effectively only when both interlocutors correspond with proficiency and interact equally during the virtual exchanges. However, the discrepancy in language proficiency of learners may cause to lingua franca impact (O'Rourke, 2005) which means that if one tandem partner speaks more fluently than the other during a synchronous tandem exchange, the former learner's language is likely to be the dominant communication language of the transcultural dialogue, and the latter learner is likely to profit less from this practice. Another problem related to tandem learning is situated in the learning motives of learners. If learners do not attach the same amount of significance to the telecollaborative exchanges and hold different incentives to participate in the prescribed tasks, they may be apt to demonstrate differentiating effort to fulfil these tasks, and it may jeopardize the number of benefits learners will obtain. The aforementioned shortcomings are perceived to emanate from the model's non-systematized nature. In this regard, the Cultura model which is known for its rigid structural content is introduced to the telecollaboration designs as an alternative.

2.4.1.3.2. *Cultura Model*

Cultural teaching which was anteriorly regarded as a minor component of foreign language education as opposed to other language skills has gained momentum in FL pedagogy over the last decades. The definition and the role of culture have continuously evolved through the contributions of notable academicians in language teaching and linguistics disciplines. The improvement in the position of culture in language education traces back to Hymes' proposition of communicative competence model in the 1970s (Garcia & Crapotta, 2007, p. 62). In his academic publication, Hymes criticized the Chomskian model of competence and asserted that first language acquisition goes beyond the development of learners' grammatical competence and involves the improvement in their sociolinguistic competence, which signifies the capability to communicate properly in social situations. Even though Hymes principally concentrated on social interplay within monolingual communities, his paradigm was transferred into the field of foreign language learning and contributed to the development of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) through the efforts of Canale and Swain's broadened version of communicative competence (1980). However, cultural teaching remained as an insignificant element in language teaching in this period inasmuch as Canale and Swain's (1980) communicative competence model addressed sociolinguistic appropriateness more than sociocultural propriety in diverse social situations and exerted its stress on proper language use instead of proficiency to mediate in the L2 society effectively (Garcia & Crapotta, 2007, p. 63). Nonetheless, the development in social networks, increment in globalization rates and international migration waves transformed monocultural communities into multicultural and plurilingual entities and obligated the proposition of an approach which responds to the requirements of interculturalism. To this end, the concept of ICC, which stands for the capacity of individuals to interweave the necessary knowledge, attitudes, and skills to communicate efficiently with the members of L2 societies, was theorized by Byram (1997). Drawing on this competence model, foreign language education shifted its target from sociolinguistic correctness to cross-cultural effectiveness. Foreign language learning pedagogy currently concentrates on qualifying language learners with fundamental cognitive, affective, and behavioural competence to enhance their transcultural sensitivity and understanding. To this end, a more systematized and culture-oriented telecollaboration design, the Cultura model was introduced to foreign language classrooms to contribute to learners' ICC.

Cultura Learning is an internet-governed telecollaboration model which was launched by Gilberte Furstenberg, Shoggy Waryn and Sabine Levet in 1997 at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures (Garcia & Crapotta, 2007, p. 64). The scholars instituted the initial Cultura project as a telecollaborative interchange between MIT students studying the French language and students of Institut National des Télécommunications studying the English language. This model is constructed on the hypothesis that language and culture are intricately intertwined and on the conjecture that acquisition of culture is an actively progressing operation of communicating both personal and societal identities, viewpoints, beliefs, merits, and virtues (Chun, 2015). Therefore, the acquisition of transcultural information goes beyond the mere collection of factual evidence regarding the target culture and involves the development of an understanding entailing the internalization of cultural norms, convictions, attitudes, and viewpoints (Furstenberg, Levet, English, & Maillet, 2001). To acquire and deepen this understanding, the cultural analogy is of significant importance since the close representation of cultural components belonging to two distinct communities provides learners with the opportunity to examine correspondences and differences situated within these aforementioned cultures which otherwise may remain unnoticed (Byram, 1997). Based on this premise, the Cultura model unites two classrooms from different sociocultural and sociolinguistic backgrounds, each of which is composed of learners who learn the other party's language as a foreign language. Then, the groups are requested to convey a collection of cultural artefacts for their Cultura partners including their personal productions and information obtained from exterior sources with the aim of enhancing learners' intercultural awareness and sensitivity. These artefacts compose the substructure for the proceeded intercultural dialogue as learners correlate, examine, and interpret them (Garcia & Crapotta, 2007, p. 65). Although intercultural learning is the prime focal point of this telecollaboration model, lexical and structural competences take on a complementary role since students grasp and practice on the linguistic elements while they scrutinize the transculturally mediated context.

In comparison with the Tandem learning model, Cultura suggests an adaptable, yet systematic hierarchical organization to provide gradual assistance for instructors and learners. It offers a collection of successive phases where students are continuously presented with more challenging cultural notions as they expand the spectrum of their investigation. The first phase in this model necessitates learners to fill out online

questionnaires prepared to unveil cross-cultural dissimilarities between target cultures respecting the subjects of appropriate social demeanor in their society, certain characteristics of their culture, and living standards in their country, and their lifestyles. These questionnaires include three question forms: word associations, incomplete sentences, and responses to imaginary scenarios (Garcia & Crapotta, 2007, p. 65). In word association activities, students are provided with individual lexical items and asked to note down the initial words that occur in their minds in response to these words. In incomplete sentence activities, they are provided with half-sentences and requested to complete them in line with their opinions, beliefs, and attitudes. And, the last question format, responses to imaginary scenarios prompts learners to respond to some imaginary scenarios by explaining their possible reactions, attitudes, and opinions towards them. These web-based questionnaires are introduced to learners in their native language so that they are not to be restricted by their linguistic incompetence in the target language. Once learners carry out the questionnaires, the data obtained from both telecollaboration parties are assembled into a single online document and demonstrated in adjoined fashion. This online document is aimed to cater to authentic cultural readings and lay the foundation of intercultural communication between the Cultura partners. Following the online documentation of cultural variances between the target L2 cultures, the second stage entails the critical investigation of the questionnaires under the supervision of their teachers. In this stage, teachers adopt the role of a facilitator who is responsible for preserving the harmony between learners, formulating classroom exercises for stimulating further opinion exchange, presenting supplementary information about the partner country's culture, and adapting the schedule of the tasks in accordance with students' needs whereas learners acquire the central position and scrutinize on their Cultura partners' responses to the questionnaires to determine the similarities and differences between the target cultures and formulate a cultural hypothesis. Learners administer the target language in this phase in order to practice their language skills while engaging in an authentic context. The subsequent stage requires both target groups to contact via asynchronous forum interactions. On this virtual exchange platform, learners convey their primary perceptions, express their initial attitudes, precursory judgments and interpretations, and pose further questions to their Cultura partners. This continuing asynchronous communication enables learners to negotiate on the cultural concepts and establish an understanding of each other's cultures collaboratively. The pioneers of the Cultura model designed the

functioning of this stage in the native language of the interlocutors. The fourth stage is conducted within the classroom setting. In this phase, learners are assigned to debate over the forum discussions with their classmates so as to explore the native speakers' linguistic preferences and cultural practices and to generate new questions to ask their L2 counterparts. Finally, the concluding stage in this structured organization includes the provision of additional target language materials to expand the spectrum of virtual and physical investigation. These artefacts allow learners to widen their knowledge and pursue their cross-cultural interaction with their Cultura companions.

2.4.1.3.3. *eTwinning Model*

eTwinning is an online telecollaborative exchange platform which was founded for educational institutions situated in Europe and some bordering countries to carry out cross-cultural projects, publish the best conducts, and deliver pedagogical development opportunities (Demir & Kayaoğlu, 2021). This online intercultural exchange model does not present a pre-structured series of linguistic principles, pre-determined topics, or explicit exchange formats as opposed to the aforementioned telecollaboration model; on the contrary, it provides freedom for schools and teachers registered to this platform to set up their own projects, identify the content and linguistic components, and select among the available digital instruments to assist students to engage in effective intercultural interactions. This platform was inaugurated by the European Commission in 2005 with the aim of stimulating European schools to cooperate, to interchange linguistic and cultural information, and to publicize educational products via utilizing a wide range of digital technologies and multimodal resources. It was initiated as the principal movement of the European Union's electronic learning strategy so as to improve the role of networked technologies and transculturally mediated communication in education. Therefore, this model is built on the Vygotskian theory of *social constructivism* (1978) which theorizes that learning occurs when information emerges from the communicational motifs of one's personal and rare interpersonal experiences which develop over a period of time within a context-based and progressive synthesis (Kanuka & Anderson, 1999). Turkey participated in this telecollaboration platform in 2009 under the auspices of the Turkish Ministry of National Education and has conducted more than 40.000 projects so far with the contribution of educators from different disciplines.

The eTwinning telecollaboration model declares voluminous educational objectives for institutions, educators, and individual learners. Firstly, it aims to inspire learners and instructors to take an active position in instructive projects with their peers in other European nations so as to strengthen the European magnitude in education (Miguela, 2007, p. 87). Secondly, it intends to raise awareness among the young generation concerning the European figure of plurilingual and pluricultural communities, to promote transcultural interaction and reciprocal understanding via virtual educational practices, and to assist instructors to develop their pedagogical knowledge and digital competence (Miguela, 2007, p. 87). Thirdly, it targets demonstrating the intricacy and variety of project countries through unifying cultural, linguistic, institutional, and juvenescence merits. This model also concentrates on encouraging the administration of a target language as an interactional medium and enabling learners to attach significance to it as an individual and cooperative heritage adept at conveying cultural virtues. And the final objective is to enhance the intrinsic motivation of learners to collaborate with students, teachers, librarians, administrators, and local representatives from different nations to generate novel and comprehensive educational methods and techniques and to disseminate them to a wider public. Based on these objectives, eTwinning projects embody four conventions: the inclusion of computer technologies and the notion of European identity into institutions, professional development of teachers through information and opinion exchange practices, the formation of an internet-oriented multicultural system, and the improvement of learners' critical intercultural awareness (Miguela; 2007, p. 87).

The eTwinning platform offers a multitude of tools and systems to facilitate the attainment of useful information and communication between European schools. The *Profile* segment provides individual information about teachers and their institutions. The *eTwinning Live* section is comprised of six sub-segments: people, events, projects, groups, partner forums, and professional development, all of which enable educators to search for partner institutions to start up a joint project or send partnership requests to their existing project, to participate in groups to enhance their pedagogical practices and digital literacies, and to register webinars and online workshops to contribute to their professional identity. This tool also allows eTwinners to narrow down their search findings in accordance with measures such as study areas, languages to be exploited in the tasks, and grade level of learners to render them to select the most appropriate project in line with their schools' implementation capacity and learners' needs. *My Groups* section renders telecollaborators

to participate in larger multilingual and multicultural communities to exchange learning resources, share the best practices, announce and hold webinars, initiate opinion and information exchange through thread boards, and communicate via synchronous Adobe Connect meetings or asynchronous forum chats with the aim of enhancing their technological capability, language skills, and pedagogical competence. *My TwinSpaces* is a cooperative workspace for project partners to perform their tasks collaboratively and exchange audial or written products. When eTwinners identify their partners and launch a telecollaboration project, a workspace specific only to that project is activated on the platform so that they can organize synchronous and asynchronous meetings to design the project activities, inform the partners about the schedule and content of the tasks on teacher bulletin, interchange culture-generic or culture-specific productions, and provide opinions on intercultural matters and constructive feedback on target language use. Finally, the last segment includes *Self-Teaching Materials* which provides guidance for educators and educational institutions to regulate effective telecollaboration projects. eTwinning platform also includes a separate messaging system which allows eTwinners to communicate with one another in written format so as to address questions to one another or establish partnership on a project. In addition to these internal tools and mediums, the eTwinning platform also permits the uploading of external web-based tools such as interactive boards or blogs to motivate the exploitation of novel technologies and to enhance the collaborative content in the project.

Even though the eTwinning platform provides structural flexibility in content and design for students, teachers, and their organizations, they are recommended to follow certain procedures for the effective implementation of the project activities. The initial action lies in the registry in the platform. In this stage, eTwinners are suggested to register in the network and provide a detailed description of their experiences, abilities, and objectives of participation in this network. After they supply information at an individual or institutional level, the eTwinning Live segment enables them to search for suitable project partners through refining their investigation in accordance with their learners' age group, grade level, and language proficiency, and their institutions' learning objectives and implementation capacity. Once possible telecollaborators are identified, establishing active contact with them necessitates paramount importance to obtain more personalized information about them in addition to the information presented on their Profile page. The second step in this process is launching a virtual intercultural exchange project in which

both instructors and learners in each partner school are willing to participate and carry out the designed tasks. It is suggested that the activated project follow the principles of the collaborative learning approach. For instance, educators must arrange online meetings to plan and structure the tasks cooperatively so that task objectives are to be attainable for each partner organization, and the project timetable is to be convenient for project participants to complete the tasks according to the schedule. The following step concerns the completion of project activities through communicating, exchanging expertise, and generating joint products. Language adopts an important role in this stage since eTwinners decide on a foreign language or use one another's languages to propose new dimensions to education. In the final step, assessment and evaluation of project activities and their contributions to respective fields of education are recommended to be carried out by project partners to measure the effect size of the telecollaborative experience and disseminate the good practices to other European schools.

2.4.1.4. Anticipated Problems and Solutions in Telecollaboration

Telecollaborative interplays do not always yield positive intercultural mediation between individuals from different sociocultural backgrounds. On the contrary, they generally result in unsuccessful negotiation and management of meaning since learners usually fail to attain a definite understanding of one another due to various individual, educational, and organizational reasons (Helm, 2015). The reasons presented in the EFL literature are multifarious in nature and observable in numerous online intercultural exchange studies. In this respect, O'Dowd and Ritter (2006) developed an exhaustive model which is composed of four-factor levels to conduce to missed communication: *the individual level, classroom or methodological level, socio-institutional level, and interactional level*. According to the scholars (2006), the individual level pertains to participants' current level of ICC, false or stereotypical knowledge of the target culture, personal goals and expectancies, and willingness to communicate. The classroom or methodological level consists of factors including incompatible accord between project teachers, the ineffective arrangement of tasks, the inappropriate pairing and grouping students in local and global extents, and poor communication between local group members. The socio-institutional level; which is identified as the most attributed factor level in the whole model, respects factors such as the inaccurate selection and misuse of technology, the disparity between learners'

academic programmes and organizations' assessment criteria, and the quality of cooperation between institutions. The prestige of languages plays a crucial role at this level as well. Lastly, the interactional level incorporates factors stemmed from cultural variances in verbal and non-verbal communication patterns, level of politeness, and use of mocking or ironical tone during conversations. Moreover, the exploitation of means specific to a certain culture may bring unsucccess and failure to the quality and quantity of the exchanges in this level (Thorne, 2003). Even though the aforementioned factors are classified into four levels, O'Dowd and Ritter (2006) point out that not the observation of a single factor but the aggregation of several factors in different levels cause miscommunication and eventual failure in telecollaboration.

The first stratum, the individual level concentrates on participants' emotional, intellectual, and academic backgrounds. It encompasses experiences, knowledge, skills and sentiments with which these participants contribute to the communicative process. O'Dowd and Ritter (2006) highlight two important points in this level that may bring impediments to the telecollaborative practices: *learners' present degree of ICC and their motivation and expectations* towards virtual exchanges. To begin with the intercultural competence, it refers to the ability to form effective relationships with people from diverse sociocultural upbringings by exerting a positive attitude, appropriate knowledge, necessary skills and critical cultural awareness. In telecollaboration projects, learners with low intercultural competence are generally deficient in demonstrating openness towards novelty and leniency towards otherness. Hence, they are unlikely to establish profound rapport with their culturally distinct partners. These learners usually possess stereotypical knowledge and hold prejudices against other cultures. The paucity of their legitimate cultural knowledge tends to result in misunderstandings and unfair judgements; thus, hamper effective cross-cultural communication between telecollaborators. Moreover, they mainly lack the necessary skills of discovery and interaction to conduct ethnographic interrogation (O'Dowd, 2006) and the skills of interpreting and relating to make sense of the information elicited from the members of the target culture (O'Dowd & Ritter, 2006). Therefore, they generally remain incapable of forging enriched multicultural partnerships. The challenges which may occur due to learners' low ICC levels may be overcome by pairing learners' with identical language proficiency and ICC or assigning them into groups so that they could peer review the messages together before submission to eliminate misunderstandings. Secondly, learners may have different motivational orientations and

anticipations from the same virtual exchange project. For instance, learners may be intrinsically motivated to establish friendships or extrinsically motivated to obtain high marks. Similarly, they may be in the expectation of grammatical correctness or information richness. The mismatch in their incentives and expectations may affect their focus on accuracy, response speed, and message content and length negatively (Ware, 2005). To exemplify, the short messages full of grammatical errors received from their partners may lead to disappointment and adverse functioning of the virtual exchanges. The presumptive challenge may be avoided if teachers and learners in both groups know about the present knowledge and skills of their partners and become aware of their reasons for collaboration and expectations. If learners are able to meet in a common ground and set certain standards to spare similar efforts, the effectiveness of the exchanges increases.

The second stratum, classroom or methodological level regards organizational and local group managerial factors and situates itself between individual and institutional levels. In this level, O'Down and Ritter (2006) identified five factors which set barriers for effective intercultural interplays: *bad teacher-teacher relationship, ill-structured task design, flawed student matching procedure, negative local group dynamics, and low-quality pre-exchange briefing*. First, telecollaboration is an online learning medium that functions through virtual planning and cooperation. In this form of computer-mediated communication, teachers forge collaborative partnerships with foreign teachers accommodating overseas via platforms such as eTwinning. Therefore, both teacher teams generally consist of individuals who do not know one another. In this context, it becomes strenuous for teachers to establish positive relationships and form mutual agreement on the project's terms due to temporal and spatial reasons. As a solution, teachers can build good relationships through organizing online meetings prior to project activities or prepare a common Word document asynchronously to produce the project's plans together. Secondly, task design is an important factor to be considered at the methodological level. Project teachers are generally acquainted merely with the curricular and syllabic specifications of their own country and possess insights about which topics and activities may create positive learning experiences for their own learners (O'Dowd & Ritter, 2006). Nevertheless, they are mostly uninformed about the partner organizations' curricular demands and inclined to overlook their goals and needs. Furthermore, most teachers have the tendency to implement personal information exchange and comparison and analysis tasks whereas they prefer avoiding the collaborative tasks due to their intricate nature

(O'Dowd & Ware, 2009). The biased task design and inclusion of task types with lesser communicative demand conclude in an inferior level of cross-cultural interaction. The upper-mentioned challenges can be settled by project teachers via negotiating on the curricular objectives and syllabic contents of both countries and determining mutual themes for intercultural exchanges (O'Dowd & Ritter, 2006). Moreover, they can be reduced via following the task design framework titled the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies developed by Helm and Guth in 2010 and sequencing the tasks as the personal information exchange, comparison and analysis, and collaboration and product creation tasks successively and carefully. Third, student matching procedures appear as another problematic domain of the methodological level. Students are frequently partnered on a one-to-one basis in telecollaboration modes such as the eTandem model. However, organizational limitations including crowded classrooms and time restrictions may oblige teachers to separate their learners into small groups and match them with other foreign groups in models such as Cultura and eTwinning. Although the learner twinning process is perceived as a simple endeavour, partnering students randomly may conduce to proficiency mismatch between learners, and short productions of learners with lower target language proficiency may be viewed as inhospitableness and non acceptance by learners with higher target language proficiency (Belz, 2001). In this regard, learners' age, gender, language proficiency, and learning goals must be taken into consideration in the pairing and grouping process (O'Dowd & Ritter, 2006). Moreover, the relationship between the members of a local group is as imperative as the relationship between telecollaboration partners. Specifically, learners in a local group must collaborate with one another on a regular basis, determine the time and format of their cooperative productions, and concur on the design and structure of their outputs. Nonetheless, some members may be obliged to carry the whole workload alone while others demonstrate minimum performance in the process (Chen, Shih, & Liu, 2013). For this reason, dividing the workload fairly, assigning roles for each member, and monitoring the task creation process may act effectively to deal with the negativity in local group dynamics. If learners assume that their efforts will improve the final product and be valued by their teammates, they may begin to feel a kind of personal attachment to one another (Fuchs, 2016; Jenking, 2006). Lastly, preparing a decent pre-exchange briefing is indispensable to familiarize with project partners, learn about their expectations and capabilities, and pre-determine the institutional responsibilities before beginning the telecollaboration projects (O'Dowd & Ritter, 2006) so

as to prevent probable methodological problems. Pre-exchange briefing documents which fail to establish ground rules for exchanges lead to confusion and complication in the actual virtual exchange processes. Therefore, the document must incorporate the organizational responsibilities such as the contents of the tasks, deadlines, and the digital mediums to be used; preliminary tasks and activities in line with the knowledge and abilities of both groups; and information about the partners' social and academic backgrounds, expectations, and goals (O'Dowd & Ritter, 2006).

The third stratum, socio institutional level, which has received more attention in comparison to the other factor levels in EFL literature, focuses on extrinsic domains that surpass learners' direct management and authority. In this level, O'Dowd and Ritter (2006) pinpointed three factors that affect the quality of telecollaborative exchanges negatively: *the mischoice and misuse of technology and low digital literacy skills, institutional differences in students' studies, and the disparity in prestige value of languages*. First, intelligibility and user convenience of technological mediums hold robust influence on the effectiveness of telecollaborative interplays since the selection of complicated programs or utilization of platforms requiring paid membership may obstruct learners to communicate with one another on a regular basis. For instance, Fuchs (2016) carried out research to determine the micro and macro-level problems that learners and educators encounter in online intercultural exchange projects and figured out that learners felt mentally disoriented in the first weeks of the exchange due to the intricate organization of the Moodle platform. Even though these learners got accustomed to using the platform over time, they still had difficulty in recalling with whom they communicated in prior exchanges. The author (2016) also pointed out that some learners were unable to use the pre-identified project website at home owing to political limitations in their country; hence, they endeavoured to fulfil their tasks at university within a short period of time. According to Ware (2005), this domain must be attributed importance inasmuch as the restricted access to websites and tools may reduce the length of the productions and increase the response time, causing false impressions on partners. Second, the institutional differences in educational philosophies, regulations, and practices of both telecollaboration groups may lead to the failure of the project activities. This sphere incorporates various instances including the misadjustment in academic calendars, different assessment patterns in target cultures, distinction in teachers' academic backgrounds and goals, differences in meeting schedules, the disparity in schooling and expectations, and unmatching educational

philosophy between partner organizations. Of the instances, the misalignment in academic calendars refers to the situations in which learners remain unable to abide by the schedule of the tasks and to complete their responsibilities on a timely basis. The difference in assessment patterns indicates the administration of culture-specific measurement instruments to evaluate the success of the telecollaborative exchanges of both partner groups. This factor is a complicated but vital problem domain (Helm, 2015) since an instrument that is appropriate for one culture may be insufficient to measure the contributions of and learnings in another culture. The distinction in teachers' academic backgrounds and goals signifies the circumstances in which project teachers set different goals and objectives for their learners in line with their educational upbringings and different level of field expertise. Establishing different goals may lead to the production of incompatible outputs and cause divergences in assessment procedures, damaging the reciprocity principle of telecollaboration. The differences in meeting schedules imply the mismatch in the contact hours. In other words, the time difference between project countries may influence the frequency of the partners' interaction since a message sent by a telecollaborator during daylight may be delivered to his partner during nighttime, and it may remain unanswered for a particular period of time (Yang, 2020). The disparity in educational systems between project countries diversifies the aims and expectations of teachers and learners. This inconsistency among respective partners may trigger disagreements on contents and structures of tasks and create clashes in verbal and non-verbal behaviour (O'Dowd & Ritter, 2006). Lastly, the mismatch of educational philosophies between partner institutions entails the allocated curricular freedom for educators. In other words, a telecollaboration partner may have substantial freedom to shape his classroom activities in accordance with the syllabic requirements whereas the other partner may be obliged to follow the syllabic prescriptions strictly and substantiate his educational decisions (O'Dowd & Ritter, 2006). Finally, the differences in prestige values of languages may bring about proficiency mismatch and lead to low-functioning and disengagement of groups. The telecollaboration study carried out by Belz in 2001 portrayed a good example of this factor. In her study (2001), the low prestige of the German language in the United States as compared with the high prestige of the English language in Germany induced German learners to be more linguistically proficient in the target language than their American counterparts. As a result, American students produced shorter and less detailed messages in proportion to the German learners. However, German

learners evaluated the shortness and non-elaborateness as reluctance for communication. The aforementioned socio institutional challenges are likely to be prevented by strengthening the role of teachers in telecollaboration projects. Teachers can offer assistance and instruction to enhance their learners' digital literacy skills and to generate culturally and linguistically developed outputs. They can also communicate with their partners on a regular basis so as to establish positive relationships and develop the plans and the calendars of their project collaboratively (O'Dowd & Ritter, 2006). Similarly, these problems may be avoided via introducing pre-packaged culture-general projects which incorporate a certain curricular design, schedule, measurement instruments, and alternative decisions for different contexts (Helm, 2015). Having meticulous pre-designed syllabi and project plans may not only lighten teachers' exhausting responsibilities but also ease the inclusion of telecollaborative practices into curricular activities (Helm, 2015)

The last stratum, the interactional level covers miscommunications and conflicts that derive from cultural discrepancies in learners' communicative attitude and verbal and non-verbal behaviour (O'Dowd and Ritter, 2006). This domain is mainly situated in cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics since showing emotional responses to interactional discrepancies between respective cultures is generally the leading problem causing communication breakdowns and reciprocal affirmations of negative personality characteristics (House, 2000). In a more clear sense, it signifies that interlocutors generally confuse the differences in interactional patterns with their partners' lack of engagement and bad characteristics and do not notice the actual cultural diversities in their customs and practices. This confusion is more observable in asynchronous modes inasmuch as the telecollaborators are merely exposed to written messages of their partners; therefore, they have limited temporal and spatial opportunity to ask for clarification on sensitive, ideological, political, or rhetorical statements. Similarly, bringing more depth and commitment to communication remains a serious challenge at this level. According to Ware (2005), learners are more likely to refrain from sensitive conversation topics so as to demonstrate their positive face, preventing learners from engaging in more sophisticated dialogues with their culturally distinct counterparts. Furthermore, the administration of culture-specific instruments; which is discussed among socio-institutional challenges above, frequently yields to inconsistencies between learners' aims and affects the level of communicative engagement of local and global project groups at this level. These interactional challenges may be resolved through unearthing the sensitive topics and

conflicts and negotiating on them online instead of assuming a neglective attitude towards them (Helm, 2015). Even though most educators prefer staying in the safe zone and excluding troublesome issues from their agenda (O'Dowd & Ritter, 2006), disagreements must be perceived as reformative forces to ameliorate intercultural problems and encourage perspective-taking (Helm, 2015) since intercultural posture cannot be acquired by overlooking disturbing points or power imbalance between countries. Moreover, misunderstandings and communication gaps may be prevented through peer-review and classroom feedback sessions. Ware and Kramsch (2005) recommend establishing a peer-review session for learners to check their classmates' messages before sending them to the partner institutions. Müller-Hartmann (2000a); on the other hand, suggests organizing classroom discussions and negotiating on defective and offensive statements in small groups or as a whole class.

2.4.2 Digital Storytelling (DST)

Globalization aims at improving the concept of a borderless world in which information is transmitted between nations; therefore, it has created an increasing need to build bridges across cultures to enable individuals to understand, respect and appreciate cultural variances. The prerequisite for a more interconnected world has imposed an obligation to foster the ICC of learners. In this regard, global education has demanded digital mediums which will contribute to individuals' intercultural competence, creativity, productivity, analytical thinking and collaborative skills. Among these digital instruments, digital storytelling (DST) has come to the forefront with its collaborative and intercommunicative nature.

The concept of DST, which has been distinguished in EFL and ESL literature over the last decades, has been defined with associated terms by researchers and authors. Miller (2004) described DST as a narrative entertainment which is characterized with interactivity and delivered to the public through media, internet, Web tools, and DVDs. Davis (2004) elucidated that digital stories are short tales frequently conveyed in first-person narration and demonstrated in movie format on televisions and computers. Lathem (2005) conceptualized DST as art that juxtaposes narration with contemporary technology. Bruner (1996), Kearney & Schuck (2006), and Lambert (2006) correlated DST with traditional storytelling and defined DST as the sophisticated version of traditional oral storytelling

which presents personal significance and authentic experience in a context. As the co-founder of the Center of Digital Storytelling, the organization that pioneered the practice of DST, Lambert (2003; 2006) characterized digital stories as a synergistic art which is more entertaining and authentic and identified the 7 elements of DST in his book, *Digital Storytelling Cookbook* in order to offer a beginning point for individuals to build on their digital narrations. These 7 elements are *the point of view*, *a dramatic question*, *emotional content*, *the gift of your voice*, *the power of the soundtrack*, *economy*, and *pacing* subsequently. According to Lambert (2003; 2006),

1. *Point of view* refers to the premise of a story and the target message of an author. Lambert (2006) points out that all tales are fabricated to specify a point. The point may include expressing a will, depicting an issue, giving a message, or reporting a need. The point of a tale pursues the narrative actions and unveils an awareness and understanding in consequence of the characters' experiences and their connections with the storytellers' initial goals.
2. *A dramatic question* is posed in the starting lines of a story to elevate the excitement and answered at the end of the same story. Well-written narrations establish tension in the earlier developmental stages with the aim of keeping the curiosity and enthusiasm alive until the finalization of the story. The tension is created via a dramatic question, which can be exemplified as 'Will the man win the girl's heart?' in the romance genre and 'Who is the murderer?' or 'What is the motive of the murder?' in detective stories. When an answer is provided for the question, the story is completed by the author.
3. *Emotional content* stands for arousing emotions in the audience and setting them out on a heartwarming or sorrowful journey. Presenting content which engages the audience in the story emotionally enhances the possibility to maintain their concentration and curiosity through the narration process. The emotional content is achieved when a character pays for his evil deeds and mistakes in tragedies, wipes himself out in order to save his country in the action genre, or experiences a close brush with death for the sake of love in romantic tales. This content is supported by the utilization of elements such as images, effects, music and tone of voice to appeal to the audience's interest more.

4. *The gift of your voice* means personalizing the story by using one's own voice in narration. Lambert (2003) asserts that it is among the most critical elements of DST that strengthen the power of narration since it enables the audience to lose themselves in imagination or communicate with the story. When the storyteller uses a communicative tone, the audience pauses to think on the propositions of the story for a while and produces a positive or negative response. Moreover, when the storyteller narrates the story with a pure musical tone, the audience looks back to their pasts and correlates the story with their experiences.
5. *The power of the soundtrack* represents the use of a wide range of audio materials to embellish the narrative. Effectively used musical materials may promote or reinforce the narration via intensifying the critical points and increasing the intricacy of the actions. Moreover, it may manipulate the perceptions of pictorial or video-based inputs. For instance, an instrumental soothing melody may indicate the romantic encounter between characters and assist the audience to detect the protagonist of the tale whereas a piece of incremental suspenseful music may be the representative of a forthcoming catastrophe.
6. *Economy* points out the provision of a sufficient amount of information without overwhelming the audience with excessive details. DST acts as a powerful technique to decrease the excessive use of linguistic patterns since it supports the meaning through visual and audio inputs. To exemplify, a digital story starting with the opening phrase "Once upon a time in a land far away, there was a princess..." reinforces the textual material with imagery and diminishes the number of depictions concerning the appearances of the characters and the scenery.
7. *Pacing* implies the change in the pace within the story to move the audience from one emotion to the other. Lambert (2006) suggests that various storytellers consider pacing as the genuine secret of powerful narration since well-narrated stories use effective pauses and an incremental or decremental tempo to maintain the audience's interest. Beginning with a slow pace to promote the concentration of the audience, heightening the tempo gradually to increase the tension, and decreasing the pace in some parts to enable the audience to breathe enhance the quality of digital products.

Lambert (2006) stated that even individuals with considerable storytelling experience may overlook the basics of the narrative organization; therefore, the 7 elements of DST provide a beginning point for successful productions. Drawing on the propositions of Lambert, Robin (2008) developed a more education-oriented and detailed definition and highlighted that DST offers educators assistance to overcome the limitations of using technology for productive purposes. According to Robin (2008), digital stories proceed as traditional narratives and allows individuals to determine a topic, carry out an examination, write a composition, and elaborate a remarkable story; however, they combine voice recordings, audio, video extracts, and digital mediums for the aim of distributing them to a wider public. The author (2008) also identified three forms of digital stories as *personal narratives*, *stories that inform or instruct* and *stories that examine historical events* to be used in classrooms.

- *Personal narratives* are stories which depict the storyteller's subjective experiences. These accounts may exhibit the important incidents in life, stir up emotions, and individually relate to both the creator and the spectator. Some of these narratives include the stories produced to commemorate a certain person or an event or to tackle worldly experiences, triumphs, complications, and rehabilitation. For example, Katherine Hwu shares her personal account to explain the hardships of growing as an Asian-American in the following digital story (http://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu/view_story.cfm?vid=487&otherid=featured&title=Featured%20Digital%20Stories)
- *Stories that inform and instruct* are educational accounts which are designed in various subjects so as to present the scholastic content to learners Teachers can benefit from this form of narration to provide comprehensible input for learners on subjects such as geometry, science, social sciences, geography, history, information technology, music, and language arts. For example, Heather Moore describes the act of bullying as a clinical case and proposes effective solutions to tackle the problem in the following digital story production (http://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu/view_story.cfm?vid=406&categoryid=4&title=Health/Medical)
- *Stories that examine historical events* refer to digital chronicles which are designed to depict past incidents. Learners may resort to old newspapers, archival resources,

documentaries and historical pictures to create this type of digital story. To illustrate, the students receiving education at the University of Kragujevac narrate the story of the first Serbian uprising in the following digital production (http://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu/view_story.cfm?vid=483&categoryid=16&title=History)

Robin's well-established DST definition has prompted the evolution of other definitions and perspectives in the EFL field. The University of Houston (2020) denominated other names to DST as *digital documentaries*, *digital essays*, *electronic memoirs*, and *computer-based narratives*; and defined DST as the practice of combining stories with a wide range of multimedia including audial materials, videos and electronic files. Beckett (2018) identified DST as a learning technique incorporating contemporary technology in institutional environments for educational objectives. The aforementioned definitions demonstrate that DST has been defined with related terms and concepts in the literature. This thesis will contribute to the literature further and characterize DST as a potent technology-mediated learning strategy that ascribes affective components into the semantic meanings of words by attaching video clips or pictures and integrating intonation patterns and the accent of the storyteller into the conventional stories.

The founders of DST, Lambert and Atchley introduced a three-day workshop framework in the 1990s on their website *the Center of Digital Storytelling*, which is currently named as *StoryCenter*, in order to assist thousands of people to produce their own digital narrations. The scholars still continue to provide three-day workshops online for educators and learners across the globe to offer assistance for them in the Covid-19 period. Their workshops consist of three stages labelled as *Story Circle*, *Story Creation*, and *Story Show*. The first day of the workshop, *Story Circle* is the stage in which stories are conceptualized and framed in mind. It is projected to assist learners to voice their opinions and listen to others attentively. On this day, learners come together and propose a storyline or share a memory of themselves without worrying about being ridiculed by their companions. They also tune in others' speeches without chiming in or making remarks on their utterances. This stage holds significant importance since the initial positive synergy between learners results in developing mutual trust, which yields to heightened encouragement and emotional attachment correspondingly. After learners listen to one another and decide on their story, they prepare a brief succinct intelligible outline together. According to Lambert

(2013), the temporal and textual economy is a critical element of DST; therefore, 200 words are sufficient to put down the story's plan on paper. The *Story Creation* stage is held on the second and the half of the third day of the workshop. This stage focuses on converting the outline into a digital story via following Lambert's 7 element protocol. Ribeiro (2015) points out that learners are not obligated to follow the 7 element protocol in a rigid fashion; on the contrary, they are solely recommended to receive support from it in the creation process. Narrations must convey a message, maintain curiosity and enthusiasm with its dramatic question, and stimulate the audience spiritually. Hence, the first three elements of this protocol carry scriptural importance. The scripting phase is followed by the digitization phase in which learners exploit the remaining elements in the protocol. In other words, they give voice to their story, develop its pacing, use appropriate audial materials, and support the narration via proper imagery in order to produce the desired effect on the viewers and engage them emotionally in the digital output. Finally, the DST workshop is completed with the *Story Show* stage in the second half of the third day. In this stage, learners view the produced digital narratives and are involved in an interactive process. They not only analyze and interpret others' digital stories critically but also hear and observe the responses of the audience to their own digital narratives in order to ameliorate the final products.

2.4.2.1. Historical Development of DST

Narrative understanding is one of the primordial functions of human cognition and remarkably widespread practice to coordinate individual experience (Bruner, 1991). Therefore, from cave paintings in the Upper Palaeolithic Era to social networking sites in the Digital Age, individuals have utilized narration as a means to spread their world knowledge and continue their social interactions (Gottschall and Wilson 2005). The literature review suggests that the origin of interactive narration dates back to prehistoric times when anecdotes, songs and tales were shared among people for educational and entertainment purposes. Some authors postulate that the earliest version of interactive storytelling existed around campfires in this period when ancient storytellers modified their narratives for the needs and requests of listeners (Miller, 2004). According to this postulation, ancient narrators predetermined the main idea or concepts of their stories; however, they did not script a narrative scenario prior to the storytelling event. On the

contrary, they created and built on their stories in consonance with the audience's reactions during the event. However, Miller (2004) argues that these stories portrayed a weak form of interactivity since listeners were passive processors of input and had limited control over or participation in the narration. Campbell (1990); on the other hand, hypothesizes that the earliest genre of interactive narration is myths. According to him, myths allowed for a higher level of interactivity compared to campfire storytelling since narrators did not solely read out these traditional stories. Rather, they prompted listeners to reenact a chapter or the entire story in religious rituals (Limouze, 2000). This role-play enabled listeners to be involved in the narration process actively and united individuals emotionally around a common goal. Campbell (1990) points out that the myth enactment rituals are still performed by some isolated communities who have not been influenced by contemporary ideologies.

Even though campfire storytelling and myth enactment ceremonies are represented as the initial modes of interactive storytelling in the literature, the 'playing' culture has a more direct affiliation with interactive storytelling (Miller, 2004). Similar to campfire narrations and rituals, this culture traces back to the prehistoric periods when children engaged in different games necessitating both physical strength and power of imagination. Addo and Castle (2015) categorize the 'play' forms as individual play, cooperative play, competitive play, coextensive play, creative play, allegorical or emotional play, inactive play, formative play, observer play, and perceptual-motor play. Role-plays contain the characteristics of almost all aforementioned categories and stimulate both children's and adults' interests. Specifically, role play activities necessitate individuals to create an imaginary scenario, sequence the actions, adopt fabricated roles, and animate a scene by using an appropriate accent and body language. They follow a flexible plotline and carry an emotional dimension with their dramatic tensions and sentimental content. They may be put on as solo performances in some situations; however, they are mostly dynamic and collaborative experiences. In addition, they may be used as an analytical activity to prompt individuals to negotiate on the produced performance and provide feedback for future displays. As it is discussed in this paragraph, role-plays and interactive storytelling share the same interactive, entertaining, and story-based feature; therefore, role plays are attributed as the righteous predecessor of interactive storytelling in the literature.

Interactive storytelling practice evolved further with the advancement in technology over time. In the late 1980s, Joe Lambert and Dana Atchley acknowledged the innovative prospect of exploiting technological mediums and producing and disseminating narrations (Lambert, 2009). Then, they launched the Center of Digital Storytelling (CDS), which is a community arts organisation without any profit motive, and systematized a process named '*digital storytelling*'. The rationale behind their *affectio societatis* was to heighten awareness for disparaged groups and communities, which were neglected by the media in that period (Robin, 2008). With this object in mind, Lambert and Atchley collaborated to alter people's attitudes towards marginalized communities, change the government's policy towards them, ameliorate unequal power distribution system, and create a more democratic environment (Polk, 2010). Lambert was fascinated by the cost-friendly and time-effective nature of DST to reflect on the life stories of the disparaged with great efficacy (Tucker, 2006); hence, the co-founders resorted to digital stories to change the power imbalance between the powerful and vulnerable, fight for the social equality, and create prosperity in the whole country. They developed and published the Seven Elements of DST, which is mentioned in the previous chapter, to provide a guideline for beginners to create their own digital narratives. In addition, they offered training programmes to assist them to produce their own personalized digital story outputs to allow them to voice their distress and influence others. The educators changed the name of the CDS to StoryCenter in 2015 and upgraded the content of their programmes to reach the large masses.

Since the early 1990s, DST has progressed to respond to the growing needs of the societies living in the Digital Age. The 21st century's storytelling has advanced further with the improvement in recording and editing technology and the establishment of social networking sites. The cybernated instruments imperative for creating digital narrations including computers, voice recorders, and photographic equipment have become more ubiquitous and have been sold at more reasonable prices in the new millennium. The development of more economical and robust operating systems has assisted even the neophytes to turn into content creators and revisors by juxtaposing audial, textual and visual materials, enabling them to narrate their own stories, and conveying their personal experiences (Greenfield, 2015). Their affordability and practicality have yielded dramatic growth in the utilization areas of DST medium. The numbers of sectors administering digital stories have increased over the last few years respectively. Community initiatives and research organizations have begun to benefit from DST in education, health care

services, museums, libraries and initiatives to promote the notion of citizenship (Dunford, 2017). Furthermore, StoryCenter's humanistic approach towards marginalized societies has continued to gain strength in this millennium and contributed to the democratic evolution and liberation of disparaged communities (Beckett, 2018). Illustrations concerning pains and losses of communities are believed to remind all humanity's responsibilities for one another; thus, they result in the amelioration of social and historical disputes between societies. In this context, DST offers therapeutic and community development potentials (de Jager, Fogarty, Tewson, Lenette, & Boydell, 2017) and works as a powerful instrument to portray the current hardships of minority groups and to provide services to cultivate acceptance in individuals from diverse backgrounds.

2.4.2.2. Advantages of DST Use in ESL and EFL Education

DST is a scholarly practice that has engaged the attention of researchers and educators in recent decades. Researchers have conducted a wide range of studies placing DST medium as an independent variable and measuring its effect on the linguistic, social and individual growth of learners. These studies have illustrated that DST is a potent digital learning technique which encompasses multifarious advantages for learners and educators. Some of these advantages are presented below in this section.

In-depth learning transpires when learners are motivated to harmonize information into meaningful visual and rhetorical representations in line with their own perceptions (Mayer, 2003). DST advocates this learning process since it enables learners to combine pictorial, oral, and inscribed evidence in the creation process and comprehend the concepts and messages through written, audial, and visual channels simultaneously in the demonstration phase. Designing a digital story requires not only the manipulation of information and utilization of technology but the authors' reflection on experience as well (Barrett, 2005). Designers mesh images with meaningful messages they aim to convey and manifest their perceptions to an audience (Walters, Green, Wang, & Walters, 2011). The DST medium influences the audience by sharing authentic experiences within a narration and enables them to intertwine layers of multimedia content with target messages which may not be conveyed through traditional storytelling methods (Brushwood Rose, 2009). Davis (2005) states that the audience learns from this experience by reflecting on the circumstance, defining its meaning, and converting it into a symbolic system to be declared and relieved

in mind. In other words, the enriched experiences assist the audience to understand, transform, and recite information and learn about the circumstances (Applebee, 1978; Bruner, 1991). In addition, digital stories offer language learners a fundamental opportunity to construct their own knowledge. It is not obligatory for these digital outputs to reflect the narrator's own point of view; they can be designed to scrutinize historical events, inform or instruct (Robin, 2008) as well. They collect, examine and unify visual elements and written texts for the aim of providing more clear input for learners to reshape and process it. Burmark (2004) suggests that DST integrates images with compositions, and this integration reinforces and facilitates students' comprehension skills. Robin (2008) emphasizes that DST concretizes abstract or conceptual notions, provides a clearer image on learners' minds and presents more comprehensible content for them. In other words, DST instruments expose learners to comprehensible input which is meaningful for them to process it and make modifications in schemata, yet challenging for them to step out of their comfort zone and spare effort to learn. Therefore, it encourages the in-depth learning of events and educational materials through narratives.

DST functions as an effective interactive medium to develop critical and creative thinkers who are able to solve 21st-century problems. To begin with creative thinking, it refers to the inventive cognitive process which allows individuals to produce unique, unconventional, and fresh alternatives as well as broadening and cultivating the existing possibilities. The social, economic, educational and environmental challenges of the 21st century necessitate the new generation to be creative and innovative in order to define the problems, raise the target questions, search for alternatives, and generate solutions. However, learners are not accustomed to engaging in artistic processes and demonstrating creative performances; therefore, these operations generally eventuate in failure and disappointment (Nyboe and Drotner, 2008). Formal education is principally established on predetermined hypotheses and answers; hence, it remains limited to prepare them to act creatively and productively in situations which require proceeding towards the unknown (Nyboe and Drotner, 2008). DST offers an innovative sphere to formal instruction with its multimodality and constructive nature. It utilizes a wide range of technological mediums to assist learners to become creative narrators via choosing a theme, drafting a scenario, and creating an appealing plotline (Liu, Yang, & Chao, 2019). The scripting process is then supported by the integration of multimedia materials such as digital diagrams, voice recordings, subtitles, and video extracts so that these narrations can be published on digital

platforms (Robin, 2006). This learning method transcends the passive acquisition of knowledge and enables learners to communicate their perceptions through triangulating written, auditory, and pictorial components (Ohler, 2013) with the power of their imagination. On the other hand, critical thinking, which is defined as the main goal of schooling by Dewey (1910), is the intellectual and analytical ability to contemplate actions and beliefs through reasoning. The social, financial, academic, and environmental issues in the 21st century entail the development of learners' critical thinking skills to assist them to identify problem areas, mount arguments, make logical inferences, and exploit these inferences to provide solutions. Moreover, the information overload in this century requires learners to assess the accuracy and reliability of proposed documents through their cognitive filters. Nonetheless, conventional disciplined-based techniques in modern-day formal education fall short to address the critical thinking needs of learners. In this context, DST acts as a potent medium to facilitate learners' analytical and cognitive growth. When learners construct their digital narratives, they collect information to strengthen the storyline, confront real life-like problems, and ascribe these problems onto their characters. They also benefit from several literacies and language skills when they synthesize physical components such as audial, visual and written materials with receptive and productive language skills. Arranging the order of the visual components in their story necessitates critical awareness to consolidate the theme of their story (Walters et al., 2011); therefore, the creation process itself results in active cognitive engagement and enhanced critical thinking ability of learners (Ribeiro, 2014). In addition to the creation phase, narrating their own story or tuning in others' stories contains analytical components since they are to exploit several critical thinking skills including persuasion, deduction, and evaluation in the process (Sims, 2004). Furthermore, evaluation of other participants' digital stories demands high cognitive engagement and prompts learners to learn how to critique their own products as well as others, fostering their social and emotional intelligence (Robin, 2008) and critical thinking skills respectively.

Language is a system of communication that is constructed on linguistic and paralinguistic rules to convey messages. Therefore, motivating learners and engaging them in authentic interplays are significant elements of successful language learning. In this context, DST enhances the learning motivation and communicative performance of learners even in the earlier stages of education. Literature documents that synthesizing textual, visual, and audial elements while preparing digital stories promotes learners' involvement in learning

(Foelske, 2014; Liu et al., 2019; Yang & Wu, 2012). It also postulates that the multimodality of DST draws their attention to the instructional activity and boosts their learning enthusiasm (Chan, Churchill, & Chiu, 2017). Specifically, learners who have the tendency to behave timidly to pass their remarks in a classroom environment display a genuine willingness to communicate their opinions and beliefs through digital narratives. This expressive convenience can be attributed to the fact that these narratives hearten them to reflect on their experiences without difficulty and increase their motivation to convey their viewpoints (Kim, 2014). Moreover, creating digital stories ascribes author qualities to learners and enables them to develop a sense of ownership over their final products (Dumova, 2008). This authorism and ownership encourage them to search for an audience via digital means, enhance their self-worth, and strengthen their motivation subsequently. This motivational enhancement plays a supportive role to develop learners' communicative abilities through DST practices. To explain it more clearly, creating digital stories stimulates individuals' interest to communicate with the digital text and one another with a great number of purposes including sharing knowledge, spending pleasant time or transferring personal heritage (Zipes, 2013). In this process, learners carry out researches on a subject, exchange opinions, pass on remarks, raise questions, prepare an outline, and designate eloquent stories while creating digital stories; and it provides them with the opportunity to promote their communication skills (Robin, 2008). Furthermore, they narrate their stories multiple times in the vocalization phase for coherence and intelligibility, and this activity improves their spoken ability as well (Kim, 2014). As it is presented above, DST contributes to learners' motivation and oral proficiency, and it equips them with the courage to participate in cross-cultural storytelling practices. Digital technology broadens the amount and type of semiotic properties to build stories, accelerates the dissemination processes, and presents a bilingual approach through subtitles and voice recordings; and this mechanism fortifies cross-cultural storytelling in which interculturality is a pivotal factor (Anderson & Macleroy, 2017). This storytelling model makes it possible for the youth to recognize their own culture, learn about differences in other cultures, compare their cultural identity with those of others, and develop a unified worldview. It also affords young people to explore, question and transform the modern culture and commence to shape their own multicultural identities (Anderson & Macleroy, 2017). This sophisticated process yields to the enhancement in learners' ICC in an effective fashion and allows them to develop an intercultural posture.

DST exceeds the language barriers and attaches importance to the issue of identity, which has been overlooked in modern literacies (Anderson & Macleroy, 2017). Conventionally, educators have resorted to several textual techniques such as writing journals or diaries and keeping portfolios since they posit that practicing writing enables students to learn how to express themselves (Freidus, 1991) and reflect on their feelings, behaviours, and thoughts (Walters et al., 2011). According to Blocher (2008), storytelling may serve as a more effective reflective technique compared to the aforementioned traditional methods. The rationale behind this argument is that even the construction phase of DST prompts content designers to reflect on their inner selves (Sandars, Murray, & Pellow, 2008; Ribeiro, 2014). The designers compose the script and arrange images, videos, and audial materials consciously or unconsciously. They also include diverse elements from their own personal experiences and inquire about the culture they were born into. In this respect, the final product represents the designers' worldly understanding and a part of their identity (Ribeiro, 2011; Ribeiro, Moreira, & Pinto da Silva, 2011). Moreover, these digital outputs permit communication of emotions; thus, they render to the development of a sense of belonging (Oatley 2002) and help the audience to manage their emotions produced out of earthly experiences (Kurakin, 2010). Since DST enables individuals to express their feelings and reflect on their experiences, this technological medium also becomes the voice of the disadvantaged and vulnerable groups (Macleroy, 2015). Digital narratives are robust mechanisms to voice the inequalities and shift to a more equitable schooling system through thrusting the marginalized forward and dealing with critical agendas usually avoided within classroom walls (Thumbran, 2010). They allow the marginalized to break their silence and reveal their physically or mentally agonizing memories. This form of DST is defined as *critical digital storytelling* or *digital counter storytelling* (Rolon-Dow, 2011). However, the effectiveness of this form of narration is disputed in literature inasmuch as it may result in emphasizing the power relationships between societies and strengthening the discrimination between them further (Stewart & Gachago, 2016).

2.4.3. Telecollaborative DST and Related Studies in the World

We live in an interconnected world in which worldwide interaction and integration among individuals, organizations, and societies are of significant importance to sustain trade, diplomacy, global health, world heritage, and intercultural education. Therefore, ELT

literature acknowledges the requirement for a learning movement which will reform the purpose of language education as fulfilling the needs of the interdependent world; as a result, increasing individuals' cultural awareness and cross-cultural communication skills. As the world presents written materials, spoken words, and audial and visual elements in merged fashion, the learning movement which will respond to the intercommunicative needs of this interconnected world must also juxtapose these written, oral, comprehension-based and visual elements in its system to provide real-life like experience and authentic learning opportunity to the learners. In this regard, telecollaborative DST is a potent learning technology which provides a multimodal composition of images, videos, recordings and texts to convey personal and cultural information through narration.

In the globalized world, it is of prime importance to foster learners' intercultural communication competence which is characterized as the capability to tackle complex situations resulting from different cultures and customs ingeniously (UNESCO, 2013, p.5). For this purpose, designing telecollaborative digital stories about cultures and intercultural matters may help students engage in a knowledge construction process by looking for and adjusting information and refining the evidence deduced from their own culture and other cultures (Ribeiro, 2014). This mechanism encourages learners to build their worldview based on their own cultural background (Ribeiro, 2014). In addition, Guo and Jamal (2010) suggest that relativizing one's self with others is fundamental to comprehend the worldviews of others, and the concept of otherness may be an intrinsic process through self-reflection and an extrinsic process when they are employed with activities obliging them to develop alternative perspectives. Since telecollaborative DST is an activity of such kind, it functions effectively to prompt learners to step out of their comfort zone and develop a sense of otherness by internalizing cross-cultural viewpoints and constructing their own understanding.

The growth in cross-institutional collaboration in education underlines the significance of virtual exchange techniques which operate for intercultural interaction and multicultural learning. Virtual learning platforms and mediums catalyse heightened interaction and collaboration (Epper & Garn, 2004) for cross-cultural intentions. Intercultural interaction entails learners to have a thorough understanding of disagreements and misconceptions that may emerge during a cross-cultural interaction, to grasp the underlying reasons for these misconceptions, and to associate the encountered problems with differences in

cultures (Degens, Hofstede, Beulens, Krumhuber, & Kappas, 2016). In this respect, a culture-general digital instrument which will foster individuals' IS and ICC is essential for educational organizations to facilitate cross-cultural communication and develop a sense of mutual respect and acceptance between individuals. A culture general instrument will not restrict the knowledge to a specific culture; on the contrary, it will embody a wide range of knowledge about distinctive cultures and instruct individuals on how to resolve conflicts resulting from behavioural, attitudinal and intellectual differences of other cultures. For this purpose, researchers have commenced conducting studies on the influence of DST as a culture-general tool on the ICC of learners. Several authors have argued that rather than utilizing digital stories for the learner's cognitive development, they can be exploited as a social practice to question, analyse, and contribute to the "real world" (Jolls & Wilson, 2014). An individual must contextualize his experiences socially and culturally through narratives if he aims at making sense of wider social domains (Greene, 1995; Bruner, 2004). From this perspective, DST allows content creators to reflect their perceptions of the world within a context and enables an audience to negotiate on the presented social and cultural knowledge and build on their intercultural competence. Hence, DST is perceived as an effective medium to assist learners to understand their own self and the world itself and to develop their ICC.

In the study of Pegrum, Oakley, Lim, Xiong, and Yan in 2014, Australian and Chinese students were assigned to prepare digital stories about their lifestyles and local cultures and exchange these stories with their transatlantic peers in the common language, English. The researchers observed challenges relevant to learners' incompatible expectations about their foreign partners during various phases of the project; nevertheless, it was evident in the collected data that students practiced language, acquired some awareness about other cultures, obtained a wide range of cultural knowledge, and demonstrated enthusiasm, determination and altruism to find a common ground with their peers from overseas. (Pegrum et al., 2014). In this study, researchers portrayed that exchanging digital stories equip learners with intercultural knowledge and raise their cross-cultural sensitivity and enthusiasm.

Truong-White and McLean (2015) viewed intercultural competence from a different standpoint and explored the potential of telecollaborative DST to raise global citizens who are aware of and understand the wider world and their own stance in it. They administered

digital stories to connect secondary and high school students around the globe. The study's findings revealed that curricular activities involving telecollaborative DST enhanced interaction with different points of views and self-reflection. Virtual digital story exchanges between culturally diverse classes permitted students to study on miscellaneous perspectives and realities, to generate solutions to the problems stemming from telecollaborative DST projects, and to deduce unusual knowledge to acquire global citizenship skills.

Learners' understanding of cross-cultural matters was explored through telecollaborative digital stories by Ribeiro in 2016. Ribeiro (2016) concentrated on the notion of culture, monochronic and polychronic cultures, high and low context cultures, cultural variances, multicultural abilities, culture shock, and the need to develop a holistic worldview before she presented DST activities. Students' views pointed out that learning about and discussing these concepts had a positive impact on their digital story projects since they gained new perspectives, and these perspectives helped them to develop the ability to debate over miscellaneous opinions and views. Students believed that they were capable of uniting ideas and talents while they were creating their digital stories and attaching their opinions about intercultural matters. Moreover, learning about cultural notions and gaining insights over cultural variances contributed to learners' awareness of their own cultural identity and enabled them to differentiate between their own culture and others even though countries' lifestyles and traditions are similar. In this study, online DST exchange projects promoted learners' intercultural communication competence by encouraging learners to contemplate cross-cultural matters and personalizing their experiences.

Anderson & Macleroy (2017) carried out a prominent study on interculturality and identity across primary, secondary and high schools in 2017. In this study, students were assigned to create digital stories on subjects such as ethnicity, fairness and migration which have global value and importance. Students approached delicate and challenging global problems in an emphatic and endearing manner and produced digital stories by juxtaposing their voice recordings, memoirs, and histories. This telecollaborative DST project allowed learners to merge entertainment with their critical evaluation skills and prompted them to construct influential digital stories by exploring their self and culture and critiquing on intercultural issues and different cultures' stances towards them. This process permitted

students to foster their intercultural identity and to obtain a sense of shared social reliability.

Oakley, Pegrum, Xiong, Lim, & Yan (2018) designed a study to determine the strengths and weaknesses of online DST exchanges between Australian and Chinese learners in 2018. In this study, the digital stories prepared by Australian and Chinese students aimed to increase learners' intercultural and language competence. Challenges and acknowledgements of this cross-cultural DST practice were specified through teacher observation. As a result, it was figured out that teachers embraced the idea of telecollaborative DST since it enabled learners to exchange cultural information and interact with teachers and learners from a different country. Even though problems arose due to lack of technological resources or digital competence, DST practice was found effective to develop intercultural communication skills and provide authentic learning objectives for students.

Yang (2018) carried out a comprehensive study to investigate digital stories' impact to attain a global audience. The researcher assigned students to prepare short video-based English digital stories in order to perform intercultural synthesis. In this study, students worked collaboratively to design their digital stories and asked for peer reviews from international students. The students revised their digital story outputs after they received feedback from their partners overseas and presented them globally. What is striking in these digital stories was the fact that students created unreasonable digital designs such as integrating a taxi driver who rides a scooter or a gleaming attractive woman beside the stream. However, these videos, which are similar to YouTube streams, were perceived with entertainment and humour by the global youth (Yang, 2018).

The literature review presented in this thesis illustrates that constructing telecollaborative digital stories and exchanging them with transatlantic peers allow learners to comprehend their own cultural identity, enable them to relativize themselves with other cultures, and provide them with a deeper understanding of intercultural issues. In this regard, telecollaborative DST is a robust learning strategy to respond to the needs of globalized education in this interconnected world. For this purpose, embedding virtual exchange DST tasks into formal educational activities will promote learners' ICC and permit them to acquire the worldview they must obtain to take a strong position in the world.

2.4.4. Telecollaborative DST and Related Studies in the Turkish Context

In the 21st century, technology use has come into prominence in almost every field from health services and engineering to arts and entertainment, and the field of education has remained no exception. With the large part of the production processes being carried out with the opportunities provided by technological opportunities in the contemporary world, technologically supported training has become an inevitable element in the education system of Turkey. Moreover, the enhancement in and proliferation of technology has rendered today's youth to administer social media and other CMC mediums actively to interact with individuals across borders. According to the study conducted at Near East University (2021), 84.6% of Turkish children benefit from the computer network dynamically to make new friends, play international games, watch videos from various channels, and contact culturally distinct people via social networking sites. Therefore, equipping the youth with intercultural understanding and sensitivity and enabling them to acquire an intercultural posture has gained more importance than ever at present. To encourage the intercultural dimension of contemporary education and raise more interculturally competent individuals, Turkey participated in the eTwinning platform in 2009 and incorporated it into the extra-curricular requirements of schools. This telecollaboration platform was also integrated into Erasmus+ programme guides in 2014 and described as a pre-requisite for projects to reinforce their physical mobilities by organizing virtual mobilities. Even though online intercultural exchanges have been extensive at the tertiary education level in Turkey over two decades (Keranen & Bayyurt, 2006; Moalla, Abid, & Balaman, 2020; Saricaoglu, 2021; Uzum, Akayoglu, & Yazan, 2020; Taskiran, 2018; Toscu, 2021), these virtual exchanges were limited in primary and secondary education prior to the participation in eTwinning platform due to the difficulties of finding suitable partners, non-flexible curricular prescriptions, and the paucity in pedagogical knowledge and practices to take inspiration. However, joining the eTwinning website and unifying teachers all around Turkey in the same platform have enabled Turkish teachers to communicate with foreign teachers, form their own virtual exchange projects, get assistance from their project partners, and conduct their project activities in alignment with their curricular responsibilities without encountering any hindrances. In this regard, the number of telecollaborative projects has begun to increase at primary and secondary education levels in Turkey thanks to the eTwinning platform. However, these projects have mostly remained small-scaled and inadequate in assessment procedures.

Concordantly, the volumes of academic publications have remained limited at these levels owing to the difficulty in establishing a comprehensive methodology and selecting appropriate measurement instruments for young language learners.

Initially, young language learners were regarded as research objects to be studied, assessed, and negotiated on (Neill, 2005). Their opinions were sought through surrogates such as their parents, instructors or sanitarians (Alderson, 1993). Therefore, the earlier virtual exchange studies at primary and secondary education levels in Turkey have concentrated on the teachers' and parents' observations, insights, and perceptions. The study carried out by Akdemir (2017) offers a good example in this context. Akdemir (2017) explored the influence of the eTwinning platform on the language learning process by drawing on the practices and experiences of teachers who were rewarded with Quality Labels due to their successful operations. He collaborated with 7 foreign language teachers through virtual means and collected the qualitative data via semi-structured interviews. The findings pointed out that the central benefit of the telecollaborative exchanges was the improvement in learners' ICC since they enabled learners to enhance their intercultural knowledge, attitudes towards otherness, and discovery and interpreting skills. In addition, they reported that peer feedback provided by foreign peers was perceived as less intimidating compared to the teacher-oriented feedback and contributed to the learners' foreign language accuracy. The study documented the challenges encountered in the virtual exchange projects as well as the advantageous points of the interplays. The negative attitudes of school administrators to protect the digital devices at schools and the obligation to strictly follow the curricular requirements were portrayed as the main challenges hampering the quality of the online intercultural exchange practices in this study.

Similar to Akdemir's (2017) study, Bal (2019) conjectured that the perspectives and experiences of teachers play a critical role to improve pupils' ICC. To this end, the author investigated 165 teachers' viewpoints of ICC and their operations to promote their learners' ICC in his thesis. In the light of the aforementioned objectives, he administered a survey to acquire detailed descriptive data concerning the subjects and semi-structured interviews to elicit their opinions and practices of ICC. The researcher figured out that teachers mostly focused on the domains of knowledge and attitudes to define the existence of ICC and set forth that many students had low ICC due to their stereotypical knowledge and low motivational orientation. Respecting the knowledge domain, students had neither in-depth knowledge and understanding about their own and the target culture nor regular

intercultural experience to contribute to their cultural awareness. Concerning the attitude domain; on the other hand, students held prejudices against foreign cultures and perceived intercultural learning as a threat to lose their identity. Moreover, the teachers stated that coursebooks and learning materials remained limited to promote the ICC of learners since they did not contain adequate transnational information or cultural activities. Therefore, the teachers engaged in various practices to enhance the transnational knowledge and attitudes of their students. They made presentations about the customs, celebrations, and eating habits of different nations, assigned documentaries and videos for their learners, set homework to enable them to research on and introduce different cultures, and conducted international projects including eTwinning, Erasmus+, PenPal, and Grundtvig. Based on their cross-cultural project operations requiring learners to communicate with people from culturally distinct backgrounds, several teachers stated that their students learnt about cultural similarities as well as differences. Their learners not only practiced on the target language but also developed their understanding of the respective cultures, and it made valuable contributions to their ICC.

The improvements in child rights and the appreciation of sociocultural psychology in language education have led to the development of a new perspective in children's research in recent decades (Avramović, 2013). This new paradigm has contrasted with the traditional epistemological perspective of 'research on children' in which young language learners are viewed as objects to be measured and produced the perspective of 'research with or by children' in which they are considered as active participants and builders of academic research (Avramović, 2013). In other words, the position of children has been upgraded to co-researchers or collaborators in academic research (Pinter, 2019). In contemporary research, young learners are able to cooperate with researchers to determine and shape the research questions, select suitable methods for their learning and examination, and announce the results (Kellett, 2005). The understanding of research with children has gained momentum in the Turkish context in the last few years and given rise to the studies exploring the perspectives of young language learners. An example of such a project belongs to Bozdağ (2018b) in the context of telecollaborative DST. Bozdağ (2018b) carried out an in-depth analysis of a virtual exchange project with the aim of gaining a sophisticated understanding of how online intercultural exchange practices are being incorporated into the regular activities of educational institutions. With this purpose, the researcher examined an eTwinning project titled 'The Collaboration Project' regulated

between a German and a Turkish secondary state school in 2013. The partner schools' main aspiration to launch this project was developing the intercultural posture of their learners and promoting the notion of world citizenship in them. With this motivation, the German and Turkish teachers benefitted from Skype as a main videoconferencing medium and arranged their classrooms to meet online in elective English lessons on a weekly basis. In these online meetings, the teachers placed web cameras in their classrooms and connected to the partner classroom online. First, the students in both classrooms gave surprises to one another by wearing costumes and masks or performing a show including singing a cup song. When the students welcomed one another virtually, the video conferences were halted for a brief period of time so that the teachers could read a brief passage about the week's topic aloud. Then, the video conferences were resumed, and the teachers asked questions relevant to the topic to the partner classrooms. The German and Turkish students responded to the questions posed by the partner countries' teachers. The synchronous telecollaborative exchanges on Skype were supported with asynchronous DST and presentation tasks to ensure a higher degree of intercultural engagement and learning in this project. The effectiveness of the synchronous and asynchronous activities of the project was measured via observations and interview sessions with students and teachers. The findings revealed that the synchronous meetings were perceived as strictly structured and teacher-centred by the participants. The students felt as if the teachers were the ones who communicated in the online sessions while most of the learners were passive listeners, and it resulted in boredom and disengagement in the process. They also highlighted that there emerged disagreements between the learners' and teachers' perceptions concerning the success of the project activities. The teachers defined the project activities as successful and stated that students effectively communicated with one another and developed their intercultural understanding and skills. However, the focus group interviews with the students exposed that students only recited the dialogues written by their teachers in the online sessions; hence, they could not construct an authentic conversation with their foreign peers. Lastly, the results indicated that the cultural information presented in the asynchronous assignments and Skype meetings remained at a superficial level since only information about the national cultures of the countries were introduced whereas the critical subjects were overlooked in the process.

Vahed and Soleimani (2020) established an online virtual exchange project in order to find out what metacognitive devices introduced by Bahtina (2013) were present in young

language learners' interplays, if the English language had a dominant stance in transnational communications, and what outcomes and challenges the telecollaborative practice produced. For this project, the researchers selected 12 Iranian and 12 Turkish secondary school students and assigned them into multinational groups in accordance with the conformity in students' personality traits. The BigBlueButton application was administered for the synchronous telecollaborative exchanges, and 10 sessions were held to allow the language learners to communicate with one another. The telecollaboration sessions were succeeded by interview sessions to elicit the participants' feelings, opinions, and experienced problems. The analysis demonstrated that students mostly utilized the English language to interact with their culturally distinct partners in the sessions as opposed to the conventional speaking activities in the classrooms in which they hold the tendency to welcome every opportunity to speak in their mother tongue. It also revealed that students with high motivational orientation addressed sophisticated questions so as to gather individual, cultural, customary, and notional information from their partners. The posed questions stimulated further discussions and allowed them to compare and contrast the partner country's knowledge with their own cultural knowledge and complete one another's utterances based on the acquired information, enabling them to enhance their cultural awareness. Moreover, the results exhibited that learners' attitudes improved over time since they began to develop tolerance towards dissimilarities and a sense of otherness. Demir and Kayaoğlu (2021) investigated the telecollaborative experiences of secondary school students with the aim of identifying the position of the eTwinning platform in a disadvantageous region of Turkey to enhance learners' foreign language proficiency, digital competence, and intercultural awareness. For the present study, the authors participated in an eTwinning project and collaborated with Azerbaijan and 8 other European countries for 8 months. The teachers in the project countries assigned their learners to introduce themselves, demonstrate the seasons in their countries via photographs, provide potato recipes, discuss the negative aspects of wars to voice the voiceless, present the must-see places and attractions in their country, share their artistic hobbies and scientific experiences, present their country's brief historical background, perform entertaining web-based activities, discuss internet safety rules and digital detox, and produce a multinational electronic magazine as a collaborative output at the end of the project. The data were collected via interviews, documents, and observation reports from 23 Turkish and Azarbaijane students and 2 teachers accommodating in the respective

countries. The data analysis highlighted that students had the opportunity to use their foreign language knowledge and skills in an authentic context with the assistance of their teachers. The guidance of the teachers lowered their initial communication apprehension, and regular intercultural interaction contributed to their oral skills. The findings also uncovered that the participants learned the usage of new digital tools and websites effectively and enhanced their understanding of safe internet use and etiquette, which promoted their media literacy and digital competence. Furthermore, the results indicated that the students constructed on their cultural knowledge by learning their partners' lifestyle, hobbies, and likes and dislikes etc., built positive attitudes and showed willingness to involve in the project activities, and developed their skills of interpreting and relating while processing the digital stories and asynchronous presentations of their partners and their skills of discovery and interaction while communicating with their partners on social networking sites synchronously. The improvement in their knowledge, attitudes, and skills contributed to their ICC and enabled them to raise their cultural awareness.

Moalla, Abid, and Balaman (2020) intended to provide their students with an opportunity for their intercultural and communicative growth via cooperative and intercommunicative assignments. For this purpose, they launched a telecollaboration project between Hacettepe University and Sfax University and involved 38 students in this project. This telecollaboration project was planned for 4 weeks. Before the project activities, each student from Sfax University was paired up with a student from Hacettepe University to engage in dialogic encounters. The pairs' first meeting was projected into the personal information task; hence, the learners were assigned to exchange individual knowledge about themselves. This meeting was accompanied by five proceeding synchronous meetings in which the pairs were assigned to engage in ten tasks in total. The students were offered 20 minutes to fulfil each task. On the completion of the project tasks, the students' performances were measured and evaluated in accordance with their ability to preserve suave dialogues with one another, explore the target culture, conduct self-cultural introspection, hinder communication mishaps, adapt and alter their behaviours, and establish further communication. Even though the telecollaboration project was regulated between Turkey and Tunisia, the scope of the study remained limited to the gains of the Tunisian students since the Turkish students' gains were restricted to their reflective assignments. The data acquired from the Tunisian bloc reported that the Tunisian students

enhanced their intercultural knowledge and attitude towards otherness. Similarly, they highlighted that the students promoted their skills of discovery and interacting and achieved to deal with emergent communication gaps during the synchronous encounters. Moreover, the findings indicated that the students succeeded in acquiring intercultural awareness by recognizing commonalities and divergences between the respective cultures. Finally, the data illustrated that the students demolished their initial ethnocentric attitudes and developed ethnorelativist perspectives.

Aytas and Kaya (2021) aimed at promoting the reading and writing skills of their learners in the target language, enhancing their intercultural understanding, and increasing the authentic language use in their classrooms through DST practice. To this end, the researchers created a telecollaborative project titled ‘Tale Architects’ on the eTwinning platform and cooperated with secondary school teachers and students in Ukraine, Romania, and Lithuania to produce multinational digital narratives. Before beginning the virtual exchange project activities, teachers and students from different sociocultural backgrounds prepared the project’s activities and calendar together. When a suitable calendar was tailored for all participants, it was brought into action to complete the tasks in a timely fashion. In the first phase, the students introduced themselves through brief digital narratives and online games to form acquaintances between them. In the second phase, the project participants formed local teams, decided on a national narrative, and wrote it in the target language for their culturally distinct peers in the digital format. The team members prepared vocabulary and comprehension questions for their digital stories as well. Quiz Nights were organized by the teams of each country so that the prepared questions were to be answered by the students and their parents overseas together. In the final phase, students were assigned into global teams and provided with a role to produce collaborative digital stories. Each member of the teams added one character to the story, and they set the backgrounds of the scenes, determined the problem statement of the narratives, and wrote the utterances of the characters in a cooperative fashion. Even though the personal information exchange, comparison and analysis, and collaborative tasks were carried out thoroughly in the process, the researchers could not gather in-depth data due to the school closures in the Covid-19 process. However, the small-scaled data acquired by the participants demonstrated that young learners began to comprehend the cultural correspondences as well as the differences between the respective cultures and to feel more competent to use their skills to interact with students across borders.

Ozcan Ozalan (2021) launched two collaborative projects on the eTwinning platform with the aim of engaging her learners in authentic interactions and enhancing their intercultural competence and foreign language proficiency. The first project was carried out on the subject of immigration and involved secondary school students who were studying in the 5th, 6th, and 7th grades of the project schools located in Turkey and Azerbaijan. Since the project was constructed on refugeeism, the subject group consisted of not only Turkish and Azarbaijane students but students from refugee backgrounds as well. In order to enhance the acceptance and integration of refugee students in mainstream schools, the project activities involved creating a logo collaboratively, writing poems about immigration and refugees, singing songs about peace, and meeting online and having a picnic together through Skype. Since the refugee students did not know the Turkish language, the project activities and interactions were regulated via the English language throughout the project. The second study; on the other hand, focused on poetry and involved secondary school students who were studying in the 5th, 6th, and 7th grades of the project schools located in Turkey, Italy, Romania, Albania, Georgia, Ukraine and Azerbaijan. In this project, the students communicated with their European peers via e-mails, wrote poems about their native country and shared it via digital presentations, exchanged postcards reciprocally in the Christmas period, and produced joint poem books. The results of both telecollaborative projects indicated that the online intercultural exchanges enhanced the Turkish participants' attitudes towards intercultural interactions, self-esteem to participate in future virtual exchange projects, and motivation for language learning. Similarly, they allowed the participants to use the target language meaningfully and functionally; therefore, promoted their linguistic knowledge and communication skills. Furthermore, they enabled the participants to develop empathy and tolerance towards otherness and boosted their IS.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

Globalization necessitates the increasing interdependence of nations' economies, cultures, and services; therefore, it demands continuous integration and interaction of nations. In this global world, individuals are obliged to develop their ICC with the aim of acquiring a sense of otherness and exchanging ideas, goods and information. In order to cater for the needs of the global world and foster the ICC of learners, researchers and scholars have searched for a learning technique which is authentic to function in real life. In this respect, telecollaborative DST is selected by numerous scholars and researchers inasmuch as digital stories provide real-life like experiences for learners. Telecollaborative DST technique implies interweaving not only multimodal components such as visuals, audial materials with texts and ideas, but also receptive and productive language skills, which is identical to real-life where every skill is utilized in an integrated fashion to achieve an objective. In this regard, EFL literature perceives it as a robust mechanism to promote the ICC of learners effectively and appropriately.

Literature review reveals that potent virtual exchange digital story constructions engage learners with cross-cultural matters and have a positive impact on intercultural communication competence. However, most of the studies have provided an overview of findings on teenage and adult learners, and the number of studies addressing the intercultural competence of young EFL learners has remained limited in the literature. Furthermore, the number of studies exploring the influence of intercultural storytelling on identity construction, self-representation, and intercultural development is insufficient even

though the traditional storytelling approach has been valued and embraced in the ELT field. Therefore, the present study aims at exploring the effectiveness of telecollaborative DST on ICC from young learners' perspectives accommodating across nations through the use of qualitative and quantitative analysis.

3.2. Research Design

The present study resorts to mixed methods research in line with its research questions and problem statement. A mixed methods research design is the process of acquiring, examining, and unifying both qualitative and quantitative information in an individual academic endeavour to comprehend a research problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The rationale behind the researcher's selection of this design adheres to the conjecture that the synthesis of qualitative and quantitative analysis presents a sophisticated perspective to the issues compared to sole qualitative or quantitative approaches. The combination of both designs through calculating the information through quantitative analysis and evaluating the social process via qualitative inquiry enables researchers to develop an advanced portrayal of social circumstances (Greene & Caracelli, 1997). For this reason, the researcher employs the explanatory sequential mixed methods research model to collect and analyse the data in a two-stratum system. This model includes collecting numeric information in the first stratum and gathering non-numeric data in the second stratum to clarify quantitative findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The researcher relies on the model to collect and examine quantitative information prior to and after intervention through an IS scale to define the magnitude of development in students' consciousness and attitudinal stance in the first phase of the study, then she progresses with adopting qualitative information through interviews, reflections, and research journals to represent perspectival differences and understand the complexity of the situation.

With the results of this contemporary mixed methods research, the researcher aims at addressing the recent problems regarding intercultural communication in the literature. She intends to generate findings to enhance new perspectives and provide alternative solutions for educational hindrances regarding communication patterns across borders via defining the cross-cultural sensibility of young learners through quantitative analysis and eliciting their point of views through qualitative inquiry. The researcher's purpose of juxtaposing both approaches is to correlate the objectivity of statistical data with the subjectivity of

non-numeric data to acquire an in-depth understanding of the research problem. Furthermore, the current study endeavours to offer development in ICC practice in young learner classrooms worldwide. Equipped with implementation procedures and study findings, instructors grow into more efficient educational specialists (Creswell, 2012). Through quantitative exploration and qualitative inquiry, this mixed methods research provides a method of analysis for intercultural awareness and knowledge of young learners, presents characteristics of an ICC integration method to curricular activities in FL programs at schools, and highlights student perspectives on the research domain for teachers and policymakers to ameliorate the course contents through cross-cultural practices.

3.3. Context & Participants

This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of telecollaborative DST application on the cross-cultural sensitivity and ICC of young learners in both qualitative and quantitative fashion. In this regard, the eTwinning Platform was administered to create a project titled “Europe – A Melting Pot” and to search for and collaborate with teachers and students across borders. Two middle schools from Turkey and Portugal volunteered for this eTwinning project to establish intercultural relationships and explore students’ perceptions of cultural differences. Since eTwinning projects are regulated as extra-curricular activities at schools in both countries, the Purposive Sampling Method was utilized in the participant selection process for the aim of electing a representative sample group for this study. Fifteen (15) participants, whose ages range between 9 and 10, were selected from each project school in accordance with their willingness to take part in this project, ease of attaining technological devices, and residential proximity to their schools. The total number of subject groups was estimated as thirty (30) students in this study. Then, parental consent was received from each informant’s parents or legal guardians to validate their participations to the current study.

The project teachers in Turkey and Portugal organized an online meeting on the eTwinning platform before the project activities began in order to discuss the foreign language education systems in both countries. To begin with the Turkish education system, twelve years of formal schooling is compulsory for male and female students, which is segregated into 4+4+4 years of instruction. The 4+4+4 system consists of four years of first level

primary education, four years of secondary level primary education, and four years of secondary education. In this system, students begin their English language education in grade 2 at state-funded schools. The 2nd, 3rd, and 4th-grade students have 2 hours of English instruction on a weekly basis and follow skill-based syllabi throughout the year. However, weekly course hours are increased to 3 hours in 5th and 6th grades and to 4 hours in 7th and 8th grades in the secondary level primary education. However, some mainstream schools present a preparatory year for 5th graders and incorporate 15 to 24 hours of weekly English instruction into their academic programmes. The national English curriculum is constructed upon Communicative Language Teaching in the secondary level of primary education of Turkey. Drawn on the general systematic information above, the Turkish subject group in this study consisted of fifteen state school students receiving their formal education in 5th grade. Therefore, these students were exposed to only 3 hours of weekly English instruction. The Portuguese education system; on the other hand, differs from the educational mechanism in Turkey. In Portugal, mandatory education begins with imperative pre-school education at the age of 6. Then, preschool education is followed by three cycles of compulsory primary education and imperative secondary education. The first cycle contains the grades 1 to 4, the second cycle encloses the grades 5 to 6, the third cycle comprises the grades 7 to 9, and the secondary education embodies the grades 10 to 12 in this system. English language instruction holds significant importance in the current policy; thus, students begin their formal English language education in the 3rd grade of the first cycle and continue their imperative English language schooling until their graduation from the secondary education programme. Students are exposed to at least 2 foreign languages throughout their mandatory education. In this regard, only 2 hours of instruction is allocated for English classes on a weekly basis. Based on the information above, the Portuguese participants in this research comprised fifteen 5th grade students receiving their formal training in the second cycle of primary education. These students were provided with 2 hours of English lessons each week. Even though the allocated time for English instruction was limited to 90 minutes, most students had high language proficiency as a result of their active engagement in the target language at home.

3.3.1 Presentation of Demographic Information

Descriptive statistics of Portuguese and Turkish subjects' demographic information hold significant importance so as to make sense of and interpret the acquired data in the light of the young learners' age, gender, grade, native language, and previous telecollaborative or overseas experience. Therefore, the demographic information was examined both holistically and individually for Turkish and Portuguese young learners in the present study. To begin with the holistic examination, 30 (100%) young learners all of whom were studying in the 5th-grade classroom (100%) of the secondary schools of the respective countries participated in the study. The participants' ages ranged between 9 (13.33%) and 10 (86.67%), thus, the mean age was computed as 9.87 for the present analysis. Parallelism was observed in the gender-based estimation. Of the participants, 14 (46.67%) were male, and 16(53.33%) were female. Lastly, all research subjects reported that they had not been to any foreign country before, or they had not attended any international project on digital platforms.

To continue with the individual examination, it was presented for the Turkish students in Table 1 as below.

Table 1

Demographic Information of Turkish Students

Categories	Sub-Categories	Frequency	Percent (%)
Age	9 years old	4	26.7
	10 years old	11	73.33
Gender	Male	6	40
	Female	9	60
Grade	5th Grade	15	100
Native Language	Turkish	15	100
	Other	0	0
Telecollaboration Experience	Yes	0	0
	No	15	100
Overseas Experience	Yes	0	0
	No	15	100

The analysis highlighted that 15 (100%) young learners whose ages varied between 9 (26.7%) and 10 (73.33) were selected from Turkey for the study in accordance with their participatory willingness and physical accessibility. Therefore, the mean age was estimated as 9.73 for the Turkish group. All Turkish participants were 5th-grade students (100%) studying in three different classrooms of the same secondary school. The number of male students was 6 (40%), and the number of female students was 9 (60%) for this subject group. According to the obtained demographic data, no student from a different ethnic background attended the project activities. All Turkish participants had a Turkish origin; hence, their mother tongue was Turkish (100%). Finally, the Turkish participants expressed their inexperience in both telecollaboration projects and overseas travel.

The individual analysis for the Portuguese students; on the other hand, was represented in Table 2 as below.

Table 2

Demographic Information of Portuguese Students

<u>Categories</u>	<u>Sub-Categories</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent (%)</u>
Age	9 years old	0	0
	10 years old	15	100
Gender	Male	8	53.33
	Female	7	46.67
Grade	5 th Grade	15	100
Native Language	Portuguese	14	93.33
	Other	1	6.67
Telecollaboration Experience	Yes	0	0
	No	15	100
Overseas Experience	Yes	0	0
	No	15	100

As seen from the statistics of the Portuguese subjects, they exhibited that 15 (100%) young learners were included in the project activities in line with their willingness to participate and attain convenience to the technological devices. Of the learners, all were 10 years old;

to this end, the mean age was calculated as 10.0 in the analysis. The Portuguese students were selected from the same 5th-grade classroom as opposed to the Turkish subject group. The number of male students was identified as 8 (53.33%) whereas the number of female students was 7 (46.67%) for this research group. 14 participants (93.33%) had Portuguese origin; however, one student had a Brazilian ethnicity. Moreover, it was documented that all young learners including the Brazilian participant reported having neither a previous virtual exchange experience nor travelling opportunity to the foreign lands. The individual statistical computations enabled for comparative analyses and pinpointed that the Portuguese and Turkish research groups displayed correspondence in all aforementioned variables of age, gender, grade, native language, and telecollaboration and overseas experience.

3.4. Procedures

Before the intervention process, research permission was taken from the Ethics Committee at Gazi University (See Appendix A.). When the permission was granted, the students were selected and registered to the eTwinning platform to allow them to communicate with one another through digital stories and group conversations in the chatroom regularly. Moreover, parental permission was received from each informant's parents or legal guardians both in pre-intervention and post-intervention. Then, all project participants were asked to complete the translated and adapted version of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (IS-15) developed by Wang and Zhou in 2016 and pre-interviewed in order for project teachers to gain insights about their learners' knowledge, opinions and perceptions of their own culture and cultural differences across borders. This interview session was carried out through telephone conversations due to the pandemic, and the participants were addressed questions concerning the similarities and differences between the target cultures, possible communication breakdowns, and their willingness to engage in continuous interaction. Then, a 7-week telecollaborative DST plan was prepared by the researcher with the pursuit of improving the young learners' ICC. The plan was based on the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies proposed by Guth and Helm in 2010. In line with this pedagogical model, the plan followed the four phases of the framework labelled as *situated practice*, *overt instruction*, *critical framing* and *transformed practice* and consisted of three task types

titled *personal information exchange tasks, comparison and analysis tasks, and collaborative tasks*. This plan is presented in Table 3 and explained in Figure 6.

Table 3

The Agenda of the Telecollaborative DST Tasks

Weeks	Task Name	Task Type	Implementation Phases & Related Activities
Week 1	Introducing Yourself	Information Exchange	Situated practice: Creating monocultural digital stories Overt Instruction: Guided discussions Critical Reflection: Learner diaries
Week 2	National Cuisine	Comparison & Analysis	Situated practice: Creating monocultural digital stories Overt Instruction: Guided discussions Critical Reflection: Learner diaries
Week 3	Everyday Fashion	Comparison & Analysis	Situated practice: Creating monocultural digital stories Overt Instruction: Guided discussions Critical Reflection: Learner diaries
Week 4	Holiday Customs and Traditional Dances	Comparison & Analysis	Situated practice: Creating monocultural digital stories Overt Instruction: Guided discussions Critical Reflection: Learner diaries
Week 5	Story Chains	Collaboration & Product Creation	Transformed Practice: Creating multicultural digital stories Overt Instruction: Guided discussions Critical Reflection: Learner diaries
Week 6	Story Chains	Collaboration & Product Creation	Transformed Practice: Creating multicultural digital stories Overt Instruction: Guided discussions Critical Reflection: Learner diaries
Week 7	Story Chains	Collaboration & Product Creation	Transformed Practice: Creating multicultural digital stories Overt Instruction: Guided discussions Critical Reflection: Learner diaries

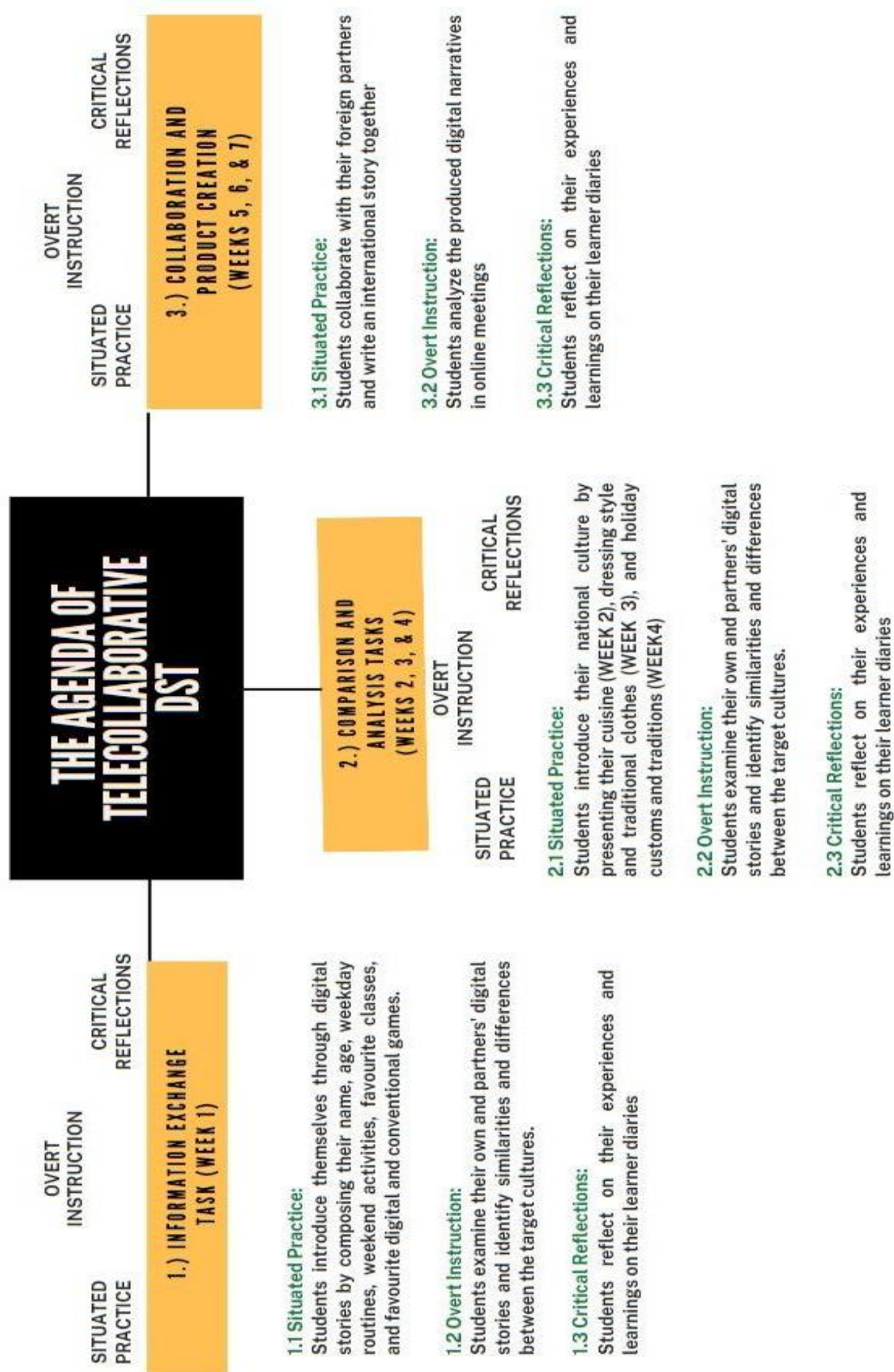


Figure 6. The explanation of the agenda of the telecollaborative DST project through infographics

In accordance with the agenda, the first four weeks of the plan were projected in the situated practice, overt instruction, and critical framing phases and included personal information exchange and comparison and analysis tasks. In the first week, students were asked to introduce themselves by stating their name, age, weekly activities, hobbies, school schedules, favourite subjects, and favourite traditional and online games. In the second, third, and fourth weeks; they were assigned to create intracultural digital narratives via presenting their school and street styles, national cuisine, and holiday traditions and folk dances and to upload them on the Twinspace of their project. The situated practice phase was accompanied by the overt instruction and critical framing phases in these weeks. In other words, the teachers responsible for the project activities in each country acted as mentors and provided counselling services for their learners in the overt instruction stage in order to deepen their examinations, create conscious awareness, and prevent the development of stereotypical images. For this purpose, they organized ZOOM meetings for their students so that they could congregate online at the weekends, watch their foreign partners' digital productions, and discuss the similarities and differences between the cultural practices in both countries. The Turkish students preferred meeting with their teachers in smaller groups on Saturdays whereas the Portuguese students determined Sundays as their online discussion days. Then, the Portuguese and Turkish teachers communicated with one another on Sundays at 9 p.m. and reported their observations to one another. They also submitted their observation documents to their research partners through e-mails on Mondays. When the students finalized their online analyses and discussions, they were engaged in reflective practice in the critical framing stage. Specifically, they were assigned to respond to the reflection questions and reflect on their experiences in written and pictorial fashion in their learner journals and requested to send their personal accounts to their teachers via the WhatsApp platform. However, the participants who were reluctant to share their individual accounts were not obligated in this phase. The fifth, sixth, and seventh weeks; on the other hand, were projected in the transformed practice, overt instruction, and critical reflection phases and centred on collaborative tasks. In the transformed practice stage, the teachers resorted to Chain Stories which necessitates learners from different sociolinguistic backgrounds to cooperate together to create a brief narration through leading an introductory statement provided by the teacher to a story (Ekşi & Aşık, 2020). To ensure their engagement in chain stories, the Portuguese and Turkish students were segregated into multinational teams and provided

with empty DST templates on StoryBird. Each team was assigned different topics related to the 5th-grade syllabi in both countries and given written prompts to build their narrations upon them. The team members forged an asynchronous collaborative partnership and contributed to their narrations via directing the actions, reinforcing the plotline, elaborating on the characters, and correcting the language errors. The produced digital stories were exhibited on the Twinspace of the project. The transformed practice stage was advanced by the overt instruction and critical framing stages respectively. Mere interpersonal exchanges do not generally result in developed critical cultural awareness and IS since it does not prompt learners to evaluate the produced outputs analytically. Therefore, the overt practice phase was regulated by the project teachers to assist their participants to propel their examinations forward and strengthen their intercultural understanding. For this purpose, the project teachers scheduled their online meetings on the ZOOM platform at the weekends and guided their students to watch the uploaded digital stories, review them critically, reflect on their feelings in the creation process, and upgrade the content and the language of their digital stories through feedback. The Turkish and Portuguese teachers recorded their observations in their research journals throughout the online meetings and delivered them to one another via e-mails at the end of the day. When the teacher-guided practice was completed in this stage, the students were asked to reflect on their experiences and feelings through paintings and compositions in accordance with the reflection questions and to send the photographs of their learning diaries via the WhatsApp platform. However, some students did not want to share some of the pages in their diaries due to their poor-quality paintings; therefore, they were given the freedom to keep their journals private. When the 7-week telecollaborative DST plan was brought to completion, the research participants were asked to fill out the IS-15 Scale developed by Wang and Zhou (2016) again and invited to a post-interview session to identify the rate of their ICC development and understand the reasons behind their personal progress.

3.5. Data Collection

The present study administered the explanatory sequential mixed methods design. Hence, the research commenced with quantitative procedures. Bacon-Shone (2015) postulates that quantitative research is a design to obtain information from structured data collection tools such as questionnaires, scales, and polls in which the outcome of the examination is

dependent on the research sample representing the whole universe. The researcher claims that quantitative study attaches importance to the collection of unbiased data in the evaluation of social situations. Therefore, quantitative data were accumulated via an IS survey to measure learners' cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity to acquire objective information. The second stage of the study; on the other hand, relied on qualitative inquiry to interpret the numerical findings acquired in quantitative exploration. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) state that qualitative research design aims at analysing phenomena in their usual environment, endeavouring to comprehend and interpret them by means of the values individuals attribute to them. It follows an explanatory approach in order to describe the social reality of individuals, groups, or societies. Therefore, the present study administered qualitative data collection instruments to investigate the influence of telecollaborative DST productions on young learners' intercultural awareness and sensitivity. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews, reflective journals, and teacher observations. The data collection process is illustrated with an infographic in Figure 7.

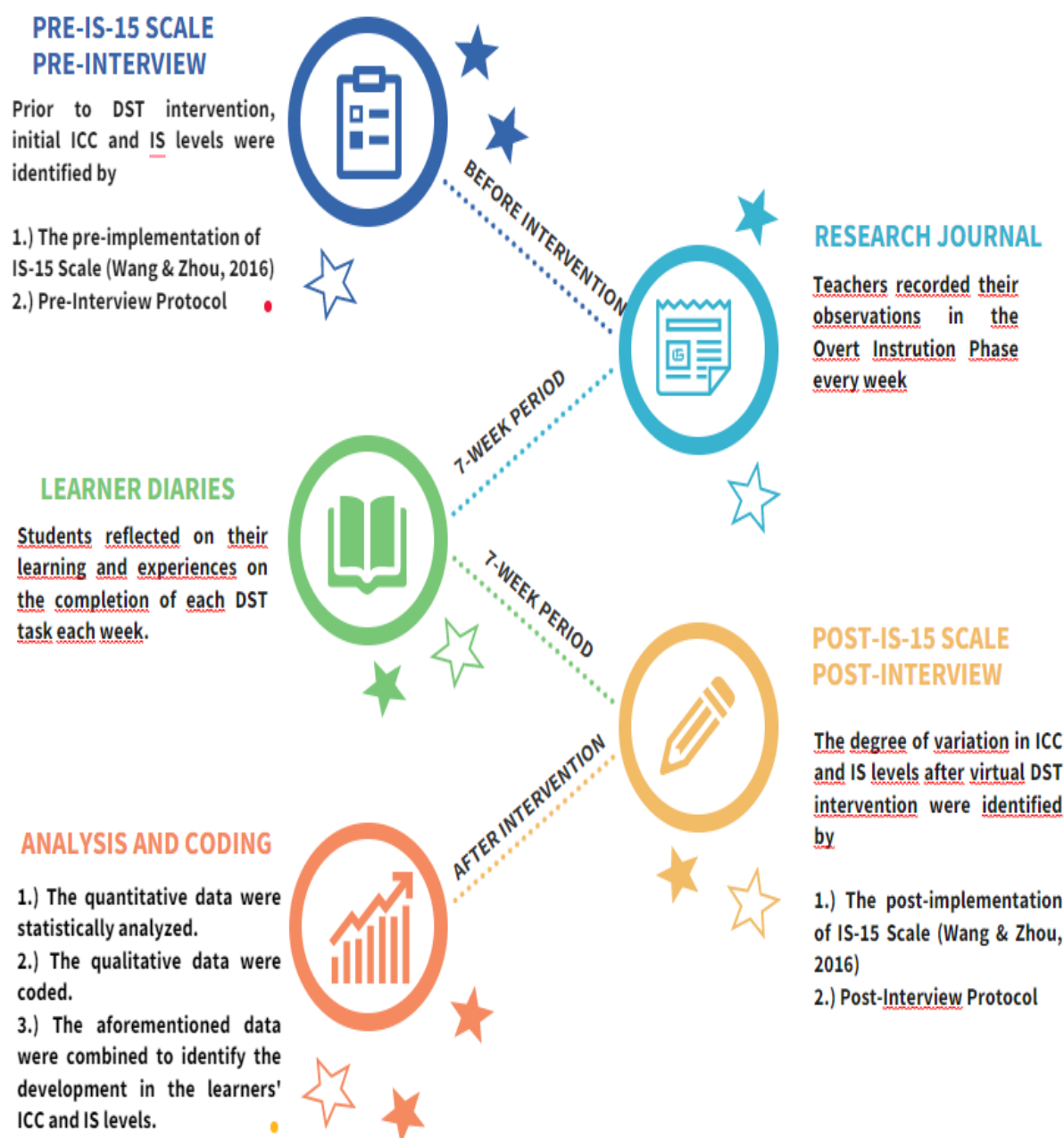


Figure 7. Data collection procedures through infographics

As illustrated in the infographic, before the beginning of the study, the young learners were asked to complete the IS-15 Scale as a pre-questionnaire to measure their initial IS levels. Moreover, they were pre-interviewed so as to reveal the reasons behind their early IS and ICC levels. Then, the participants were registered to a telecollaboration project and requested to exchange digital stories with their foreign counterparts on the eTwinning platform for 7 weeks. Data were accumulated by the journal entries of the project teachers and diary reflections of the young learners in this process. On the completion of the project

activities; on the other hand, the IS-15 scale was administered as a post-questionnaire in order to understand the statistical enhancement in the participants' IS levels. In addition, the participants were post-interviewed via an interview protocol in order to understand the reasons behind their ICC enhancements. In the final phase, the qualitative data were statistically computed on the SPSS platform whereas the qualitative data were coded to unearth the development in their ICC. The data collection instruments and the data analysis phase are explicated in detail in the following sections.

3.5.1. Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (IS-15)

IS refers to the skill to understand and distinguish cultural variances during cross-cultural interactions (Hammer et al., 2003). It is conventionally regarded as acting attentive towards foreign cultures, recognizing and appreciating cultural diversities, and voluntarily altering one's manners out of appropriateness and respect (Hammer et al., 2003). Based on these definitions, several researchers endeavoured to develop IS scales to determine learners' transcultural awareness and attitudes. Chen and Starosta (1996); however, critiqued that the previous academic productions conducted to measure learners' ICC states did not build their scales on a theoretical framework. Hence, the authors (2000) developed a 24-item IS scale which encompasses five factors as *interaction engagement*, *respect for cultural differences*, *interaction confidence*, *interaction enjoyment*, and *interaction attentiveness*. Although this scale has been widely recognized and utilized by academicians across borders, Wang and Zhou (2016) critiqued its practicality in their study. According to the academicians (2016), some scholars perceive the IS of individuals as a developmental process; therefore, they prefer measuring their research participants' personal IS advancement multiple times. Nevertheless, the length and longevity of the IS scale proposed by Chen and Starosta (2000) obstruct its implementation when it is utilized with other qualitative and quantitative constructs. Moreover, the research participants may lose their concentration while engaging with long lists of scale items, and their honesty to respond to the questions may diminish owing to its long duration. To this end, Wang and Zhou (2016) initially broadened the content of Chen and Starosta's (2000) original IS scale by modifying 15 items from Barbaranelli, Caprara, Rabasca, and Pastorelli's (2003) Big Five Questionnaire so as to determine learners' individual demeanours encompassing their socialization, amiability, acceptance of novel experiences, awareness, and emotional

balance and adapting 14 items from Wilson's (2013) Revised Sociocultural Adaptation Scale in order to identify their social adaptation to a foreign culture. Then, they shortened the measure in accordance with Stöber and Joormann's (2001) self-report abridgement procedures to prepare a scale in brevity. This modified scale contained five subscales contingent with Chen and Starosta's five factors as *interaction engagement*, *respect for cultural differences*, *interaction confidence*, *interaction enjoyment*, and *interaction attentiveness*. And, each subscale encompassed three items. According to Wang and Zhou (2016), although the scale incorporated only 15 items, the performance of the new scale was estimated higher on the basis of reliability, internal consistency, and validity compared to Chen and Starosta's (2000) original version.

In quantitative research, the questionnaire method is the most commonly utilized instrument to obtain information (Cohen, Manion. & Morrison, 2007). The rationale is the fact that questionnaires enable researchers to elicit data from a large sample size of participants in a concurrent fashion. The quantitative phase of the present study was achieved through the IS-15 questionnaire in the Likert-scale format developed by Wang and Zhou (2016) which consists of 15 statements and an ordinal 5 point scale. According to Pingault, Falissard, Côté, and Berthoz (2012) short scales are more appropriate for young learners whose various individual demeanours will be measured at multiple time zones over a certain period of time since longer scales may disturb younger subjects' concentration and challenge them to provide sincere responses for each item. Contingent with this statement, Wang and Zhou's (2016) IS-15 scale was singled out for the present research since it renders to assess young learners' IS and attitudinal stance with ease without hampering the accuracy of the estimation. Moreover, secondary schools in Turkey possess three-credit English instruction whereas Portuguese secondary schools have two-credit instruction in foreign language education. Hence, the IS-15 scale was determined as an effective measurement instrument due to its pragmatic approach. In accordance with its high efficacy and appropriateness in young learner research, this scale was selected to be used in this study (See Appendix C). Since young learners in this study had low foreign language proficiency and cognitive capacity to complete the scale in its original language, it underwent a process of translation and adaptation before its implementation. First, it was translated into Turkish with the efforts of 5 translators (See Appendix D). Then, it was linguistically and visually adapted for young learners (See Appendix E). Both the translated and the adapted versions were piloted and statistically validated through the

computations of Cronbach's Alpha reliability, exploratory factor analysis, and confirmatory factor analysis. The translation and adaptation process is presented in detail in Section 3.4.1.1 below. When the adapted scale was verified as utilisable for the further stages of this thesis, it was employed twice by the researcher. The former administration was held before the telecollaborative DST intervention was provided for learners with the aim of identifying their initial state of IS. Since the young learners had had no background intercultural experience to respond to the scale items effectively, the implementation of this pre-questionnaire was conducted via a drama activity named "Film-Making". In this drama activity, the students were given some scenarios such as introducing themselves to a foreign classmate or asking a foreign classmate to play a game with them. Then, they were requested to communicate with these foreigners effectively. Students carried out this drama activity behind a TV screen made from cardboard. The students not only put on a performance behind this screen but also watched their classmates' performances. While watching their friends' acting, they were asked to use a remote controller and turn the volume up when they were unable to hear their friends' voices. After this showcase, the pre-questionnaires were distributed to the young learners so that they could answer the scale questions individually. In the responding process, the project teachers read aloud the questions one by one, and the young learners responded to the questions silently and individually. The rationale behind the utilization of the read-aloud technique was to make necessary explanations for the young learners when they remained unable to understand some items. The latter administration; on the other hand, was regulated after the 7-week virtual digital story exchange intervention in order to measure the effectiveness of the operation on young learners' IS. Since the students acquired intercultural experiences in the 7-week process, no drama activity was utilized in the post-questionnaire. However, the read-aloud technique was utilized again to clarify the scale items when the learners remained unable to understand them. The students responded to the items individually.

3.4.1.1. Translating and Adapting the IS-15 Scale for Young Learners

The translation and adaptation process of IS-15 Scale developed by Wang and Zhou (2016) consisted of four hierarchical stages: translation, implementation and statistical analysis, simplification and moderation, and piloting and moderation.

3.4.1.1.1. Translation

The owners of the scale, Wenting Wang and Mingming Zhou, were contacted via e-mail and requested the written permission to adapt and use the scale for the current thesis. The researchers granted their consent for the present study. In addition, permission letters were received from the Institute of Educational Sciences at Gazi University and the Ministry of National Education in order to conduct the scale on secondary school students. When the consent forms were delivered, the scale adapting procedures proposed by Aydın and his colleagues (2016) were followed to translate and adapt the scale for young learners. In the initial phase, five translators, who were proficient in both English and Turkish and who had no familiarity with one another, were selected to translate the original scale into Turkish in individual blind sessions. The first translator was a college instructor in the ELT department of a state university and a PhD student in the ELT Department of another state university; therefore, he contributed to the translation process with his valuable academic knowledge and experience. The second translator was a foreign language teacher at a primary school and an MA diploma in the field of ELT. Hence, she had expertise in the spheres of foreign language learning and child development. The third translator was an American-born individual with full Turkish heritage and an MA student in the ELT department of a state university in Turkey. Her proficiency in both languages facilitated the translation process. The fourth translator was a BA graduate from the English Translation and Interpretation Department of a state university; thus, he contributed to the translation process with his educational and work experience. The last translator was an MA student in the Department of Psychological Counselling and Guidance of a state university. This translator had high English proficiency; therefore, she both made contributions to the interpretation process and functioned as the drama expert in the moderation phase. The selected translators converted the original scale into English in independent blind sessions and sent them to the researcher via e-mail. The researcher combined the translated versions of the scale in a single Word document and held an online ZOOM meeting so that the translators could produce one interdependent scale out of these different versions. Since the IS-15 scale has clear statements, the translated works corresponded with one another. To this end, the meeting lasted only for 40 minutes. After the single translated version was generated with the general consensus, the Turkish version of the scale was back-translated into English by two MA students in independent sessions. Then, these translators also organized an online meeting to unify their re-translated scales and produce a single back-

translated version. In the end, the original and back-translated scales were compared by the researcher, and no significant difference was detected between them.

3.4.1.1.2. Implementation and Statistical Analysis

Once the crosscheck process ended in success, the English and Turkish versions of the scale were implemented over two time periods on adult learners in order to detect the compatibility between them in terms of reliability and validity. For the administration phase, Convenience Sampling Method was utilized, and the sample group was selected as 122 adult learners studying in the Medical, Artificial Intelligence Engineering, and Aerospace Engineering faculties of respected universities all around Turkey. Of the participants, 70 (57.38%) were in their first year of college education and 52 (42.62%) were in their second year of university training. In this research group, 77 (63.11%) of the participants were female whereas 45 (36.89) of the participants were male. Moreover, their ages ranged between 18 and 21, and the mean age was computed as 19.22. After the selection process, the original scale was employed through Google Forms, and the participants' responses were recorded to the SPSS software. Then, the Turkish version was implemented through the same platform after 3 weeks so as to reduce the recalling of the previous answers. These answers were registered to the SPSS platform as well. Subsequently, the collected data were statistically calculated to identify the similarities and dissimilarities between both scales. To compute the reliability, the internal consistency of both scales was estimated via Cronbach's Alpha measure. Then, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) estimation was carried out to determine whether the sample size is appropriate for the factor analysis. Similarly, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was conducted to find out if the data were normally distributed to begin the factor analysis. When the initial computations were completed, the exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were regulated so as to verify the construct validity of both scales. In this process, exploratory factor analysis was executed with the principal component analysis and varimax rotation methods so as to identify the accords between the scale items. Confirmatory factor analysis; on the other hand, was performed in order to explore if there is a potent connection between the factors and if the factors define the framework effectively.

According to Bachman and Palmer (1996), *reliability* refers to the consistency of assessment scores. It measures if the scores are re-generated when the assessment tool is

applied across time intervals or separate testers under the same circumstances (Middleton, 2021). To determine the consistency between the original (English) and translated (Turkish) versions of the scale in this study, Cronbach's Alpha and Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items were considered. The Cronbach Alpha coefficients were estimated as 0.970 for the English version and as 0.973 for the Turkish version. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients extend between 0.00 and 1.00, and internal reliability escalates when the coefficients close in to 1.00 value. The assessment criterion launched by George and Mallery (2003) highlights that values between 0.00-0.50 are unacceptable the values between 0.50-0.60 are poor, the values between 0.60-0.70 are questionable, the values between 0.70-0.80 are acceptable, the values between 0.80-0.90 are good, and lastly the values between 0.90-1.00 are excellent. Based on the values and their interpretation above, the English and Turkish versions of the IS-15 scale were found to have correspondingly excellent internal consistency.

Table 4

Reliability Statistics

Versions	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Number of Items
English (Original)	0.970	0.970	15
Turkish (Translated)	0.973	0.973	15

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) is utilized to reveal whether the sampling is suitable to carry out a factor analysis whereas Bartlett's Test of Sphericity correlates a study's estimated matrix to the identity matrix to check out whether the variables in both matrixes differ and function appropriately for the factor analysis. To conduct the exploratory factor analysis, KMO and Bartlett's tests were regulated in the present study. The analyses exhibited that the KMO value was 0.957 for the English version and 0.955 for the Turkish version. According to Tavsancil (2002), if the KMO value is between 0.70 and 0.79, the number of participants is good for analysis; if it is between 0.80 and 0.89, it is very good for analysis, and if it is between 0.90 and 1.00, it is perfect for analysis. Therefore, the estimated values higher than 0.90 in both scales pointed out that the sample size is perfect to continue with the factor analysis. In addition, the p-

values were demonstrated as $\chi^2=1890.881$ ($p<.00$) for the English version and $\chi^2=2369.50$ ($p<.00$) for the Turkish version in Bartlett's test. The p-values lower than 0.05 manifest the normal distribution of the data-set (Serçekuş, Vardar, & Başkale, 2020); therefore, the p-values of .000 indicated the appropriateness of the scales for the factor analysis.

Table 5

KMO and Bartlett's Test Computations

Versions	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	
English Version	0.957	Approx. Chi Square	1890.881
		Df	105
		Sig.	.000
Turkish Version	0.955	Approx. Chi Square	2369.500
		Df	105
		Sig.	.000

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is a numerical procedure which is implemented to reveal the fundamental structure of measured variables. Therefore, this analysis is used to determine the construct validity of measurement tools. In this study, EFA was performed with principal component analysis and varimax rotation techniques. First, the item correlation matrices of both scales were reviewed to examine the correspondence of the scale items with one another. The minimum correlation value of items was identified as 0.501 on the English scale and 0.573 on the Turkish scale. Since all correlation values were higher than 0.30 in both versions, no item was removed from the scales. Second, the explained variance of both scales and the scree plot test manifested a one-factor solution which signified the presence of only one prevalent mechanism in the whole structure. In other words, the scales were determined as one dimensional with only one eigenvalue above the score of 1.00. Inasmuch as the Turkish version had a single factor solution as the original version, both scales demonstrated parallelism. In addition, the total variance was explained as 71% for the English version and 72.86% for the Turkish version. According to Buyukozturk (2010), the explained variance must be a minimum of 30% for one-dimensional scales. To this end, both the original scale and its translated version exposed good construct validity. However, the Turkish version displayed a slightly higher construct

validity compared to the English version. Lastly, the factor loadings varied between 0.682 and 0.939 for the English scale and between 0.732 and 0.907 for the Turkish scale. Factor loading scores over the value of 0.60 are considered as high factor loads; therefore, all items in both scales were regarded as effective.

Table 6

Eigenvalues and Explained Variance of the English Version for Exploratory Factor Analysis

Component	Initial Eigenvalues				Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			
	Total	% Variance	of	Cumulative %	Total	% Variance	of	Cumulative %
1	10.650	71.002		71.002	10.650	71.002		71.002

Table 7

Eigenvalues and Explained Variance of the Turkish Version for Exploratory Factor Analysis

Component	Initial Eigenvalues				Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			
	Total	% Variance	of	Cumulative %	Total	% Variance	of	Cumulative %
1	10.930	72.867		72.867	10.930	72.867		72.867

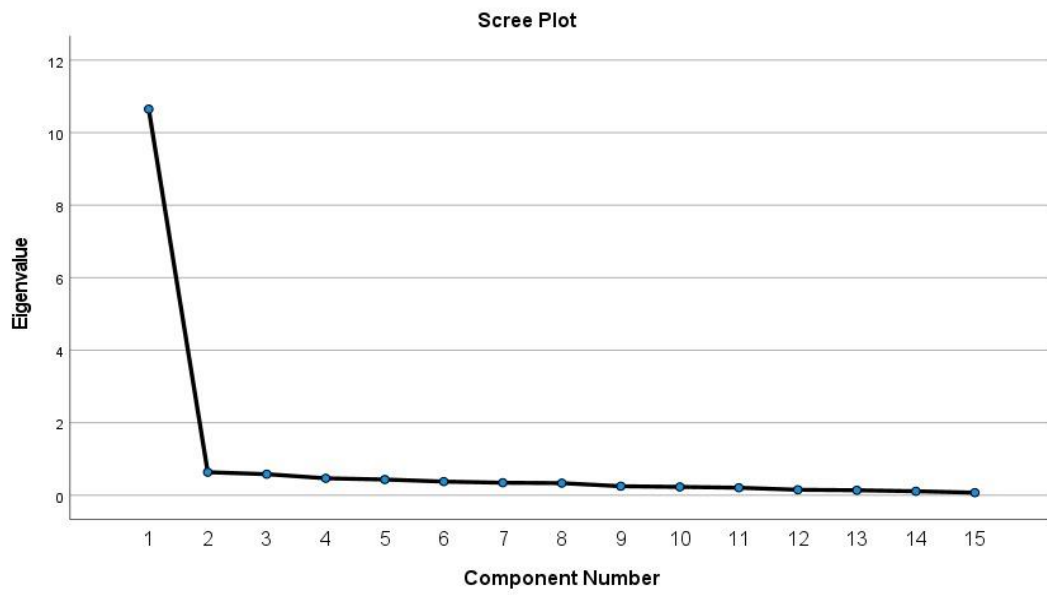


Figure 8. Component numbers and eigenvalues of the English version

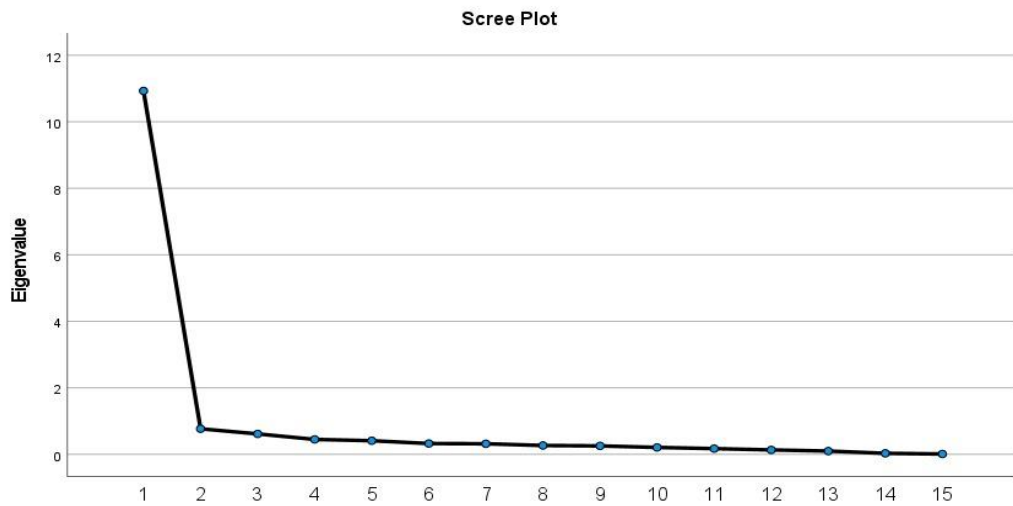


Figure 9. Component numbers and eigenvalues of the Turkish version

Table 8

Factor Loading Values of the English and Turkish Versions

English Version		Turkish Version	
Items	Factor Loads	Items	Factor Loads
1	.939	1	.843
2	.855	2	.821
3	.883	3	.848
4	.779	4	.769
5	.682	5	.792
6	.771	6	.732
7	.868	7	.906
8	.896	8	.907
9	.897	9	.901
10	.817	10	.852
11	.863	11	.863
12	.875	12	.870
13	.848	13	.860
14	.830	14	.891
15	.803	15	.927

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA); on the other hand, is another numerical procedure that is carried out to confirm the fundamental structure of measured variables. According to Yirci and his co-authors (2016), this analysis examines if there is a potent connection between measured variables and to what degree these variables define the whole structure. Therefore, it is used with EFA to determine the construct validity of assessment instruments. In the present study, CFA was regulated via the maximum likelihood estimation method, and the results were evaluated via model fit indices. The first fit index, Chi-square (χ^2) was used to measure the correspondence between the hypothesized model and the computed variables. The estimation highlighted that both English and Turkish versions of the scale demonstrated a good fit for the model. The second index, degrees of freedom (df) computed the number of variables which were able to demonstrate divergence. In this analysis, high degrees of freedom were detected for both versions, which signified the existence of a large sample size to continue the analysis. The proportion of the chi-square to the degree of freedom was calculated as 1.828 for the original version and 1.28 for the Turkish version. Although the values were below the

value of 3 in each scale and indicated a good fit, the Turkish version of the scale manifested a better model fit than the original version. The fourth index, p-value was estimated as 0.00 in the English version and as 0.046 in the Turkish version. Even though the p-value in the original version was evaluated as a mediocre fit in the table, high scores obtained from the other model fit computations including RMSEA, CFI and GFI values altered its interpretation as a good fit in the current analysis. The Turkish version; however, displayed an acceptable fit directly and showed improvement in the p-value compared to its English counterpart. The fifth index, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was reckoned to identify the difference between hypothesized value and the actual value. The reckoning reported that the English version presented an acceptable fit with the score of 0.08 whereas the Turkish version offered a good fit to the model with the score of 0.048. The sixth index, the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) was computed to estimate the agreement between the hypothesized structure and actual covariance matrix, while the seventh index, the Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) was measured to rectify the GFI so that it could not be adversely influenced by the complexity of the hidden variables. In the analysis, the GFI value was detected as 0.863 with the portrayal of acceptable model fit, and the AGFI value was established as 0.794 with the indication of mediocre fit for the English scale. On the other hand, the GFI measure was observed as 0.907 and interpreted as a good fit to the model while the AGFI measure was revealed as 0.86 and labelled as an acceptable fit to the model for the Turkish scale. As the findings suggest, the translation process contributed to the amelioration of the model fit indices and yielded improved results. The eighth indices, Incremental Fit Indices (IFI), which was also named Relative Fit Indices (RFI), was measured to examine the contrast between the chi-square value for the hypothesized model and the chi-square value for the null model. IFI includes two measurements labelled as Comparative Fit Index and Normed Fit Index. In this analysis, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) was computed to investigate the model fit by identifying the difference between the baseline model and the collected data. On the other hand, Normed Fit Index (NFI) was counted to find out the divergence between the chi-squared score of the hypothesized structure and the chi-squared score of the null model. The non-normed Fit Index (NNFI), which was also titled Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), was regulated to overcome the negative biases, which could be acquired in the NFI estimation process. The aforementioned estimations highlighted that IFI, CFI, and NNFI values were over 0.95 in both English and Turkish scales; hence, the measures were interpreted as good fits to the

model. Nevertheless, the NFI score was estimated as 0.926 in the English version and defined as an acceptable fit while it was assessed as 0.966 in the Turkish version and described as a good fit. Lastly, the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC), which offer payments for good fits and penalties for escalating the number of predicted specifications (Eaton & Willoughby, 2018), were reckoned to compare both versions and identify the more effective one. Since the measurement tools with smaller AIC and BIC values represent higher validity, the Turkish version represented a better model fit in the analysis. In conclusion, both the English scale and its Turkish version demonstrated high model fit indices in each measurement category. However, the Turkish scale exhibited more enhancement in model fit estimations in comparison to the original scale. Moreover, GFI and AGFI values are contingent on sample size (Hu & Bentler, 1995). Therefore, these indices decline when the model has a high intricate structure notably in small sample-sized examinations (Anderson & Gerbing, 1984). Conversely, RMSEA, NNFI, and CFI values are responsive to the model errors and not dependent on sample size (Hu & Bentler, 1998). In this regard, the χ^2/df , RMSEA, NNFI, and CFI values should be regarded first prior to the evaluation of GFI and AGFI values since they are not affected by the number of examinees in the analyses (Schermele-Engel, Moosbrugger, & Müller, 2003). Drawn on the information above, the mediocrity of the p and AGFI values in the English scale can be stated to be remedied by the other acceptable and good fit measures including the χ^2/df , CFI, and NNFI scores.

Table 9

Comparison of Model Fit Estimates between The English Version and the Turkish Version

Measure	Scale Values		Good Fit	Acceptable fit	Fit (English Version)	Fit (Turkish Version)
	English Version	Turkish Version				
χ^2	146.215	102.425	$0 \leq \chi^2 \leq 2df$	$2df < \chi^2 \leq 3df$	Good Fit	Good Fit
Df	80	80		-	-	-
χ^2/df	1.828	1.28	≤ 3	≤ 5	Good Fit	Good Fit
P	0.00	0.046	$.05 < p \leq 1$	$.01 \leq p \leq .05$	Mediocre Fit	Acceptable Fit
RMSEA	0.08	0.048	≤ 0.05	0.05 - 0.08	Acceptable Fit	Good Fit
GFI	0.863	0.907	≥ 0.90	0.85 – 0.89	Acceptable Fit	Good Fit
AGFI	0.794	0.86	≥ 0.90	0.85 – 0.89	Mediocre Fit	Acceptable Fit
CFI	0.965	0.992	≥ 0.95	≥ 0.90	Good Fit	Good Fit
NFI	0.926	0.966	≥ 0.95	≥ 0.90	Acceptable Fit	Good Fit
NNFI / TLI	0.954	0.99	≥ 0.95	≥ 0.90	Good Fit	Good Fit
IFI	0.965	0.992	≥ 0.95	≥ 0.90	Good Fit	Good Fit
RMR	0.017	0.011	<0.05	<0.08	Good Fit	Good Fit
AIC	226.215	182.425	Smaller in comparison model		Good Fit	Better Fit
BIC	338.376	294.586	Smaller in comparison model		Good Fit	Better Fit

3.4.1.1.3. Simplification and Moderation

The Turkish version of the scale demonstrated correspondingly high reliability and construct validity as the original English version in the previous analyses. Therefore, the next phase was determined as simplification and moderation. Although the language used in both versions were not difficult to be comprehended, the scales were mainly designed for adult learners; therefore, they needed both simplifications to serve the linguistic and

conceptual capacity of young learners and visual arrangement to be perceived as less threatening by them. For this purpose, the translators, who converted the original scale into Turkish, worked on the translated version this time in order to revise the language and make it more intelligible for children. They were asked to simplify the language of some of the items in blind sessions first. They were also requested to customize the appearance of the scale in line with the needs of young learners by replacing the points of the scale with emojis and changing the demographic information section to suit it for children. Then, they were invited to negotiate on their simplified versions in a ZOOM meeting and form a single joint simplified version. After the ultimate simplified version was produced in the meeting, the version was implemented on 95 young learners by the drama expert through a Puppet Show role-play activity. These young learners were 5th and 6th-grade students whose ages ranged between 9 and 12. In this process, the students were given a scenario such as having breakfast with a foreign friend or introducing themselves to a new foreign classmate. Then, they were requested to communicate with these foreigners effectively. The students not only put on a performance but also watched their classmates' performances. After the showcase, the simplified version of the scale was distributed to the children so that they could answer the scale questions individually. In the responding process, the questions addressed and points not understood by the students were noted down by the researcher and drama expert to be evaluated in the next ZOOM meeting. The student performances and following scale completion procedures were recorded by them as well to be watched by all translators. The recordings and notes were sent to the translators via e-mail so that they could watch the videos, take their own notes and produce solutions to the encountered linguistic barriers. One week later, a ZOOM session was organized by the researcher, and the translators reshaped the simplified scale in accordance with the students' needs. First, the word "peer", which was translated as "akran" in the Turkish version, was changed into the word "yaşıtlı" since the students could not grasp the former translated meaning. Second, the word "opinion", which was translated as "fikir" in the initial Turkish version, was replaced by the word "düşünce" inasmuch as some students asked the meaning of the word "fikir", and they responded positively when it is explained as "düşünce" by one of their classmates. Since the students had difficulty in understanding the word "narrow-minded", which was rendered into the word "dar görüşlü" in the initial Turkish version, they could not respond to the 6th item effectively. Therefore, the translators resorted to two Turkish teachers' assistance to enhance the comprehensibility of

the item. Through the negotiations, the word was interpreted as “kendi düşüncelerinden başkasını düşünmemek” in the simplified Turkish version. Then, the phrase “being as social as possible”, which was translated as “istediği kadar sosyal olmak” in the initial Turkish version was converted into “rahatça iletişim kurmak” in the simplified Turkish version. The reason behind the alteration was the fact that the students misinterpreted the meaning of the phrase as showing physical affection such as hugging and kissing; thus, reacted negatively due to the Covid-19 cases in their country. Finally, the wording in the 14th item “being sensitive to subtle meanings”, which was translated as “üstü kapalı ifadelerle karşı duyarlı olmak” in the initial Turkish version, was transliterated as “açıkça söylenmeyen düşüncelere dikkat etmek” by the translators with the guidance of the Turkish teachers. The modification resulted from the fact that the students remained silent for a long time before responding to the item. In addition, they could not define whether being careful to subtle meanings is a positive quality when they are asked individually. Therefore, the amendment was seen as a necessity.

3.4.1.1.4. Piloting and Validation

The simplified version was piloted on 115 young learners with the puppet show role-play activity in order to determine the reliability and validity values of the scale so that it can be implemented in the following phases of the present study. The Purposive Sampling Method was utilized, and the sample group was detected as 74 (seventy-four) 5th-grade students with the 64.35% estimate and 41 (forty-one) 6th-grade students with the 47.83% estimate. Of the 5th and 6th grade learners, 4 (3.48%) were 9 years old, 49 (42.60%) were 10 years of, 54 (46.96%) were 11 years old, and 8 (6.96%) were 12 years old. Therefore, the mean age was computed as 10.57 for this analysis. Moreover, 70 (47.83%) of the participants were male whereas 55 (52.17%) of them were female in the research group. After the estimation of the basic demographic measures, Cronbach Alpha and exploratory factor analyses were regulated on the SPSS platform. First, Cronbach’s Alpha and Cronbach’s Alpha Based on Standardized Items were calculated to figure out the reliability value of the scale. The Cronbach Alpha coefficients were reckoned as 0.94 for the simplified scale, which was interpreted as an excellent internal consistency value according to the assessment protocol launched by George and Mallery in 2003. Then, the KMO estimation was carried out to determine whether the sample size is appropriate for the

factor analysis. Similarly, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was conducted to find out if the data were normally distributed to begin the factor analysis. The KMO value was calibrated as 0.924 in the computations, which was defined as perfect for analysis in line with Tavsancil's (2002) evaluation criteria. On the other hand, the p-value was demonstrated as $\chi^2=1077.019$ ($p < .001$) in Bartlett's tests, which indicated the normal distribution and fitness of the dataset to carry out factor analysis. When the KMO and Bartlett's Test scores verified the appropriateness of the simplified version for the factor analysis, EFA was regulated to detect the construct validity of the measurement tool.

Table 10

Reliability Statistics of the Adapted Version

Versions	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Number of Items
Adapted Version	0.94	0.94	15

Table 11

KMO and Bartlett's Test Computations of the Adapted Version

Versions	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	
Adapted Version	0.924	Approx. Chi Square	1077.019
		Df	105
		Sig.	<0.001

The EFA was performed with principal component analysis and varimax rotation techniques in this stage. First, the item correlation matrixes of both scales were reviewed to examine the correspondence of the scale items with one another. The minimum correlation value of items was identified as 0.498 on the simplified scale. Since all correlation values were higher than 0.30 in both versions, no item was removed from the scale. Second, the explained variance and the scree plot test manifested a one-factor solution which signified the presence of only one prevalent mechanism in the whole structure. In other words, the scale was identified as one dimensional with only one eigenvalue above the score of 1.00.

In addition, the total variance was explained as 54.905% for this version. According to Buyukozturk (2010), the explained variance must be a minimum of 30% for one-dimensional scales. As a result, the simplified version exhibited good construct validity. Lastly, the factor loadings ranged between 0.653 and 0.838 for the scale. Factor loading scores over the value of 0.60 are considered as high factor loads; therefore, all items in this version were regarded as effective.

Table 12

Eigenvalues and Explained Variance of the Adapted Version for Exploratory Factor Analysis

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	8.236	54.905	54.905	8.236	54.905	54.905

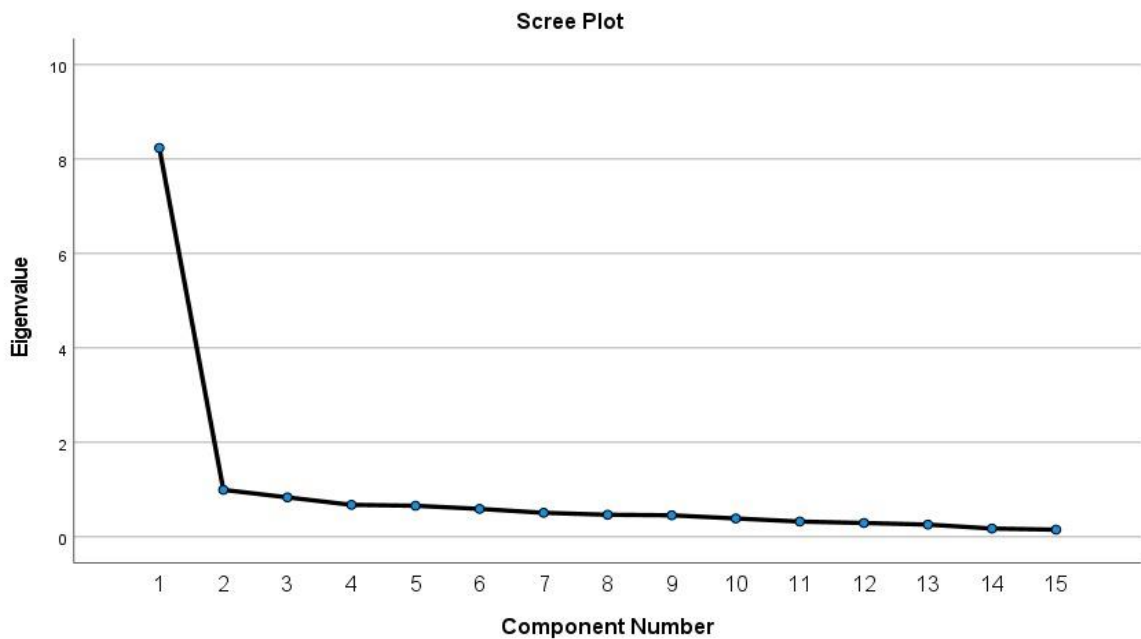


Figure 10. Component numbers and eigenvalues of the Adapted Version

Table 13

Factor Loading Values of the Adapted Turkish Versions

The Adapted Version	
Items	Factor Loads
1	.814
2	.770
3	.743
4	.719
5	.688
6	.736
7	.778
8	.805
9	.712
10	.669
11	.710
12	.838
13	.653
14	.702
15	.752

After the estimation of EFA values, CFA was carried out via the maximum likelihood measurement method, and the results were interpreted through model fit indices. The first fit index, Chi-square (χ^2) was used to measure the correspondence between the hypothesized model and the computed variables. The estimation highlighted that the simplified scale demonstrated a good fit for the model. The second index, degrees of freedom (df) computed the number of variables that were able to demonstrate divergence. In this analysis, high degrees of freedom were detected for both versions, which signified the existence of a large sample size to continue the analysis. The proportion of the chi-square to the degree of freedom was calculated as 1.603 for the scale, which also indicated a good fit for the model. The fourth index, the p-value was estimated as 0.00 in this version. Even though the p-value was labelled as a mediocre fit in the table below, high scores obtained from the other model fit computations including RMSEA, CFI, IFI, and GFI values altered its interpretation as a good fit in the current analysis. The fifth index, RMSEA was reckoned to identify the difference between hypothesized value and the actual value. The reckoning reported that the simplified version presented an acceptable fit

with the score of 0.073. The sixth index, GFI was computed to estimate the agreement between the hypothesized structure and actual covariance matrix, while the seventh index, the AGFI was measured to rectify the GFI so that it could not be adversely influenced by the complexity of the hidden variables. In the analysis, the GFI value was detected as 0.879 with the portrayal of an acceptable model fit, and the AGFI value was established as 0.812 with the indication of a mediocre fit for this scale. The eighth index, IFI, was measured to examine the contrast between the chi-square value for the hypothesized model and the chi-square value for the null model. IFI includes two measurements labelled CFI and NFI. In this analysis, CFI was computed to investigate the model fit by identifying the difference between the baseline model and the collected data. On the other hand, NFI was counted to find out the divergence between the chi-squared score of the hypothesized structure and the chi-squared score of the null model. Moreover, the NNFI was regulated to overcome the negative biases, which could be acquired in the NFI estimation process. The aforementioned estimations highlighted that NFI and NNFI values were over 0.90 and interpreted as acceptable model fits whereas the IFI and CFI values were over 0.95 and evaluated as good model fits. Lastly, the AIC and BIC values, which offer payments for good fits and penalties for escalating the number of predicted specifications (Eaton & Willoughby, 2018), were reckoned to compare the versions and identify the more effective one. Since the measurement tools with smaller AIC and BIC values represent higher validity, the simplified version represented a better model fit compared to the English version in the analysis. By taking all model fit indices and interpretations into consideration, it can be concluded that the CFA analysis revealed overall acceptability and appropriateness in each measurement category since the mediocre fitness of the p and AGFI values were enhanced by the remaining high fit indices in the analysis. The rationale lies in sampling dependency of the GFI and AGFI values. According to Hu and Bentler (1995), GFI and AGFI values depend on sample size. Hence, these indices diminish when the model has a highly complex structure notably in small sample-sized examinations (Anderson & Gerbing, 1984). Conversely, RMSEA, NNFI, and CFI values are responsive to the model errors and not dependent on sample size (Hu & Bentler, 1998). In this regard, the χ^2/df , RMSEA, NNFI, and CFI values are regarded first prior to the evaluation of GFI and AGFI values since they are not affected by the number of examinees in the analyses (Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003). Drawn on the information above, the mediocrity of the p and AGFI values in the simplified scale were remedied by the other acceptable and good

fit measures including the χ^2/df , CFI, and NNFI scores. Therefore, the adapted scale was verified as utilisable for the further stages of this thesis.

Table 14

Model Fit Estimates of the Adapted Version

Measure	Scale Values	Good Fit	Acceptable fit	Fit
χ^2	123.402	$0 \leq \chi^2 \leq 2df$	$2df < \chi^2 \leq 3df$	Good Fit
Df	77	-	-	-
χ^2/df	1.603	≤ 3	≤ 5	Good Fit
P	0.001	$.05 < p \leq 1$	$01 \leq p \leq .05$	Mediocre Fit
RMSEA	0.073	≤ 0.05	0.05 - 0.08	Acceptable Fit
GFI	0.879	≥ 0.90	0.85 – 0.89	Acceptable Fit
AGFI	0.812	≥ 0.90	0.85 – 0.89	Mediocre Fit
CFI	0.955	≥ 0.95	≥ 0.90	Good Fit
NFI	0.90	≥ 0.95	≥ 0.90	Acceptable Fit
NNFI / TLI	0.939	≥ 0.95	≥ 0.90	Acceptable Fit
IFI	0.956	≥ 0.95	≥ 0.90	Good Fit
RMR	0.62	<0.05	<0.08	Acceptable Fit
AIC	209.402	Smaller in comparison model		Better Fit Compared to the English Version
BIC	327.434			

3.4.2. Learner Diary

Learner diaries are a form of introspective qualitative data collection instruments which facilitates the construction of potent dialogues between instructors and learners first as input then as in-person communication (Howell-Richardson & Parkinson, 1988). Murphy (2008) describes learner diaries as periodic documentation of learning experiences and

exercises by learners. Since this method allows learners to reflect on their learnings and experiences without the manipulation of external sources, it is allegedly a robust technique to acquire insights into their opinions and feelings which may be beyond the bounds of possibility to be drawn out by employing other instruments such as observations (Dornyei, 2007). Learner diaries are highly unstructured compared to other data collection instruments including interviews and observations (Ma & Oxford, 2014). Therefore, they permit learners to reflect on their experiences, emotions and knowledge in a variety of manners. In this form of data collection, learners may introspect their viewpoints and feelings through written evidence or simple drawings. Similarly, they may self-analyze their own learning process or communicate in the journal with the researcher. Due to their unstructured nature, they may yield broader and more accurate data (Ma & Oxford, 2014).

As the present thesis intended to reveal the enhancement in young learners' ICC over a 7-week intervention period, learner diaries were determined as an appropriate method to be used in this research. In this respect, the learners were requested to reflect on their learnings and experiences when they completed and uploaded their digital narratives in the Situated Practice Phase and watched and negotiated on their foreign partners' digital narratives in the Overt Instruction Phase each week. However, since young learners did not know how to keep their learner diaries, they were provided with a simple guideline to enhance the criticality of their reflections (Appendix J). In other words, they were asked to evaluate the digital story productions of their peers, talk about the novel information they acquired about the partner culture during the process, specify the similarities and differences between their own and foreign cultures, describe the problems they encountered and provide solutions for the future interactions, and make further suggestions for the project in these self-reports every week. They were also encouraged to embellish their journal entries with photographs or pictures. The students were allocated 1 day to write their journal entries and asked to send them to the teacher on Whatsapp when they completed it. Nevertheless, the students who manifested reluctance to show their entries to the teachers due to their bad drawings were given the freedom to keep their personal accounts to themselves. These diaries were collected with the permission of the students at the end of the telecollaboration project. All the participants were observed to act enthusiastic to demonstrate their journals to their teachers. The diary entries were coded in line with Tecedor and Vasseur's (2020) assessment guideline based on the juxtaposition of

two frameworks: Byram's (1997) MMICC and Bennett's (1986) DMIS. The rationale behind the selection of this guideline is explained in the Data Analysis Section below.

3.4.3. Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews are qualitative data collection instruments through which learners are asked to respond to verbal questions in order to elicit specific information. Although the questionnaire method and interviews resemble one another, they are segregated by an important principle, which is the fact that interviews are verbal mediums and require researchers to record the oral answers whereas questionnaires are in written format (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Interviews are classified in line with their implementation procedures and objectives in qualitative research (Edwards & Holland, 2013) as structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews.

Dunn (2005) points out that semi-structured interviews possess a prearranged organisation, yet provides flexibility to researchers while they direct the interview process. Contrary to the structured interview format, the semi-structured format enables the focus group to evaluate the subject from different perspectives without divagating from the main point. In this respect, an interview pattern which is composed of one introductory, two main, and one conclusion section was prepared for the participants. The introductory section of the interview aimed to shed light on participants' individual backgrounds since learners' socio-economic situation, cross-cultural travel experiences, and parents' occupations may affect young learners' conceptions about their own culture and cultural variances across nations. The main section composed of a two-stratum question mechanism consisted of 21 questions. The first stratum was designed in accordance with Byram's (1997) MMICC. In Byram's (1997) perspective, ICC refers to the learners' capability of developing consciousness towards their own cultures and effective communication skills towards other cultures. Thus, the researcher intended to interrogate young learners' perceptions about their own selves and their ability to relate themselves to the otherness through the five-savoir system. According to this framework, an intercultural interlocutor is attentive to other speakers' knowledge and living styles in conditions when he is not exposed to them as a mere audience through broadcasting publications or marketing purposes; on the contrary, he possesses intrinsic motives to form reciprocal relations with them. *Savoir etre* (attitudes), which is the first component of Byram's (1997) model, indicates individuals'

interest and tolerance towards novel cultures and highlights their eagerness to adjourn scepticism towards foreign cultural entities and practices and regard the cultural norms in their own society. To this end, the first three questions in the interview protocol aimed to measure young learners' background knowledge about Turkish and Portuguese cultures and their attitudes to pursue mutual communication with the members of the target culture. Another characteristic of an intercultural interlocutor is the fact that he accumulates knowledge about the operations and communication rules in their own country and his conversationalist's culture. The second component of the model, *savoirs* (knowledge) embodies a two-layered mechanism and represents not only individuals' understanding of individuals, social groups and their cultural exercises in their own culture and other cultures, but of appropriate principles of cross-cultural communication as well. Hence, the advancing five questions in the interview protocol intended to reveal the improvement in the research participants' intercultural knowledge and resolutions of them in the face of communication hindrances. An intercultural speaker also retains the ability to clarify information and incidents from the target culture and to correlate with the information and incidents in their own culture. The third component of the model, *savoir comprendre* (skills of interpreting/ relating) signifies the capability of mediation between one's own culture and the target culture through the critique of correspondences within them. Accordingly, the ninth and tenth questions in the interview protocol concentrated on unveiling the young learners' understanding of similarities and differences between their own culture and Portuguese culture. Moreover, an intercultural speaker is someone who is competent in employing miscellaneous methods to elicit information from other interlocutors with the aim of establishing intercultural relations and adopting a broader worldview. *Savoir apprendre/ faire* (skills of discovery and interaction) manifests the competence to adopt novel information related to a culture and its operations through one's intercommunication skills. In consequence, the researcher aimed to acknowledge the linguistic and socio-cultural reasons behind interactional limitations and figure out the techniques young learners may implement to resolve them with the remaining three questions in the interview protocol. Furthermore, an intercultural interlocutor possesses the capacity to construe their own mindset while engaging with the target culture's perspectives intentionally. *Savoir s'engager* (critical cultural awareness) is the ability to conduct an analytical assessment with regards to specific principles, viewpoints, operations, and productions in one's own culture and the target cultures. Thus, the last questions in the first

stratum of the interview protocol intended to measure the young learners' ability to detect and evaluate the customs, norms, and perspectives in their own and the target culture. According to Lussier and her colleagues (2007), assessment of ICC requires ascertainment of individuals' capacity of examination, reorganization, inference, acknowledgement, synthesis, and critique. In other words, they need to provide evidence of deep learning through demonstrating their sophisticated understanding of the operations and conventions involved (Byram, 1997). To this end, a detailed interview form has been designed by the researcher in order to assist the research participants to produce sufficient evidence of their in-depth processing respecting their own cultural identities, cross-cultural practices and intercultural communication principles. The second stratum of the interview; on the other hand, is constructed upon Bennet's (1983, 2017) DMIS. This model formulates its theory on the procedure in which the presumed latent worldview develops from a monocentric perspective to a greater ethnorelative state, catalysing higher intercultural competence and sensitivity (Bennett, 2004, p. 64). Byram's (1997) ICC framework remains limited in responding to the conditions wherein individuals demonstrate ethnocentric perspectives and their ICC level perdures under the threshold level. This situation is evident particularly for young EFL learners due to their lack of linguistic skills and inability to employ deductive reasoning. Therefore, DMIS allows for the determination of learners' level of ethnocentrism and provides a pedagogical model to enable participants to acquire higher ethnorelative viewpoint by confronting their judgments respecting cultural operations and variances and negotiating critically on their accumulated intercultural experiences to attain cross-cultural synthesis (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). Drawn upon this framework, the second stratum of the interview protocol intends to manifest the development of young learners' IS from initial phases of ethnocentrism to higher stages of ethnorelativism. Ethnocentrism which is composed of three hierarchical subcategories as denial, defense, and minimization refers to the perception of one's own culture as pivotal to the whole actuality (Bennett, 2017) via either disregarding the cultural differences or conceptualizing his culture as inferior or superior to the others. In this respect, the former three questions in the second stratum of the interview protocol aim to reveal learners' recognition and perception of similarities and differences between their own culture and the target culture. Ethnorelativism which consists of three ranked phases as acceptance, adaptation, and integration is defined as comprehension and conceptualization of all experienced cultures as means of adjusting actuality (Bennett, 2017) via accepting the foreign norms and

practices, understanding others' perspectives through developing an empathic attitude and producing pertinent behaviour, and expanding one's own identity with the inclusion of different cultural viewpoints to reach broader worldview. Based on the definition, the remaining questions in the interview protocol intended to identify the participants' acknowledgement of the target culture and its operations, attentiveness to the principles of appropriateness in cross-cultural communication, and ability to synthesize their own culture with the conventions of the target culture. Finally, the conclusion section finalized the interview by eliciting learners' further comments in the process.

To describe the implementation procedures, the Turkish and Portuguese young learners were interviewed twice in the present study. First, parental permission was received from each informant's parents or legal guardians both in pre-interview and post-interview (See Appendix F & G). Then, they were pre-interviewed before the telecollaborative activities so as to reveal their initial intercultural knowledge, attitudes to intercultural dialogues, communication skills, and IS perspectives. This interview consisted of an introductory part, the main body, and a conclusion section similar to the post-interview protocol explicated in the aforementioned paragraph (Appendix H). It was carried out in the telephone interview format. After the telecollaborative DST intervention was offered to the learners for 7 weeks, the students were post-interviewed (Appendix I) in order to monitor the improvement in the students' knowledge, attitudes, skills, and IS perspectives. The pre-interview and post-interview data collected from the Turkish and Portuguese factions were translated into English and exchanged by the project teachers. Then, the project teachers coded the data in accordance with Tecedor and Vasseur's (2020) ICC assessment guideline. The qualitative data analysis process is explicated in detail in the Data Analysis section.

3.4.4. Research Journal

Research journals are a qualitative form of data collection instruments which necessitates educators to reflect on the significant situations they have encountered at their schools and their subjective experiences on certain circumstances respecting their learners (Wiegerova, 2013). According to Richards and Farrell (2005), research journals assist instructors to keep observational records of the situations occurring in their classrooms and enable them to develop novel pedagogical outlooks. These written records also allow them to establish

and regulate connections with individuals, to observe how reciprocal communication between these individuals develops and how activities are planned and arranged in this social environment, to identify what is attributed important by the individuals under this academic inquiry, and to determine how to form and ask suitable questions for the target research group and which questions must be posed in order to respond to the research questions (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999). Research journals are attached significance, particularly in young learner research context inasmuch as foreign language learning is dynamic and progressing in nature for younger students. They tend to demonstrate different demeanours in different contexts and time zones (Turupcu, 2014). Therefore, the educational analysis for young learners must follow a continuous process in a prescribed period in order to determine the alterations and developments in their cognition, attitudes, and behaviours. In this respect, research journals were utilized by the language teachers in project schools located in Turkey and Portugal in the present study. The teachers wrote their unstructured observations concerning their learners' digital story creation processes, telecollaboration experiences, reactions towards the other culture's digital productions, limitations, communication impairments between learners, and their methods of making amends. The researchers recorded their recommendations and exchanged opinions through the process as well in order to provide a more effective telecollaborative experience for their learners to enhance their intercultural understanding and sensitivity.

3.6. Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out in two stages. First, quantitative data acquired from the simplified version of the IS-15 Scale were computed by utilizing the Statistical Package for Social Sciences 22.0 (SPSS 22.00 Version). Then, the qualitative data were coded in accordance with the assessment guideline offered by Tecedor and Vasseur (2020). The data analysis process is explicated in detail as below.

3.6.1 Analysis Procedures for Quantitative Data

The simplified and adapted version of the IS-15 Scale was implemented as a pre-and and post-questionnaire in both groups. As for the first step, the normal distribution of the data

sets was estimated via Skewness and Kurtosis analysis since it functions effectively both for small and larger samples compared to other normality assessment methods (Kim, 2016). As Huck (2012) states, the indices ranging between +1 and -1 symbolize the normal distribution of the variables in this analysis. Based on the aforementioned clarification, the Skewness and Kurtosis results illustrated the normal distribution of the thesis data in pre-and post questionnaires in both Turkish (*Skewness (Pre)*= .059, *Std. Error of Skewness (Pre)*= .580; and *Kurtosis (Pre)*= -.902, *Std. Error of Kurtosis (Pre)*= 1.121; *Skewness (Post)*= -.201, *Std. Error of Skewness (Post)*= .580; and *Kurtosis (Post)*= -1.087, *Std. Error of Kurtosis (Post)*=1.121) and Portuguese factions (*Skewness (Pre)*= -.046, *Std. Error of Skewness (Pre)*= .580; and *Kurtosis (Pre)*= -.505, *Std. Error of Kurtosis (Pre)*= 1.121; *Skewness (Post)*= -.901, *Std. Error of Skewness (Post)*= .580; and *Kurtosis (Post)*= -.450, *Std. Error of Kurtosis (Post)*=1.121). Since the quantitative data were identified to be normally distributed, Descriptive Statistics were computed to demonstrate the basic features of the collected data such as mean and standard deviation values. Then, the Independent Samples T-Test was administered to study the correlation between the Turkish and Portuguese learners' pre-test and post-test scores whereas Paired Samples T-Test was utilized to monitor the IS advancements within the Turkish and Portuguese subject groups between pre-and post-assessments.

3.6.2 Analysis Procedures for Qualitative Data

3.6.2.1 Theories Used for Coding

Byram's (1997) MMICC which is known as the most frequently employed ICC framework by educators is composed of 5 factors as knowledge, attitudes, interpreting/relating skills, discovery/interaction skills, and critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997). Even though the framework is not principally constructed upon a hierarchical scheme, it highlights that the attitude factor embraces the demeanour of interest and broad-mindedness towards foreign cultures, and the knowledge factor encompasses individuals' understanding of communes and the norms of communication not only in their own and but also foreign cultures, which are prerequisite for the development of the remaining factors. When individuals develop a sense of curiosity and tolerance to acquire cultural information about

individuals belonging to certain social groups and gain sophisticated knowledge about their cultural identities, they begin to recognize and demystify the voiced and unvoiced cross-cultural messages and values (interpreting/relating skills) so as to relate the novel cultural information to their own culture through reciprocal social interaction (discovery/interaction skills). According to this model, intercommunication between the first four factors contributes to the development of the final component: critical cultural awareness in individuals. Byram (1997) specifies that continuous and systematic reflective experience is imperative for the growth of critical cultural awareness of learners.

Bennett's (1986) DMIS; on the other hand, relies on the views of cognitive psychology and constructivism and aims to formulate how mindsets and viewpoints of individuals progress through social experience over time and how their developing perspective restricts their perception of socio-cultural occurrences. This model is built upon a two-stratum hierarchical scheme in which the first stratum is labelled as ethnocentric phase whereas the second stratum is titled as ethnorelative phase. In the ethnocentric phase, individuals regard their own cultural entity as pivotal to their recognition of actuality. In the ethnorelative stage; however, they commence to identify traditions, established notions, and belief systems located in other social settings and attach this information into their own cognitive repertory. The framework suggests the consecutive development of individuals' ICC. For this aim, a regular and methodical reflective operation is significant in this framework as well so as to monitor their ICC improvement.

Even though both ICC models have been legitimately recognized in educational literature, they bear critical shortcomings in the employment phase. Byram's (1997) MMICC remains insufficient to demonstrate individuals' ICC improvement over time due to its non-hierarchical organization (Garrett-Rucks, 2014); therefore, the assessment of learners' gradual development and the arrangement of convenient instructional treatments for learners with varied ICC degrees prevail as laborious tasks (Tecedor & Vasseur, 2020). Another limitation of Byram's (1997) framework lies in the ambiguity in the threshold level of learners' ICC development. This model does not provide an adequate description pertaining to the requirements and fulfilment of the 5 phases of ICC advancement; hence, it challenges scholars to implement this framework on younger or low proficiency learners. Moreover, Byram (2000) introduces an ICC measurement protocol which is formulated upon 5 evaluation criteria (a) *interest in other people's way of life*, (b) *ability to change*

perspective, (c) ability to cope with living in a different culture, (d) knowledge about another country and culture, and (e) knowledge about intercultural communication. As it is seen, the assessment categories concentrate on measurement of 4 *savoirs* as *savoir* (attitude), *savoir etre* (knowledge), *savoir comprendre* (interpreting / relating skills), and *savoir apprendre / faire* (discovery / interaction skills), prevailing limited to assess *savoir s'engager* (critical cultural awareness). The non-existence of an assessment criterion for the fifth *savoir* makes it arduous to identify the development in learners' ICC states (Tecedor & Vasseur, 2020). Bennett's (1986) DMIS; on the other hand, proposes an effective configuration in circumstances when learners demonstrate an ethnocentric point of view since it enables researchers to monitor the ICC development of research subjects from their preliminary stages (Tecedor & Vasseur, 2020). Nevertheless, the model is criticized in the literature due to its linear developmental approach. It is constructed on the hypothesis that the ICC development of learners pursues a successive horizontal path (Garrett-Rucks, 2014). However, learners' ICC development may experience stability on a stage or recession to previous stages. Furthermore, the DMIS model neglects the significance of learners' linguistic proficiency in intercultural interplays (Fantini, 2009). It does not concentrate on the fact that learners' insufficient target language proficiency may lead to communication gaps between interlocutors and hamper their ICC development process. Notwithstanding the impediments of both ICC models, Bennett's (1986) DMIS suggests a more descriptive content and developmental direction to monitor the ICC progress of learners' with low language proficiency compared to Byram's (1997) framework whereas Byram's model (1997) attaches significant emphasis of linguistic and interactional elements between interlocutors in comparison with DMIS model. To this end, triangulation of both models may provide an effective resolution to track younger learners' ICC development. For this reason, the current study intertwined both ICC models and administered Tecedor's and Vasseur's (2020) assessment guideline to monitor young learners' ICC development over a 7-week DST exchange process.

3.6.2.2 Coding Process and Interrater Reliability

The coding process bears significant importance to interpret the elicited data accurately. For this reason, proceeding procedures are followed in this study. First, the open-ended responses drawn from the learner diaries, research journals, and semi-structured interviews

of 30 young learners and 2 project teachers were translated into English and imported into a Word document by the project teachers. Second, the project teachers were requested to code the imported responses in separate sessions. This study employed two raters; the project teacher of the Turkish school and the project teacher of the Portuguese school. The raters utilized Tecedor and Vasseur's (2020) assessment guidelines to code the data. This guideline is given as below.

Categories	Operationalization
A. Interest in knowing other people's way of life	- Information about the partner - Expression of curiosity
B. Ability to change perspective	- Expression of the realization that some aspect of the TC(s) or the interlocutors' life is different from what the learner thought before the conversation
C. Ability to cope with interaction	- Expression of feeling regarding the interaction (i.e., language or medium)
D. Knowledge about another country and culture	- Facts about the TC(s), the country, and the people
E. Knowledge of the intercultural communication process	- Comments about a misunderstanding and how they resolved it
F. Critical awareness	- Identification and interpretation of TC(s) phenomena - Evaluation and analysis of perspectives, practices, and products in one's own and the TC(s)
G. Ethnocentric mindset	- Comment displaying denial, defense, or minimization
H. Ethnorelative mindset	- Comment exhibiting acceptance, adaptation, or integration

Figure 11. Categories adapted from Byram (1997, 2000) and Bennett (1986, 1993). Tecedor, M. & Vasseur, R. (2020). Videoconferencing and the development of intercultural competence: Insights from students' self-reflections. *Foreign Language Annals*, 53(4), 761–784.

In line with this guideline, the RQ1 was coded in accordance with Categories A, B, C, D, and F whereas the RQ2 was coded in line with Categories G and F. In the coding process, the raters coded the evidence elicited from the qualitative sources separately and organized the codes in accord with the aforementioned categories in a different Word document. Then, the raters exchanged their Word documents with each other via e-mail so as to compare them with one another.

Since the study employed two raters, the inter-rater reliability was reported by Miles and Huberman's (1994) formula. For this analysis, agreements and disagreements between the raters were counted for the same and similar excerpts. It was observed that the raters did

not incorporate the same amount of context into the categories on some occasions. Therefore, the expressions involving most parts of the same excerpts were evaluated as agreements between the raters. Moreover, some excerpts were coded in more than a single category. For instance, learners' negative statements towards the practices in the target culture were coded both under Category A symbolizing the Attitude dimension in Byram's (1997) MMICC and under Category G indicating the Ethnocentric perspectives in Bennett's (1986) DMIS. According to Miles and Huberman's (1994) formula, inter-rater reliability was estimated by dividing the total number of agreements between the raters by the total number of codes (i.e. agreements + disagreements). Miles and Huberman (1994) propose that 80% agreement is considered appropriate in 95% of the total codes. Based on this proposition, 2194 total codes were identified in the raters' Word documents. Out of these codes, 1818 agreements were tallied by the coders. Hence, the inter-rater reliability was calculated as %82.9 in this study, which was interpreted suitably to report the findings.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The present chapter aims to answer the research questions below by providing the qualitative and quantitative research findings acquired from IS-15 Scale, research journals, semi-structured interviews, and learner diaries and discussing the results in the light of previous studies.

RQ1: To what extent telecollaborative DST exchanges foster the ICC of Turkish and Portuguese EFL young learners?

RQ1.1 To what extent does telecollaborative DST contribute to Turkish and Portuguese EFL young learners' own cultural identity and broaden their intracultural knowledge?

RQ1.2 What ICC domains (knowledge, attitude, skills of relating/ interpreting, skills of discovery/ interaction, and critical cultural awareness) do Turkish and Portuguese EFL young learners demonstrate through telecollaborative digital story exchanges?

RQ1.3 To what extent do Turkish and Portuguese EFL young learners develop these ICC domains through telecollaborative digital story exchanges?

RQ2: To what extent telecollaborative DST exchanges foster the IS of young learners?

RQ2.1 What perspective (ethnocentric or ethnorelative) do Turkish and Portuguese EFL young learners demonstrate towards the target culture prior to telecollaborative digital story exchanges?

RQ2.2 To what extent do telecollaborative digital story exchanges contribute to Turkish and Portuguese EFL young learners' IS from ethnocentric perspectives to ethnorelative perspectives?

RQ2.3 What perspective (ethnocentric or ethnorelative) do Turkish and Portuguese EFL young learners demonstrate towards the target culture after telecollaborative digital story exchanges?

4.2 Findings of the Research Questions

The present section presents the findings of two research questions. The RQ1 concentrates on the young learners' ICC and explores the enhancement both in their cultural self-understanding and ICC spheres (i.e. knowledge, attitude, skills of interacting/ discovery, skills of interpreting/ relating, and critical cultural awareness in its sub-questions. The RQ2; on the other hand, focuses on IS of the young learners so as to comprehend the enhancement in their critical cultural awareness further.

4.2.1 The ICC of Turkish and Portuguese Young Learners (RQ1)

Since ICC embraces both the advancement in learners' own cultural identity and intracultural understanding and the development in their intercultural, the first and second sub-research questions of RQ1 examine the influence of telecollaborative DST exchanges on young learners' own cultural identity while the third and fourth sub-research questions of RQ1 explore their impact on their intercultural knowledge, attitudes, skills, and critical cultural awareness.

4.2.1.1 The Development in Young Learners' Own Cultural Identity and its Extent (RQ1.1)

The first sub-research question of RQ1 investigates the development in students' intracultural knowledge and critical self-awareness. For this purpose, they draw their data from several qualitative sources including learner diaries, semi-structured interviews, and research journals. The findings extracted from these sources are presented as below.

The data acquired from the post-semi-structured interviews and weekly learner diaries indicated that the intracultural learning remained at a noticeably superficial level since all Portuguese and Turkish participants stated that they did not study an unfamiliar subject or acquire novel information from their native partners. The digital narratives mainly concentrated on the presentation of widespread practices and popular products in their own country including daily routines, free-time activities, famous dishes, celebrations, and traditional dances and did not communicate the belief systems of the story makers and the practices of immigrant and marginalized sub-social groups in their countries. Therefore, the group discussions during the intracultural digital story planning and preparation processes and overt instruction phases remained limited for the adoption of new intracultural knowledge. Some instances for this finding are given as below.

Excerpt 1

I did not learn any information that I did not know before. The allocated time to complete our digital stories was 5 days for the first tasks. It was insufficient to deal with Portuguese culture because we had to start preparing the digital stories immediately. And I already know my own culture. But, we did a brief research on Google to determine which dish we can present in our storybooks or which region's traditional dance we can include making our videobooks look good. I and my group took into consideration the funny and entertaining things (Portuguese Student 1, Post-interview).

Excerpt 2

I am Turkish after all. I have nothing that I do not know in my own culture. And, why should I study in my own culture? We are not doing the project with Turkish students. We are doing it with Portuguese students. We should learn their culture, they should learn our culture (Turkish Student 8, Overt Instruction Phase – Research Journal).

As illustrated in Excerpts 1 and 2, the learner diaries and post-interview records of 11 (73.33%) Turkish young learners and 7 (46.66%) Portuguese young learners demonstrated some instances of egocentrism in their written and spoken statements. The Turkish and Portuguese students indicated that they did not grasp any novel information due to their conception that since they were members of their native country, they were familiar with everything regarding their nation and culture. Moreover, 4 (26.66%) of the Portuguese students specified that they preferred conducting brief research on the subjects they were familiar with on Google before creating their digital stories in order to introduce the most interesting and appealing dishes, dances, traditions, and activities in their countries. In other words, these students believed to possess the fundamental cultural information about their own country; nevertheless, they exhibited enthusiasm to select the practices and products which would stimulate the interest and curiosity of their Turkish counterparts. To exemplify, these students assumed that they had comprehensible knowledge of the cuisine of Portugal. However, they still visited some websites in Google to select among a wide

range of dishes and display the fun facts that may astonish and attract the attention of their Turkish peers.

For Portuguese and Turkish participants endeavouring to develop their own cultural identity, the telecollaborative experience intended not only to build upon the research subjects' intracultural knowledge but also to transmit their own cultural systems to a target audience overseas. In this respect, the participants were assigned into local groups in comparison and analysis tasks to allow learners to evaluate their cultural codes and prepare through digital productions to present them to a global audience. The data elicited from the semi-structured interviews, learner diaries, and research journals uncovered that the members of the Turkish and Portuguese local groups negotiated on the products and practices of their own culture before creating their digital storybooks in order to inhibit their foreign counterparts misunderstanding or mislearning their culture. Specifically, the Portuguese and Turkish local groups engaged in critical discussions so as to introduce their culture in an accurate fashion and form a clear image in their foreign partners' minds. Their reciprocal effort to eliminate cultural misconceptions facilitated the development of critical self-cultural awareness. These discussions enabled the research subjects to recognize the cultural differences within their national boundaries although they share the same national identity. The presence of critical self-cultural awareness is exemplified in Excerpts below.

Excerpt 3

Not everybody drinks hoşaf or compost for breakfast. Not everybody eats pide in the breakfast either. So, presenting hoşaf as something we drink in the breakfast may lead to misunderstanding. This is not a habit or something common. If they come to Turkey one day, they will not be able to see hoşaf at the table. (Turkish Student 6, Post-Interview).

Excerpt 4

What my friend included in her digital stories was not meaningful, and I warned her. She included an interesting traditional dance but I am sure it does not belong to Portugal., We should present more obvious dances that really belongs to Portugal. Our Turkish partners may learn wrong things. (Portuguese Student 3, Post-Interview)

As reported in Excerpt 3, the Turkish participants manifested an instance of critical self-cultural understanding with their proposition that the habit of drinking compost is not a culture-generic habit but a family-bounded act. Similarly, as seen in Excerpt 4, the Portuguese students exhibited a case of critical self-cultural awareness in their post-interview statements discussing that representation of regional traditions and dances would remain insufficient and meaningless to introduce the traditions of the whole country. Specifically, both project parties held the belief that presenting the products and practices

restricted to an immediate area or community would create false impressions about their own nation and yield inaccurate learnings.

Twelve (80%) of the Turkish participants and 10 (66.66%) of the Portuguese participants exhibited instances of cultural self-awareness in their learner diaries. Their statements pinpointed that they recognized the existence of practical and product-oriented cultural differences among the members of their local groups even though they live in the same country and study at the same school. Supporting the aforementioned finding, the semi-structured interview reports revealed that the students' reality was restricted to their own personal context in the beginning. They were unaware of the different practices within their own society. Therefore, they questioned the different cultural practices of their classmates and provided negative responses towards them at first. For example, the Turkish students defined the act of drinking hoşaf for breakfast as a bizarre and ridiculous habit and suggested drinking tea or milk during this course of the day. Similarly, the Portuguese students reacted adversely towards the preference of wearing black wedding gowns in the Minho region and stated that they found the tradition meaningless since the black wedding gowns look ugly. However, when the participants continued to cooperate with their local groups in the comparison and analysis tasks, they began to form intimate relationships with the members of their local group. The establishment of genuine bonds and friendships accompanied their acceptance of their culturally distinct classmates. This finding is exemplified in the Excerpts below.

Excerpt 5

While working with my groups, I recognized how much my friends spend time online. They play online games all the time. I also recognized that they do their homework in late hours or on weekends after they play games for hours. I thought I should help my friends (Turkish Student 13, Learner Diary)

Excerpt 6

On Halloween, instead of asking for sweets, they can ask for biscuits or bread. And not every family celebrates Halloween. It is sad not to celebrate Halloween with joy, I think. And they also do not carve pumpkins. It was surprising but I think they have a reason (Portuguese Student 2, Learner Diary)

Excerpt 7

In Minho, I learnt that brides can wear black wedding dresses. It seemed bizarre at first. Different regions have different traditions even in Portugal. In addition, some classmates said that bridesmaids can wear white dresses if the bride wants to. It seemed really weird. But I understood later (Portuguese Student 15, Post-Interview)

As reported in the upper mentioned Excerpts, the post-interview data and the learner diaries highlighted that the students reached the understanding that different people, families, social groups, and regions may have different eating habits, weekend activities, celebrations, and family traditions within the same national borders. For instance, the Turkish students noticed the variation among their classmates in terms of the amount of time allocated for computer games and school assignments (*Excerpt 5*). In addition, Portuguese respondents identified some regional divergences concerning the meaning attributed to the wedding dresses (*Excerpt 6*) and Halloween tradition (*Excerpt 7*). Recognizing intracultural differences enabled them to establish the “Not everybody is the same.” notion on their minds and accepted their classmates’ differences. The epiphany of intracultural differences fostered the development of cultural self-awareness in young learners. The development of critical self-awareness; on the other hand, supported the development of critical cultural awareness. In fact, the participants stated that if such cultural differences are visible within the same country, it is normal to see more cultural differences across borders due to geographical reasons. Some instances are demonstrated below.

Excerpt 8

In Kayseri, they cook mantı differently. We cook mantı differently. We cook it with potato and meat. I mean, in Turkey different places cook or eat the same food in different ways. Also, they call the food with different names. Portuguese students may be cooking mantı in a different way and have given it a different name as well. In addition, Sivas is cold, but Antalya is hot. People in Antalya wear different clothes and it is fine due to weather conditions. Portuguese students may be wearing shorts and skirts in winter because the weather may be hotter like in Antalya (Turkish Student 9, Post-Interview).

Excerpt 9

The difference between hoşaf and compost and drinking compost in breakfast were discussed a lot among the Turkish students in the Overt Instruction stage. The Turkish students came to the understanding that not only in foreign countries but also in their own country, habits may change. At first, they perceived the differences negatively. They asked certain questions such as “How can they drink hoşaf in breakfast?” and provided suggestions for their classmates such as “You should drink tea or milk, not compost”. However, when they exchanged digital stories with their Portuguese partners, they had the opportunity to work in local groups and get to know each other more. In this way, they began accepting the differences in their local groups (Turkish Teacher 1, Research Journal)

Excerpt 10

My friend says that she sometimes drinks hoşaf for breakfast. I sometimes eat Cocopops for breakfast. So, Portuguese students are different. Although they are Portuguese, one plays a different game, the other one plays another game. One does not eat sweet food, the other one loves sweet food. This is similar for us as well. We eat different foods sometimes. We wear different foods sometimes. It is normal. (Turkish Student 1, Overt Instruction, Research Journal).

As stated above, the participants acknowledged the existence of not only the interpersonal differences (*Excerpt 10*) between the members of the same community but inter-territorial or communal differences within the regions of the same nation (*Excerpt 8*) as well. The realization of intranational behavioural and cultural variation rendered them to adopt openness to intercultural differences. The participants rationalized the clothing diversity as in *Excerpt 8* and non-traditional breakfast regime as in *Excerpts 9 and 10* and demonstrated some signs of acceptance to them. The revelation of intracultural differences strengthened their critical self-cultural understanding and contributed to their critical cultural awareness to a significant extent.

4.2.1.2. The Development in Young Learners' ICC Domains and its Extent (RQ1.2 & RQ1.3)

The second and third sub-research questions of RQ1 investigate the development in students' ICC domains including knowledge, attitude, skills of interacting/ discovery, skills of interpreting/ relating, and critical cultural awareness. For this purpose, they draw their data from several qualitative sources including learner diaries, semi-structured interviews, and research journals. The findings extracted from these sources are presented as below.

4.2.1.2.1 Knowledge Dimension

The present section aims to present the young learners' intercultural knowledge of products, practices, and social groups, historical and modern-day cooperations between their own country and their interlocutor's country, the general communication principles for effective interplays, their own perspectives and the perceptions of these perspectives by their culturally distinct interlocutors, sociocultural similarities and differences between their own and their interlocutor's culture, and forms and processes of cultural misunderstandings. Even though the knowledge dimension encompasses both intracultural and intercultural awareness, it mainly focuses on the development in learners' knowledge of intercultural practices, products, and social groups as well as of communicational patterns and misunderstandings by excluding the sphere of intracultural understanding since the previous sub-research questions have already addressed the enhancement in young learners' intracultural knowledge and self-cultural identity.

The pre-interview data displayed that 2 (13.33%) of the Turkish participants had limited knowledge about the target culture respecting its sports and food whereas 13 (86.66%) of them possessed no background knowledge at the beginning of the study. Similarly, 3 (20%) of the Portuguese students expressed their superficial level of knowledge concerning the religious and celebratory differences between both countries while the remaining (80%) voiced their lack of knowledge about the target country and its culture. Even though 5 (33.33%) of the participants articulated their minimal amount of knowledge about the target culture, 10 (66.66%) of the Turkish students and 8 (53.33%) of the Portuguese students declared that they had heard the names of the country for the first time. In addition, all of the Turkish and Portuguese participants including the ones with minimal background knowledge stated that they could not point at the target country on a world map. This finding is instanced below.

Excerpt 11

I know that Portuguese people love football. Cristiano Ronaldo is from Portugal, and he is a great football player. Other than that, I do not know anything. (Turkish Student 2, Pre-Interview)

Excerpt 12

I know that they are famous for their oranges. The word “portakal” comes from the word “Portugal”. (Turkish Student 7, Pre-Interview)

Excerpt 13

I know they do not celebrate Christmas. I am really curious about what they do instead. I also know that they have different prayers. They have a prayer place here close to my home (Portuguese Student 3, Pre-Interview)

Excerpt 14

I heard the country for the first time. I do not even know where the country is on the map. (Portuguese Student 14, Pre-Interview)

Excerpts 11 and 12 documented that some Turkish participants possessed a superficial level of knowledge about their partner country concerning its appreciation of football and their well-known staples. Excerpt 13 reported that Portuguese students had awareness of celebratory and religious differences between the respective cultures. However, all of the participants were incapable of demonstrating the location of their partner countries on a world map and falsely estimated that their partner countries could be situated in Asia or Eastern Europe. This data suggested that the young learners in both countries lacked even the geographical level of knowledge about their project country.

Since the participants did not have thorough background knowledge, they were asked about their predictions regarding the similarities and differences between their heritage

culture and the target culture. In this phase of the pre-interview session, 12 (80%) of the Turkish students and 10 (66.66%) of the Portuguese students associated the similarities with their daily routines, playing cultures and school subjects. However, the others ratiocinated defectively and correlated the similarities with the identity in their religious rituals, native language or celebrations. Similarly, most of the participants were observed to conduct faulty reasoning and to imply the signs of false hypothetical knowledge on basis of intercultural differences. 13 of the Turkish subjects (86.66%) and 13 (86.66%) of the Portuguese subjects expressed the possibility of differences in terms of food found in supermarkets, jobs and occupations, physical appearance, and technological advances. For instance, a Turkish student stated that they may not be able to find fruit juices or packets of biscuits in Portuguese supermarkets. He predicted that Portuguese people may have healthier eating habits than theirs. Correspondingly, a Portuguese student stated that Turkish students may not have principals or vice-principals at their schools. This case is exemplified further with the excerpt below.

Excerpt 15

I think, Portuguese and Turkish cultures are quite different from one another. Their dances, music, food, and lessons. I mean, we learn lessons in Turkish, but they may learn them in English. But, a few things may be similar. They may have mosques and Friday prayers in their country. (Turkish Student 5, Pre-Interview)

Excerpt 16

I do not know Portuguese culture at all. I only heard some of their songs on TV. But they may be sacrificing animals for God in the feast of sacrifice. (Turkish Student 15, Pre-Interview)

As seen in the extracts, the Turkish students engaged in another inaccurate cognitive calculation and claimed that the Portuguese students may worship God in mosques or sacrifice animals in the Muslim Festival of Sacrifices. All in all, the aforementioned instances highlighted that most of the Turkish and Portuguese participants held false conceptions even though they did not have any background target culture knowledge.

Intercultural illiteracy and false hypothetical knowledge resulted the young learners in developing ethnocentric mindsets. In fact, their lack of knowledge led them to predict the possible similarities and differences between both countries. Based on their estimations, 8 (53.33%) of the Turkish students idealized the Portuguese culture. The case of idealization is presented in Excerpt 17.

Excerpt 17

I would love to move to Portugal when I grow up. I can learn English and get a better education. Portuguese education is better than ours. (When asked why) I do not know why.

They are foreigners. Their education must be better. Maybe because of the languages they learn. They may have lots of English lessons since it is their native language. (Turkish Student 8, Pre-Interview)

Excerpt 18

I do not know where Portugal is. But, our culture and their culture can be different. The technology could be more advanced, or robots could be more developed there. And their markets may have different food and drinks. We may have ice cream here, they may not be selling ice cream in their country. Because of their robots, I would love to visit and have an education there (Turkish Student 1, Pre-Interview)

Drawn on the excerpts above, although the Turkish students did not know anything about the Portuguese culture, they associated the Portuguese culture with other cultures such as Spanish, English, and even Chinese cultures. In addition, they thought that Portuguese students' native language is English. Therefore, they thought that Portugal must have better educational opportunities, language programmes and technological advances compared to their own country. Seven (46.66%) of the Turkish participants; on the other hand, perceived their nation and culture as superior to the Portuguese culture due to the scenic beauties of their country or their food choices. From the Portuguese perspective; however, it was found out that all Portuguese students (100%) believed in the superiority of their own country and culture due to its scenic beauties, cuisine, music, and sports. This finding is reinforced with the excerpt below.

Excerpt 19

I do not know Turkey or Turkish culture at all. I do not want to move there. And, our country is better. Our teachers, school, lunch food, and even friends are better. Our science lessons are really entertaining. We even gathered in the garden as a whole school and did a human fingerprint. I do not think they have as good labs or science teachers as ours to do such a thing. (Portuguese Student 9, Pre-Interview)

As given in Excerpt 19, even though the Portuguese participants did not possess any background knowledge about Turkey and its dominant culture, they stated the supremacy of their country over Turkey due to their emotional attachment to their school and friends. Since they loved their schools and classmates, they reacted against the existence of better educational opportunities in another part of the world automatically. In conclusion, the pre-interview findings indicated that the Portuguese students exhibited the Defense stage of ethnocentrism towards the predicted differences whereas the Turkish students demonstrated polarization in ethnocentric mindsets by either displaying the state of Defense or the state of Reversal towards the intercultural differences.

The data collected from the participants' learner diaries on weekly basis and from the teachers' research journals reported that both Turkish and Portuguese participants enhanced their knowledge about their partners' daily routines, hobbies, school lives,

weekend activities, and favourite digital and conventional games as well as the cuisine, dressing styles, holiday customs, and traditional dances of their partner countries through personal information exchange and comparison and analysis tasks. In the personal information exchange tasks, Turkish and Portuguese students introduced themselves individually by depicting their ordinary day, mentioning their favourite games and cartoons, and describing their favourite free-time activities. They also presented the disciplines at their schools to their partners. In comparison and analysis tasks; on the other hand, students created their digital stories about the important products (music, clothes, and dishes) and dominant practices (holiday customs and celebrations) in their own countries. Some instances of product and practice-oriented intercultural learning are documented as below.

Excerpt 20

It is interesting to see that Portuguese students not only learn English but also German as a foreign language (Turkish Student 5, Learner Diary)

Excerpt 21

I have not thought that Turkish and Portuguese students may have similar foods. Even how we cook them is similar. The similarity in almost everything surprised me. (Portuguese Student 6, Learner Diary)

Excerpt 22

I have met with Portuguese boys and girls and learned about their lifestyles, games and free-time activities. There are similarities in some meals and all the games are the same. We have some differences in celebrations, but even them are identical. (Turkish Student 13, Learner Diary)

Excerpt 23

Turkish students do not have a lesson called Technical education. I think they should have that. And also, they do not have breakfast breaks at their schools. I think they have breakfast at home, so they do not need to. (Portuguese Students 8, Learner Diary).

As revealed in the Excerpts above, the participants acquired information about the local dishes, school subjects, online and conventional playing cultures, mother tongue, and weekday and weekend activities. According to Byram's (2000) ICC protocol, the knowledge dimension encompasses the knowledge of social groups, products, practices, belief systems of one's own country and the target country. In this sense, the learnings of the Portuguese and Turkish students remained at a superficial level inasmuch as the learner diaries only reported the knowledge of products and practices concerning the target culture, and no instances were detected about the living conditions of social groups with different ethnic backgrounds or the belief systems and moral codes of their culturally distinct interlocutors. In other words, the intercultural learning remained restricted to the observable aspects of the cultures as showcased in preceding excerpts, and the abstract

accounts were overlooked by the participants. The rationale behind this was associated with low foreign language proficiency and undeveloped abstract thinking skills of young learners in the discussion section.

The students preferred using “I like, I hate” structures to communicate their opinions about the subjects such as daily activities, school courses and dishes and attaching photographs of their homes, pets, books, friends, and families. The presentation of written or pictorial personal information played a significant role to direct the students’ attention to the digital stories since students acted more cautious to read or listen to the digital productions and understand the meanings behind the pictures. Moreover, the presentation of personal information, as well as information about the cultural products and practices, enabled learners to recognize the similarities between both cultures at the individual and international level and move to a transitional stage from Defense to Minimization. At the international level, the Turkish and Portuguese participants reached the recognition that Turkish and Portuguese cuisines, dressing styles, school systems, holiday customs, and living styles possess remarkable resemblances. At the individual level, they noticed that not only the weekly activities, school subjects, and hobbies are identical in both countries but their attitudes, likes, and dislikes towards them show parallelism as well. The excerpts below support this finding.

Excerpt 22

I love playing Minecraft and Brawl Stars. I saw that (Portuguese Student 9) also loves these games and plays them every day. We can be friends and play online games together (Turkish Student 12, Learner Diary).

Excerpt 23

The Turkish girl named ... (Turkish student 13) has a cat. I love cats. I keep two cats at home. I think we can get along really well (Portuguese Students 7, Learner Diary).

The excerpts represent that the correspondences at the individual level strengthened the notion of possible intercultural friendship in students’ minds. In fact, since the students identified that their culturally distinct partners have a pet, feed stray animals, read comic books, or play the same computer games as themselves, they hinted that they could establish strong friendship bonds with them. In this respect, it can be stated that the acknowledgement of similarities in each level allowed learners to advance onto a transitional stage of Minimization and assisted them to develop some signs of Acceptance level of ethnorelativism.

The data acquired from the learner diaries reported that even though comparison and analysis tasks enhanced learners' intercultural knowledge and awareness, the mere exchange of digital narratives about the products and practices of the target cultures and the effort of detecting the differences and similarities between them led to the emergence of *us* versus *them* binary opposites. The statements extracted from the learner diaries revealed that all Portuguese and Turkish students used 'I' or 'we' personas to refer to the practices and outputs in their own country whereas they utilized 'they' persona to address their foreign partners. They established 'we' and 'they' duality even when they desired to talk about the similarities. The research journals kept during the discussions in Overt Instruction stages supported this data set as below.

Excerpt 24

Through the exchanges, Turkish students recognized that Portuguese students wake up at 06.45, go to school, do homework, and engage in similar after school activities like them. They stated that their lessons are almost the same as theirs. They also pointed out that Portuguese students play hide and seek, dodgeball and blind man's buff with their friends. They also play the same games when they meet their friends. Moreover, the presentation of personal information also gathered their attention and interest in the digital stories. For example, one Turkish student negotiated on a Portuguese student's statement respecting that he does not like Caldo Verde although it is really famous in Portugal. The Turkish student said that he does not like lentil or yoghurt soups although they are cooked at home regularly. Even though learning about the similarities and likes and dislikes of their partners provided an enriched learning experience, continuous comparisons limited the use of the 'we' persona and the development of the sense of togetherness. (Turkish Teacher, Research Journal)

Excerpt 25

My students were astonished to see how similar both cultures are. They were expecting some similarities in everyday life and food culture in the beginning, but they were not expecting that even culture-specific practices such as celebrations and traditional clothes would resemble one another. The similarities excited them. Especially the game's part. They knew all the games presented by their Turkish partners. However, I should note down that they never used the 'we' subject through the discussions. Their reflections did not include 'nos' persona either. They were as if avoiding using the 'we' subject intentionally. In Zoom meetings, I emphasized the 'we' persona a couple of times, but they acted insisted on using the 'they' and 'us' division (Portuguese Teacher, Research Journal)

The research journal data represented above highlighted that the students stated their enthusiasm for comparative judgment. Specifically, they listened to or read their partners' digital stories in order to compare the cultural systems of each country and make comments on the differences. However, emphasizing the similarities more than differences in the Overt Instruction phase did not dampen the learners' comparative enthusiasm; on the contrary, it continued differentiating the cultures. To provide an example, playing the same online games or having similar daily routines did not yield to the unitary perception of the cultures and use of the 'we' persona since the participants continued to view their partners as outsiders. The 'us versus them' binary construction resulted in strengthening the

monolithic cultural perspective and posed an obstacle to developing higher ethnorelativist mindsets in learners.

There were observed two instances where Turkish and Portuguese students demonstrated a growing understanding of their partners' problems and distress through the DST exchange process. With the enhancement in their intercultural knowledge, they identified the hardships their partners encounter and displayed a sympathetic attitude towards them. To begin with, the Turkish students live in a region where they have to endure the harsh weather conditions in the winter season. Hence, they defined the winter period with adjectives such as hard, scary, cold, and unhappy. The Portuguese students were unable to comprehend their distaste in the Overt Instruction stage since they live in a coastal region where winters are welcomed with joy due to its mildness and Christmas celebrations. Thus, they resorted to their teacher's explanation on the matter. When they learnt about their partners' hardships, they adopted a sensitive attitude in the collaborative DST process and excluded the winter-themed pictures from their joint stories. The second instance was observed when the Turkish students learnt that their Portuguese partners were sent home for two weeks due to the detection of two Covid cases in their classroom. The Portuguese students were overwhelmed by the irregular classroom hours and online scheduled meetings. Since the Turkish students underwent the same process in the previous academic term, they understood the hardships of online education and exhibited an empathic attitude towards their failure of the final collaborative task. The Turkish students allocated another week for their Portuguese partners in this respect, and the project activities were completed by a one week delay.

According to Byram's (2000) ICC protocol, the ability to change perspective holds significant importance in the knowledge dimension. In this phase, the enhancement in learners' own cultural identity and intercultural understanding is expected to yield to transformation in their previous negative propositions and estimations. In line with this item, the data analysis indicated that the examinations of the digital stories and the negotiations in the Overt Instruction stage changed the initial negative and monocentric perspectives of both Turkish and Portuguese participants. All of the Turkish and Portuguese participants displayed improvement in their negative pre-interview utterances in the post-interview session. The students emphasized that the Turkish and Portuguese cultures were more similar than they esteemed. In addition, they stated that these cultures

have interesting and entertaining procedures and practices. These findings are illustrated as below.

Excerpt 26

In Portugal, they do not speak English. They have their own language like Turkish. They learn the English language like us. I thought I would not understand them if they wrote in English. But, they are students like us and learning the English language like us, so they are no different or superior to us. It is something good, I do not feel nervous anymore (Turkish Student 4, Post-Interview)

Excerpt 27

I would like to visit Turkey one day. I may also want to live there for a brief period of time. Yes, I had said that I would not live in Turkey since my country is better in the previous telephone call. But what I learnt was that almost everything is the same between my country and Turkey. So, I may go and live there. And, I also added two of my Turkish partners on Instagram. We sometimes talk or send pictures to one another. If I go there, I can learn the language from them and spend time with them. It may be fun. (Portuguese Student 4, Post-Interview)

As highlighted in the excerpts, the Turkish and Portuguese informants identified robust correspondences between the target cultures in terms of daily exercises, school subjects, foreign language learning schemes, and gaming conventions. The commonality shattered their previous ethnocentric perspective concerning that their own culture is inferior or superior to the target culture. In this way, they developed ethnorelativist perspectives regarding the acceptance and veneration of both their own culture and the target culture.

4.2.1.2.2 Attitude Dimension

The present section aims to present the study findings related to the young learners' enthusiasm to explore the different perspectives and negotiate on similar and dissimilar incidents in their heritage culture and foreign cultures, to look for opportunities to embrace otherness, to interrogate outputs and practices respecting their heritage culture, to adapt into or communicate with the target culture during the dialogic period, and to practice the principles of verbal and non-verbal communication. For this purpose, it gathers its data from semi-structured interviews, learner diaries, and research journals.

To elicit data about the initial attitudes of the research subjects, pre-interview sessions were conducted by the Turkish and Portuguese teachers. The collected data suggested that all Turkish participants (100%) expressed their high enthusiasm and interest to engage in a transnational project for the first time and have the opportunity of communicating with foreigners. All Portuguese students (100%); on the other hand, stated their happiness to be selected by their teacher to participate in such a project and articulated their happiness for

international interaction. The Portuguese students stated that they were neither extremely excited nor extremely unexcited, but cheerful to communicate with people across borders and learn about the differences between both countries. Even though all of the participants held positive attitudes towards the project activities, some students implied the signs of technophobia and anxiety as explicated in excerpts below.

Excerpt 28

I am really excited, teacher. I want to learn what they eat, how they behave, or which games they play. I feel like my heart can stop while talking with them. But, I am afraid of not being able to speak with them. You know, I can talk about classes or what we do every day. But, I may not be able to ask what they eat or things like that. I did not learn it at school. Can you teach us? (Turkish Student 3, Pre-Interview)

Excerpt 29

I am happy that my teacher chose me and my best friend for this project. I am not too happy nor too unhappy though. I am just happy to talk to children who are different from us. (When asked about her concerns) I am a little worried about technology. I may not be able to record my voice or write well technologically. I may not be able to finish the story on time (Portuguese Student 15, Pre-Interview)

As exemplified in Excerpt 28, 7 (46.66%) of the Turkish participants voiced their concerns respecting their low English proficiency. All of these students were worried about failing to find the correct words to communicate their actions and feelings or making errors in their statements and leading to misunderstandings. In line with Excerpt 29, 13 (86.66%) of the Portuguese students verbalized their lack of digital skills to create digital stories including voice recording, pictorial attachment, and textual production. They stated that they were anxious and diffident to remain unsuccessful in completing their digital narratives even though they relied on their language proficiency to interact with foreign students in a written or spoken fashion.

The Turkish students had 3 hours of English lessons whereas the Portuguese students had only 2 hours of English lessons at their schools. However, the Portuguese participants had the opportunity to practice English at home since their family members had high English language proficiency and practiced speaking with their children after school. The Turkish students; on the other hand, were living in a region in which they possessed almost no opportunity to practice the target language. Concerning their living conditions, some of the Turkish students demonstrated signs of anxiety before beginning the telecollaborative exchanges. Nevertheless, the Turkish students succeeded in completing all of the telecollaborative tasks. In the personal information exchange task, the IT teacher at their school provided the technological support for them to use the Story Jumper website effectively. Similarly, their English teacher conducted a brief workshop to instruct the

participants to use the digital platforms including My Storybook, MakesBeliefsComix, and Book Creator with high potency in the comparison and analysis tasks. As well as the technical assistance, their English teacher provided linguistic and emotional support for the participants to create cohesive and coherent productions. The teacher acted as a facilitator in this process and encouraged their productions and praised their creativity and effort. The provision of linguistic and technological support and achievement in creating the digital narratives on a timely basis reduced their initial anxiety as given in the excerpt below.

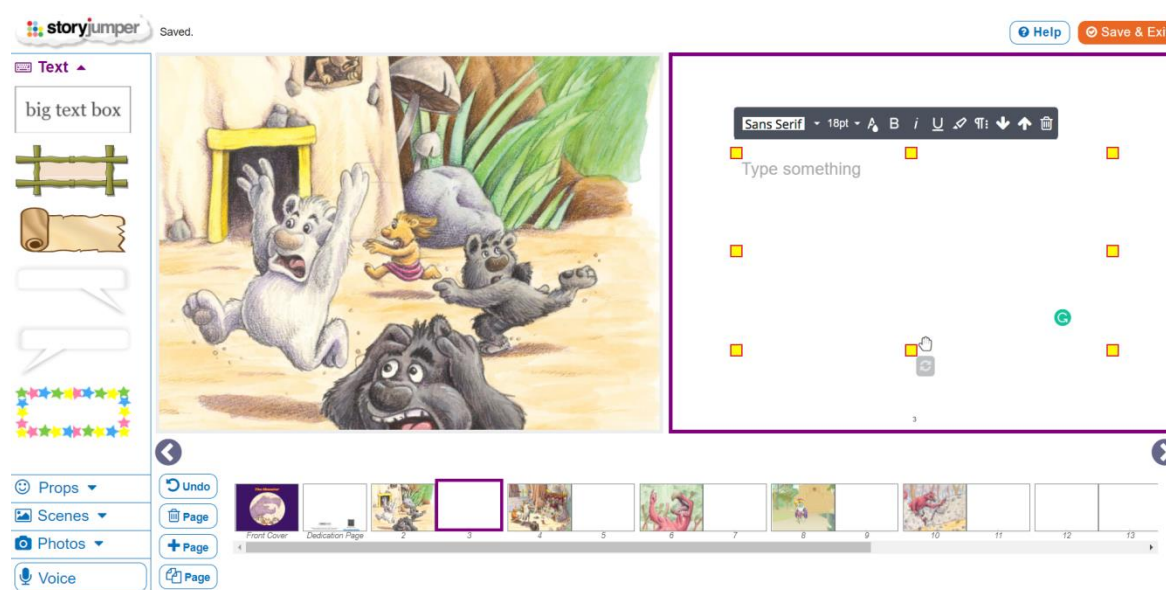


Figure 12. The book creation page of StoryJumper

Excerpt 30

I was afraid of talking to foreign students at first. I thought I would be unable to talk to Portuguese children. But, I found out that they learn what we learn. They know what we know. I was able to understand all the words and sentences in their storybooks. They learn the same things as we learn. I thought because they live abroad, they would use different words. You know, harder words. But, they wrote what we wrote. And, preparing digital stories was not hard at all. I was scared of not being able to write. But, I wrote what I like and dislike and what I do and play every day. It was easy. I am not scared anymore (Turkish Student 11, Post-Interview).

As indicated in Excerpt 30, completing the first tasks and obtaining the approval and compliment of the teacher enhanced the feeling of achievement and success in the Turkish participants. All Turkish students stressed the easiness of writing in the target language contrary to their earlier statements. Moreover, reviewing their Portuguese partners' productions decreased their anxiety. Since the Turkish students had high expectations from their Portuguese partners due to their European identity, analysing the digital stories using almost the same linguistic complexity as theirs reduced their uneasiness and feeling of

foreign language-related inferiority. Concisely, the role of the teachers as supporters and facilitators and the correspondence in the digital stories of the partner countries rendered diminishment in their previous anxiety and enhancement in their self-confidence.

The Portuguese students; on the other hand, possessed high self-esteem regarding their language proficiency and acted courageously to communicate with students from another country. Nonetheless, this subject group manifested some evidence of anxiety in the form of digital apprehension. The Portuguese group pointed out their lack of technological knowledge and skills to interact with their foreign partners through digital means and expressed their concerns about being incapable of conveying their opinions and feelings due to their cybernated illiteracy. These students were incognizant of the eTwinning platform and other DST spaces; hence, the probable intricacy of these platforms frightened them. In line with their estimations, this subject group could not exploit all of the modes of the Story Jumper platform in the personal information task. They failed to attach music to their digital narratives and remained unable to record their voices. It resulted in heightening their initial tension more. The reflection-based data highlighted that they began to feel less courageous and more reluctant to transmit their cultural practices and products to the partner group. However, the IT teacher intervened in this process and recommended the utilization of a platform on which the students had former experience. With the guidance of the IT teacher at school, the Portuguese students managed to complete their remaining tasks with efficacy, and it contributed to the reduction of their earlier anxiety and promotion of their self-esteem.

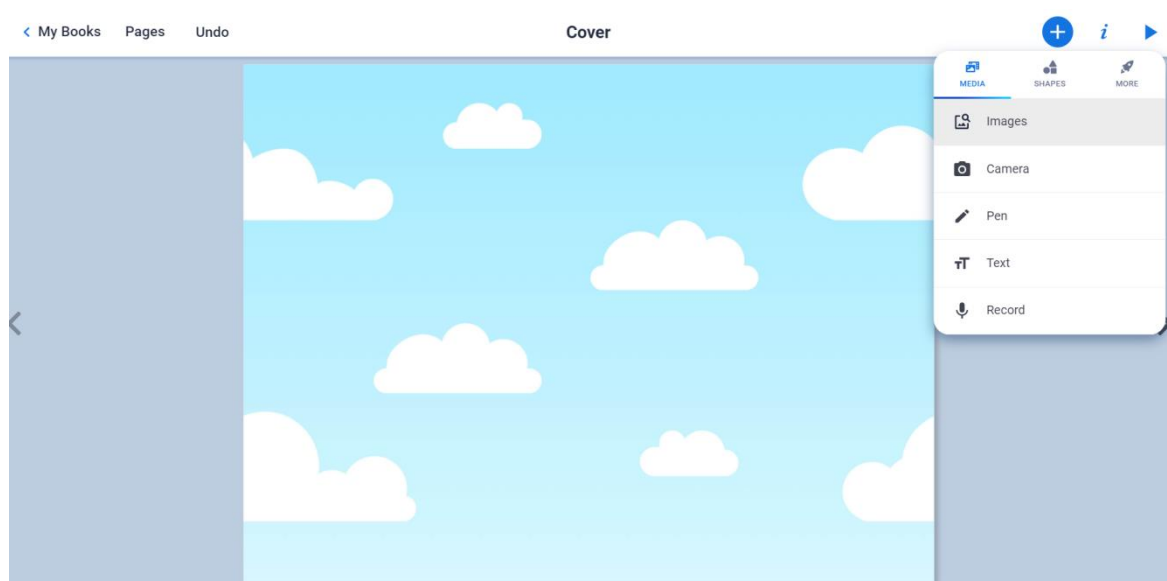


Figure 13. The book creation page of Book Creator.

Excerpt 31

I did not know how to use the first website. I felt sad when I could not record my voice or include the pictures of my puppies. The website was too complicated. I wished they would have been here to talk to us. Using technology was tiring and hard. I thought about quitting. But, our IT teacher came and helped us. She had taught the Book Creator to us before. She helped us to use the Book Creator again. Then, we completed our storybooks. I still do not understand why we used the first website at all. Book Creator is easier. (Portuguese Student 4, Post-Interview)

Excerpt 31

My students were enthusiastic in the beginning. However, their enthusiasm showed a dramatic decline when they failed to use the Story Jumper platform. Some of the students asked to drop the project since they believed that they would not be able to complete even the first activity. However, when they began using the platform they already knew and received the support of their IT teacher, they felt safer. Then, they started enjoying the entertaining process of creating digital narratives with their classmates or reading the digital storybooks of their culturally distinct partners. Their digital anxiety reduced, and they caught up to their former enthusiasm again. (Portuguese Teacher 1, Research Journal)

The preceding excerpts reinforce the previous clarification and highlight that the guidance of the IT teacher exerted a facilitative role to enhance the former attitudinal stances of Portuguese learners. The Portuguese informants overcame their digital apprehension with the technological assistance of their teachers.

The role of peer feedback played a critical role in enhancing the participants' attitude towards the telecollaborative exchanges as well. As well as the teachers' guidance, the intracultural and intercultural peer-feedback held a significant role in decreasing the young learners' anxiety and promoting their engagement in the tasks. The comparison and analysis tasks in the second, third, and fourth weeks of the project plan necessitated the students to collaborate with their local group members to prepare their digital narratives and introduce their national culture to their foreign partners. The peer interaction at the intra-cultural level enabled learners to negotiate on the accuracy of their statements and question the coherence of their stories with their friends or classmates. The peer feedback allowed them to cross-check the content and to present the most accurate version of their narratives. The consensus on the correctness of the stories enhanced their self-esteem and willingness to share them with their partners with their heart's ease. Moreover, the collaborative DST creation process itself was welcomed with excitement and keen interest by the participants. Both the Turkish and Portuguese students specified their contentment to spend time with their friends more and discuss the pictures, songs, and texts in their stories. Statistically, 13 (86.66%) of the Turkish and 10 (66.66%) of the Portuguese students declared their happiness to work with their friends and prepare joint narratives in their learner diaries and post-interview forms. Similarly, 11 (73.33%) of the Turkish and 6

(40%) of the Portuguese students expressed their openness towards their friends' corrections since they perceived joint correction as a necessary means to enhance the overall quality of their digital productions. The positive impact of cooperation and peer-feedback is reflected as below.

Excerpt 32

Working with my classmates were so much fun. While preparing the digital stories, we chose the characters, dressed them up, set the scene, and wrote the story. They were all fun. We laughed and talked a lot. My friend helped me to write the stories. I did not feel scared at all. Due to Covid, my mom does not let me go out a lot. So, it was great. And it was better than writing the story alone. (Turkish Student 15, Learner Diary)

Excerpt 33

I love surfing and reading books on the beach. I love anything about the summer holidays as well. I also love computer games. Finding a group of friends who share similar hobbies like me was fun. Writing about our hobbies and adding pictures were more fun. We wrote the stories together. We helped each other. When I do not remember a word, my partners helped me. It was not hard at all. (Portuguese Student 4, Post- Interview)

Excerpts 32 and 33 supported the aforementioned findings. Continuous interaction at the intracultural level enabled them to view the DST creation process as a cooperative game to play with their friends and lowered their initial anxiety. In addition, peer feedback was not regarded as a form of correction; on the contrary, it was perceived as assistance their classmates provided during their DST gaming process. Briefly, the cooperation and peer-feedback at the intracultural level heightened their engagement, allowed them to review the accuracy of the digital narratives multiple times, enabled them to be sure of their digital production in terms of linguistic correctness and contentwise attractiveness, and lowered their apprehension. The collaborative tasks in the fifth, sixth, and seventh weeks; on the other hand, required the students to forge a cooperative partnership with both their local group and global group members. At the intercultural level, students received feedback not only from their local group members but their foreign partners as well. Acquiring feedback from their culturally distinct partners in order to create joint digital stories rendered the participants to develop the "us" notion, establish more intimate bonds with them, and step forward in the light of online intercultural friendship. Moreover, receiving reciprocal feedback enhanced the sense of responsibility in learners to pay attention to the cohesion and coherence of their own productions before sending them to their partners and to correct their partners' mistakes in a constructive and kind manner. The feedback exchanged in a constructive and positive fashion developed mutual respect between both research groups since they began to rely on one another's knowledge. In a statistical sense, 12 (80%) of the Turkish students and 13 (86.66%) of the Portuguese students exhibited curiosity towards

their foreign partners' linguistic corrections and contributions to the plotline and enthusiasm about the final interculturally-developed DST product. The students' enthusiasm for peer-feedback is reflected in the excerpts below.

Excerpt 34

In this project, we aimed at preparing the tasks so as to develop our students' interest in language learning and social development in a supportive environment. Therefore, we intended to benefit from peer learning both at the intracultural and intercultural levels. We designed our tasks in line with the curricula and syllabi of both countries to allow our students to communicate with one another by using a common language and provide peer correction to one another's productions. We saw that peer-feedback is welcomed more than the teacher's correction since receiving feedback from their friends bear the meaning of enhancing the quality of their digital stories, not evaluating their foreign language knowledge (Turkish and Portuguese Teachers, In the Online Exchange of Research Journal Reports)

Excerpt 35

When I provide feedback for my students' works, they pay attention to my suggestions and do the necessary corrections immediately. But, when their global group members are the ones providing the feedback, they act enthusiastic to negotiate on the corrections suggested by their future foreign friends. They also take the feedback as something to enhance the quality of their narratives. They do not feel embarrassed or offended by their friends' or foreign partners' feedback. On the contrary, they feel more confident about sharing an end product revised by multiple participants. (Turkish Teacher 1, Research Journal)

According to the data deduced from the research journals of the teachers as above, peer feedback was perceived more positively than the teacher's feedback among the young learners. The teachers correlated the situation with the issue of intercultural friendship. Since both the Turkish and Portuguese students had ownership in their digital narratives, they tended to perceive the reciprocal feedback as a means to enhance the quality of their cooperative productions and form a collaborative partnership based on asynchronous communication and online friendship. The teacher was perceived as a guide who provides reliable assistance and encouragement for the learners; however, the foreign partners were regarded as potential friends who work under the same task for the same objectives.

The data extracted from the participants' learner diaries revealed that the enhancement in the knowledge sphere reinforced and facilitated the improvement in the attitude dimension. The participants' earlier enthusiasm mostly resulted from their curiosity about the regulation of a transnational project and the differences between both cultures. However, when the Turkish and Portuguese participants began to interchange digital narratives respecting their daily routines, weekend activities, and gaming culture in the first task, all of the Turkish and Portuguese participants (100%) responded to the "What surprised you?" question as the striking similarity between both cultures in their learner diaries. Even though 12 (80%) of the Turkish students and 10 (66.66%) of the Portuguese students had

associated the cultural similarities between both cultures with their daily routines, playing cultures and school subjects in the pre-interview session, all of the participants (100%) expressed their astonishment concerning the non-existence of even a single difference between the respective cultures. The considerable resemblance in the living styles enhanced the participants' curiosity to learn about the similarities and differences in other cultural products and practices in their partner country. Since the parallelism in the weekday and weekend activities was in correlation with their pre-suppositions in the first task, the learners desired to corroborate their cuisine, tradition, and celebration bound estimations in the proceeding tasks; hence, they behaved more inquisitive about the following DST assignments. The parallelism in cuisine, customs, and celebratory traditions were regarded as below by the participants.

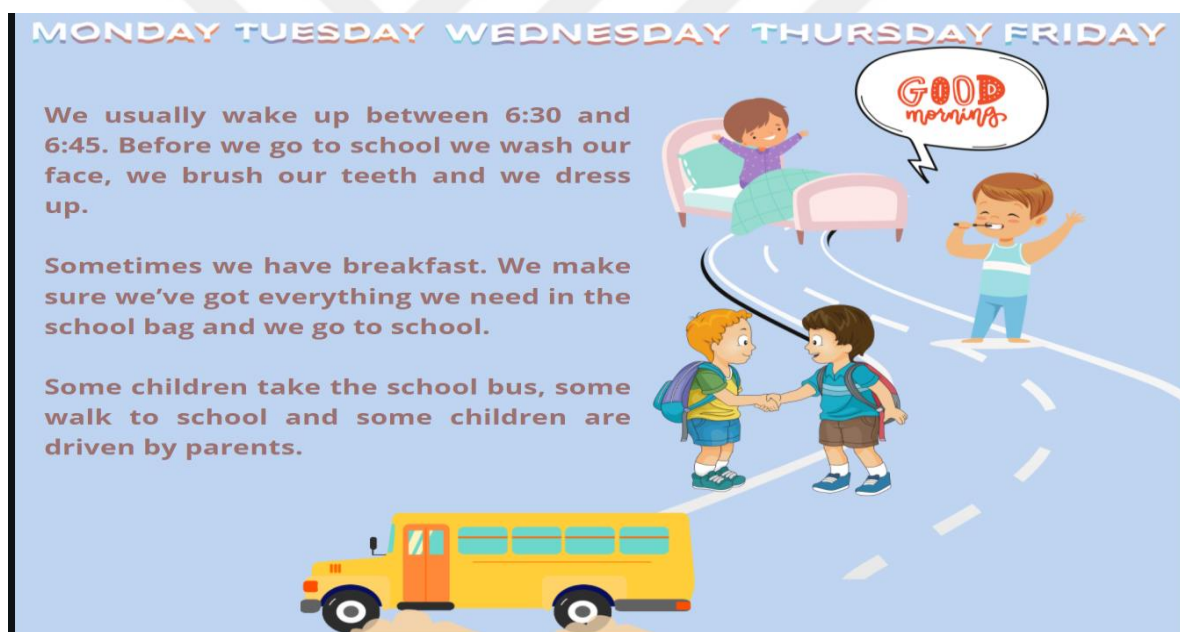


Figure 14. Portuguese students' digital narratives about their daily routines



Figure 15. Turkish students' digital narratives about their daily routines

Excerpt 36

I was predicting that their daily routines would be similar to ours, teacher. Waking up, having breakfast, and going to school... How could they be different? But, I was still surprised to learn that everything was the same. Even the hours of going to school or coming back home were the same. And, it was also shocked me to see that they have delicious pastries like us. They love pastry and meat like us. I thought they were eating different food at home. The food that we cannot eat, I mean. But, I really want to go there and taste Pastel de Nata. If the food is like this, I can live there for years (Turkish Student 1, Learner Diary).

Excerpt 37

They were playing the same computer games. They had similar hobbies and eating habits. There were even similarities in traditional clothes and some of the customs. Now, I want to learn more about what they really do at home and school. I am curious about how they listen to the lesson or spend time with their friends during the break times. Will we visit Turkey one day? (Portuguese Student 6, Post-Interview)

As seen in the Excerpt 36 and 37, the similarities in cuisine, fashion, and celebratory customs were responded with higher astonishment as opposed to the first task. The students' assumptions about the complete distinctness in these domains were missed by the prepared digital stories, and they had the opportunity to confirm their estimations via authentic experience through a telecollaboration project. The enhancement in their intercultural knowledge and recognition of similarities increased their attachment to the project activities and their interest to extract more information about their traditions, schools, and family and friendship bonds through virtual and physical mobilities.

The first digital stories of Turkish participants included voiced narration whereas the Portuguese students remained unable to use the Story Jumper platform and attach their voice recordings to their narratives. When reviewing over their partners' personal

information exchange productions (Task 1) in the Overt Instruction stage, 2 (13.33%) of the Turkish participants communicated their desire to hear their partners' voices, and the remaining of the participants demonstrated agreement on the issue. The research journal of the Portuguese teacher yielded similar results as well. Listening to the narration of their culturally distinct peers attracted the attention of the Portuguese students and enhanced their enthusiasm to record their voices and produce audiobooks in the following tasks. Then, both the Turkish and Portuguese groups benefitted from BookCreator with their local groups to design their audial digital narratives in the comparison and analysis tasks. Thirteen (86.66%) of the Turkish participants and 12 (80%) of the Portuguese participants expressed their happiness to hear their partners' voices in their learner diaries. This finding is illustrated in the proceeding excerpts.

Excerpt 38

Whenever they hit the sound button to hear their partners' narrations, they immediately started clapping hands and applauding on the camera. They were very happy to hear their friends' voices (Turkish Teacher 1, Research Journal)

Excerpt 39

Portuguese students speak fast, and sometimes it is hard for me to understand them. But, I can listen to their voices a couple of times, and I can never get bored. And, since I can understand them in digital stories, I can understand them when they come here (Turkish Student 12, Learner Diary)

Excerpt 40

It is like they are here next to us. Turkish students speak slower than us, but their voices are beautiful. I want to hear their voices more. (Portuguese Student 2, Learner Diary)

As given in Excerpt 38, the research journals of the teachers promoted the upper-mentioned data set by discussing that the voiced sections in these narratives were welcomed with cheers, ovations, and acclamations in ZOOM meetings. Specifically, hearing their partners' voices exerted a positive impact on the learners' attitudes. Since Portuguese students had better accents and faster speeches, the Turkish students displayed amazement and developed respect towards them (*Excerpt 39*). From the perspectives of the Portuguese students; however, the voice factor was believed to bridge the geographical distance and create the feeling of proximity in them. Most of the Portuguese students indicated that hearing the voice of their partners made them feel as if they had been speaking in a face to face fashion. Therefore, voiced DST exchanges enhanced their motivation to continue to the scheduled project activities and hear their voice recordings more (*Excerpt 40*). The voice recording component of DST rendered to the personalization of the content as well. Listening to the statements containing 'like and dislike' structures and using 'I' persona created an environment similar to the synchronous mode of

communication. Three (20%) of the Turkish and 11 (73.33%) of the Portuguese students stated that they felt as if they were establishing a one to one interaction.

The voice component and the enhancement in the knowledge dimension enhanced the participants' eagerness to devote more effort to their digital productions and rendered to the willingness to communicate about the project activities throughout the whole week. Both the Portuguese and Turkish subjects wanted to talk about their partners' digital stories and their own creative suggestions about the following tasks in lesson and break times. They also wanted to engage in different activities other than digital stories to surprise their foreign partners including recording video or making surprises through online ZOOM meetings. This situation raised the concern of teachers falling behind the curriculum. This incident is reported by the project teachers as below.

Excerpt 41

I have 2 hours of English in that class. Normally I was going to conduct my weekly plan. But my students wanted to speak about the project and how enthusiastic they were for the next task. They wanted to surprise their Turkish partners. Therefore, they asked questions in the whole lesson. Because of the curricular needs, I felt terrified. I hope I do not experience this situation every week (Portuguese Teacher 1, Research Journal)

Excerpt 42

One of my students, who is gifted in art and music and get special training in BİLSEM, wanted to upload videos other than their digital narratives. He stated that he learnt to play the piano by only watching YouTube videos and wanted to show his skills to their Portuguese partners. Another student wanted to upload a video about Turkish tongue twisters on the Twinspace of the eTwinning platform. And, one student wanted to learn a Portuguese song in English lessons and record the karaoke version of the song in the classroom. I could observe that their engagement in the activities enhances over time. But, it is really hard to keep up with their demands in 3 hours of English lessons (Turkish Teacher 1, Research Journal)

As stated in excerpts, both the Turkish and Portuguese participants displayed intense eagerness to speak about their own productions and provide creative recommendations for the following asynchronous assignment as well as conveying their opinions on their partners' digital stories and discussing on the products and practices in the partner country, which evidenced the significant enhancement in their attitudes towards intercultural sphere of education. Nonetheless, the span of the discussions exceeded the break times and carried to the English sessions. This situation created uneasiness among the project teachers with the concern of falling behind the curricular needs.

The examination of the post-interview and research journal data revealed that all of the Portuguese and Turkish subjects (100%) stressed their readiness to engage in further intercultural communication after the finalization of the project activities. All the subjects (100%) explained their willingness to participate in another telecollaboration project on the

completion of the present project. The participants asked for the maintenance of the telecollaborative tradition in the future and inclusion of countries such as Germany, Italy, Spain, America and England. Their willingness was stemmed from the enhancement in their self-confidence and entertainment in the tasks through the positive virtual exchange experience as well as from their curiosity of verifying their assumptions about these countries. Moreover, 6 (40%) of the Turkish participants and 2 (13.33%) of the Portuguese participants demanded continuing the intercultural dialogue via Social Networking sites such as Instagram to forge genuine intercultural friendships and bonds with their culturally distinct partners. This finding is represented as below.

Excerpt 43

I have a question, teacher. With which country will we exchange digital stories now? I hope it is Spain. I would like to join in project lessons all the time from now on. (Turkish Student 7, Post Interview)

Excerpt 44

I had seen some movies shot in Turkey and was wondering whether the presentations about clothes and physical appearance would be the same as movies. They were and they were not. Clothing, no. Appearance, yes. And I have watched movies shot in Spain or America. I am very curious whether they are the same as movies. I want to make a project with these countries as well (Portuguese Student 11, Post Interview)

Excerpt 45

If we can have more projects, we can have more friends from Italy, Spain or England. And we can go there when we grow up. I am very excited. When will we start our next project? (Turkish Student 10, Post Interview)

As shown above, the respondents expressed their willingness to perform in another virtual exchange project and extend their intercultural learning further with the inclusion of other countries. They also articulated their desire to persist in the communicative tradition with their Turkish and Portuguese partners via other telecollaboration channels including Twitter and Instagram. This finding signalled that cross-cultural exchanges function effectively to foster intrinsic motivation and openness for the intercultural dimension of foreign language education.

4.2.1.2.3 Skills of Interacting/ Discovery Dimension

The current section intends to present the research evidence with regards to the enhancement in the young learners' ability to uncover the perceptions and the belief systems of their interlocutors, find out important information within and over nations and understand their prominence, recognize similarities and differences between the cultural and communicational patterns of the target nations, and interact meaningfully with their

partners through authentic dialogues. To this end, it exhibits the qualitative findings concerning the improvements in the participants' skills of interacting and discovery.

The telecollaborative exchanges provided an opportunity for the Turkish and Portuguese young learners to transfer their knowledge, attitudes, and skills into practice. According to the data extracted from the research journals and learner diaries, the participants studied the target vocabulary items and grammatical structures and benefited from online educational platforms and dictionaries for the aim of putting their practices and feelings down on their digital stories successfully. They began to review their classroom learnings on a regular basis to create effective digital stories. This learning scheme enabled the participants to enhance their language-related knowledge. 12 (80%) of the Turkish and 8 (53.33%) of the Portuguese students reported learning new vocabulary items and grammatical structures each week. Equivalently, 13 (86.66%) of the Turkish and 2 (13.33%) of the Portuguese students declared to learn the pronunciation of some target words from online dictionaries and their partners' digital stories. The collected data also suggested improvement in learners' writing skills. While creating their digital narratives, the students remained obliged to put their linguistic knowledge into practice by taking cohesion and coherence principles into consideration so as to be comprehended by their foreign partners. Eleven (73.33%) of the Turkish and 5 (33.33%) of the Portuguese students stated that they began to write faster and needed fewer corrections through the exchanges. Moreover, the examination of the textual and audial components in their partners' digital stories contributed to the students' listening and reading skills. According to the research journals, the Portuguese students were accustomed to reading in English due to their regular reading assignments and monthly examinations. However, the Turkish students were used to reading sentence-level productions and listening to short recordings focusing on the pronunciation of individual vocabulary items. Therefore, listening to and reading their partners' long audial and non-audial storybooks enabled the participants to engage in authentic reading and listening practices on a weekly basis and resulted in improvement in their receptive skills. In a statistical sense, all of the Turkish participants (100%) and 4 (26.66%) of the Portuguese students declared that they began to understand their partners' narratives without difficulty over time. The development in reading and writing skills went hand in hand in the collaborative tasks, Story Chains. This task type was challenging for the participants inasmuch as they needed to read and understand their partners' sections in order to complete the digital stories in a meaningful fashion.

Therefore, this task form contributed to the listening, reading and writing main skills and pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary sub-skills of the participants. The enhancement in the learners' language skills is reflected in their interview and learner diary statements as below.

Excerpt 46

At first, I could not understand their speech. They talk really fast. I read what they wrote in the storybooks, but I still did not understand what they spoke. But, I can understand them now. I listen to their voices sometimes twice or sometimes three times, but I can understand them at the end (Turkish Student 4, Post Interview)

Excerpt 47

At first, my teacher was warning me about the mistakes in my digital storybooks. But, she stopped correcting my mistakes. When I asked her, she said that I needed no correction, so she did not correct me. I think I write better now. (Portuguese Student, 3, Post Interview)

Excerpt 48

At first, writing was hard. You know speaking was easier, but writing was lengthy and boring. But, I started even joking in writing, My teacher said that Turkish students loved my jokes in storybooks. Now, I love writing. I even try to make jokes in writing. (Portuguese Student 5, Post Interview)

Excerpt 49

I could understand and complete the stories easily. I had thought that Portuguese people were learning different things in English lessons. They are foreigners after all. But, they use the words we know. They learn what we learn. So, I can understand and complete them (Turkish Student 9, Learner Diary)

As given in Excerpt 46, the participants were accustomed to engaging in discriminative listening activities; therefore, they experienced difficulty in comprehending their partners' narrations in the earlier phases of the intercultural exchanges. However, they reported understanding the voice recordings of their partners easily over time through listening to the narrations multiple times or reading the narration prior to or during the listening process. The shift from discriminative listening in their classrooms to comprehensive listening in digital stories enabled them to enhance their listening skills. As illustrated in Excerpts 47, 48, and 49, the participants confronted some cohesive and coherence-related complexities in the initial stages of the telecollaboration project. Nevertheless, engaging in authentic reading and writing activities on a regular basis and receiving peer feedback and teacher's correction between the tasks rendered them to promote their sub-language skills as pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary as well as their main language skills as reading and writing. In line with Excerpt 47, the participants achieved to reduce the number of mistakes in their following digital narratives and diminished the reliance on the teachers' correction over time, which was another remarkable sign of the promotion in their language skills.

The teacher's facilitative role and peer-interaction and feedback played a significant role in the improvement of the participants' skills of interacting and discovery as well. According to the teachers, their learners needed digital and linguistic support at the beginning of the project activities. Therefore, they acquired a facilitative role and guided their learners to identify and correct their own mistakes, review the coherence and plotline of their narratives, discuss the possible challenges and misunderstandings, and produce negotiated solutions for them. In addition, the teachers conducted workshops in the IT classrooms of their schools with the aim of rendering their learners to use DST modes easily. Peer interaction and feedback at intracultural and intercultural levels; on the other hand, enabled the participants to review their productions multiple times and analyse their productions from both their own point of view and their partners' perspectives. It assisted the participants to negotiate on the meaning and develop an empathetic attitude. In other words, it rendered the participants to acquire the ability to decenter which signifies the skill to contemplate on the issues that may be unfamiliar to the other culturally distinct interlocutors (Peiser, 2015). The ability to decenter was observed in two forms in the present study: the selection of attention-grabbing subjects for their interlocutors and the identification and resolution of mishaps via emphatic attitude. In the first form, the participants decided on presenting the unfamiliar and interesting operations in their own culture to their partners based on their own desire to learn different and surprising products and practices of other cultures. For example, the Portuguese students did not want to include Christmas and Halloween celebrations in their presentations since they desired to illustrate the strange and unknown facts about their countries in their digital narratives. They thought that these celebrations were recognized and known across borders due to TV shows and movies and were not specific to their own country. Then, they put themselves into their Turkish counterparts' shoes and stated that they would want to learn new information specific to only Portuguese culture if they were Turkish students. Therefore, they decided upon presenting the celebrations that could catch the interest of their partners such as Carnival and Festa dos Tabuleiros. In the second form, they conferred on the issues that may introduce their heritage culture wrongfully or may be interpreted negatively with the members of their local groups before sending the first half of the story to their foreign partners. Then, the foreign group examined their partners' incomplete stories and provided corrective and creative recommendations. Peer communication at the intercultural level assisted the learners to act more kindly and thoughtfully in the following digital stories and

develop a sense of otherness in the form of empathy. For instance, the Turkish students evaluated the Portuguese tradition of wearing casual clothes at school negatively. Then, the Portuguese students discussed the issue with their local group members and provided the solution of asking for school uniform designs from their Turkish partners. This thoughtful behaviour strengthened the bonds between both research groups. In fact, the Portuguese students discovered an effective method to manage the crisis successfully and overcome the communication gap. Similarly, the Turkish students reached the consensus of including the products not only from their own culture but from the Portuguese culture as well in their joint digital stories in order to form stronger communication relationships with their Portuguese partners. As it is discussed above, the facilitation of the teachers and peer interaction in local and global extent enhanced both the students' skill-based knowledge and empathetic attitudes, which contributed to their skills of interacting and discovery to regulate effective communications. Moreover, the research journal data revealed that the participants resorted to their teachers' assistance and correction less, the time allocated for the negotiation of meaning at the intracultural level decreased, and the amount of corrective feedback provided by the partners at the intercultural level diminished over time, which could be evaluated as another sign of the promotion of the participants' skills of interacting and discovery.

The improvements in the participants' knowledge, attitudes, and skills rendered an improvement in their intense teacher-dependent attitude. According to the evidence obtained from the first pages of the learner diaries, 14 (93.33%) of the Turkish students and 11 (73.33%) of the Portuguese students resorted to their teachers in the first task when they desired to acquire more information about their partners' habits and gaming practices. They asked several target nation-bound questions to their teachers and aimed to gain a thorough understanding of the products and practices in the target culture. Similarly, 10 (66.66%) of the Turkish and 9 (60%) of the Portuguese subjects endeavoured to elicit more information about the target culture's dressing styles via the teacher channel in the second task. However, the participants began feeling more self-confident and less anxious to communicate with their culturally distinct partners asynchronously. They commenced to utilize the eTwinning platform and online dictionaries effectively and acquire a sense of achievement through completing their digital stories with success. To this end, 1 (6.66%) of the Turkish students set up the practice of employing the eTwinning platform and asking questions regarding the products and practices on discussion boards so that their partners

could provide responses to them. Then, the number of students seeking teachers' clarification diminished to 5 (33.33%) in the Turkish context and 5 (33.33%) in the Portuguese context. The Turkish participants benefited from several online translation software and posed questions concerning why the Portuguese students learn German in the earlier stages of education, why they have a breakfast break at their school, whether they do not have breakfast at home in the mornings, or why they do not wear school uniform. Correspondingly, the Portuguese participants exploited several digital translation software and received assistance from their parents to ask questions respecting which levels they are on in certain games, whether they receive the religion class at school or in their praying place, and if they have tried surfing or any water sport before. Both the Turkish and Portuguese students started to depend on the teacher's explanation less, communicate on the discussion boards on the Twinspace of their project and draw out more information from their partners, which highlighted the advancement in the participants' skills of interacting and discovery. Moreover, the analysis of digital stories, discussion boards, and comments sections illustrated that the participants began to utilize some communicative strategies in order to establish effective dialogues with their partners. Some of the strategies are identified in the proceeding excerpts.

I sometimes get
on the dragon.
Ooops! I mean I
get on the bus.

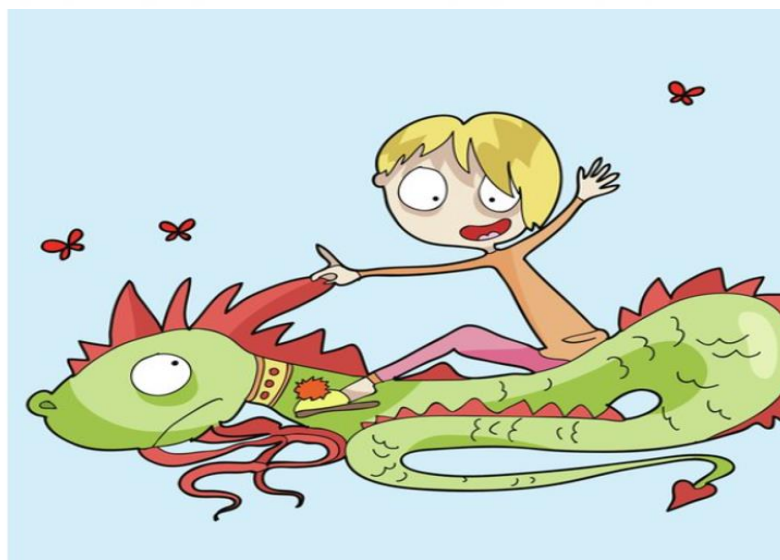


Figure 16. An instance of the communicative strategy of using humour extracted from the students' collaborative digital narratives

Excerpt 50

Students asked for information and clarification on the subjects they want to learn more about. They even demanded exchanging digital stories or letters and postcards. (Turkish Teacher 1, Research Journal)

Excerpt 51

The Portuguese students wrote “I get on a dragon and go to school” in their stories. It was really cute and funny. I think Portuguese children are really fun. (Turkish Student 4, Post-Interview, Strategy of Using Humour)

Excerpt 52

I told “Afiyet olsun!” today to my family while having dinner, and they did not understand me. Then, I explained. Learning Turkish is really enjoyable. I want to learn more (Portuguese Student 7, Overt Instruction - Research Journal, Strategy of Using Basic Statements in Their Partners' Native Language)

Excerpt 53

Teacher, have you seen that they wrote they loved our comic book? Have you seen my comment? I thanked them. Can I teach them how to use MakeBeliefsComix? (Turkish Student 14, Overt Instruction Stage, Research Journal, Strategies of Complimenting and Thanking)

Excerpt 54

They are very thoughtful. They both added their national dishes and our national dishes in their stories. I want to have dinner on a table including all these foods. Then, we did this with (Portuguese Student 1) and (Portuguese Student 8). We gave the character a name and put blanks so that they could give the character a second name. We did the same thing for the country and nationality. (Portuguese Student 7, Post Interview, Strategy of Providing Alternatives)

As illustrated above, these strategies included thanking, congratulating, praising and complimenting, and apologizing in comments sections (*Excerpt 53*) whereas they consisted of asking for clarification (*Excerpt 50*), using humour (*Excerpt 51*), using the basic statements in their partners' native language (*Excerpt 52*), providing alternatives (*Excerpt 54*), and providing feedback in digital narratives and discussion boards. Specifically, the students complimented on their partners' digital narratives, expressed the sections they loved, apologized for the late publication, and expressed their gratitude for the compliments. In addition, they used humour while writing their digital stories, provided options for their partners so that the characters in their digital stories can select among Portuguese and Turkish dishes or live in an imaginary country created collaboratively, attached some basic statements such as “Thank you” or “Bon Appetit!” in both their own and the target language at the end of their digital stories, and noted down their corrective recommendations on their collaborative stories in order that their partners are able to make the necessary corrections. Strategy use signified the remarkable enhancement in their skills of interacting and discovery.

4.2.1.2.4 Skills of Interpreting/ Relating Dimension

The present section aims to reveal the enhancement in the young learners' ability to make sense of evidence or occurrence from the target culture, analyse it, and correlate it to

evidence or occurrence from their heritage culture. With this academic intention, it displays the qualitative findings respecting the variance and development in the research subjects' skills of interpreting/ relating.

The pre-interview data suggested that 13 (86.66%) of the Turkish participants and 12 (80%) of the Portuguese participants expressed their knowledge deficiency respecting the target nation and its culture. Since most of the research subjects did not have any background knowledge, they were requested to reason about the similarities and differences between the respective cultures. According to the analysis, 12 (80%) of the Turkish and 10 (66.66%) of the Portuguese students associated the similarities with lessons, weekday and weekend activities, and conventional and digital games in their countries. However, the remaining group expressed the possible resemblance in the religious acts, mother tongue of the countries, and traditional celebrations. On the other hand, 13 of the Turkish subjects (86.66%) and 13 (86.66%) of the Portuguese subjects equated the differences with the supermarket food, jobs and occupations, physical appearance, and technological devices. This data highlighted that the students chiefly engaged in accurate reasoning in terms of similarities; however, they failed to generate accurate estimations with regards to cultural differences. The intercultural incognizance resulted in narrow interpretation of the cultural systems and wrongful relating of the cultures to one another. However, exchanging digital stories about the practices and products of the Turkish and Portuguese cultures enabled the participants to learn about each other's daily lifestyles, playing cultures, clothing preferences, eating habits, celebratory traditions, and schooling systems. In addition, the Overt Instruction phase regulated by the project teachers in both countries encouraged them to engage in critical discussions with the members of their local groups and negotiate on the similarities and differences between both cultures. The recognition of the resemblances and divergences deepened their analytical skills and allowed them to generate more reasonable interpretations and correlate both cultures accurately. With the enhancement in their knowledge through the exchanges and critical discussions, the participants began to correlate the practices and products in their own culture with those of the target culture, contemplate the underlying reasons behind the strange events and customs, and develop an empathetic approach towards the differences. In a numerical sense, the instances estimated from the learner diaries demonstrated that all of the Turkish (100%) and Portuguese (100%) students were able to detect the similarities and differences accurately and

correlate their own cultural system with the system of their foreign interlocutors. Moreover, 7 (46.66%) of the Turkish and 9 (60%) of the Portuguese learners exhibited some cases of analytical interpretation and evaluated the practices and products in the target culture by basing them on the practices and products in their own culture. Some of the analytical interpretations and relations are explicated in the excerpts below.

Excerpt 55

Our school has taken its name from a famous doctor. The Turkish school has taken its name from a famous wrestler. I think both Turkish and Portuguese people give importance to art, music, sports, and science. (Portuguese Student 1, Learner Diary)

Excerpt 56

In Turkey, we spend a lot of time with our family. We also visit our relatives regularly. From their videos, I can see that they cook with their family at home, help their parents, run errands, and spend time with their siblings. We saw their photographs with their siblings. Turkish and Portuguese families both have intimate bonds with their families and resemble one another. I think family bonds are important in Portugal like in our country (Turkish Student, 5, Learner Diary)

Excerpt 57

I think Turkish students are bored due to Covid-19 like us, you know due to staying at home all the time. Normally, we have Carnival and Halloween competitions and talent shows at school. Or, we have badminton, basketball, and volleyball training after school. But, due to Covid, we cannot do any of these. Turkish students also love sports and activities. They had lots of weekend activities in their online books. But, they said that they were unhappy now because they cannot do these sports. Probably, their after-school activities are cancelled as in our school, and they are unhappy (Portuguese Student 14, Post-Interview).

Excerpt 58

Teacher, I had asked you why we learn English, but they do not learn Turkish. And you had said that it is because of trade. Portuguese students learn German as well as English. I think they may be buying apples, bananas, and maybe onions from Germany. (Turkish Student, 9, Post- Interview)

As evident in Excerpt 55, once the Portuguese participants learnt that the partner school was named for a famous wrestler in Turkey, they correlated this case with the fact that their school was also named after a famous doctor. From this recognition, they deduced that both Portuguese and Turkish people attach significance to artistic, musical, sportive, and scientific values and advancements. In line with Excerpt 56, the Turkish respondents identified potent resemblances in family ties between the existent cultural systems and fathomed out that both Turkish and Portuguese people are conscious of building deeper and stronger bonds with their families. Similarly, in Excerpt 57, the Portuguese students equated the educational implementations in the partner countries to one another and estimated that the extracurricular activities may have been called off or postponed to a later date as happened in their own country due to increasing Covid cases worldwide. Lastly, the Turkish students had asked the reason why they learn English as a foreign language, but

Portuguese students do not learn Turkish as a foreign language prior to the project activities. The English teacher had clarified this question by stating that the English language was selected as the common medium of communication by various countries to a global extent so as to maintain commercial and political relationships. Based on this knowledge, the Turkish students generated an analytical estimation that the Portuguese may be learning the German language due to their commercial relationships. As clarified with the excerpts, both the Turkish and Portuguese factions engaged in critical evaluation of the products and practices in the target culture by relating them to the ones in their own culture.

The Overt Instruction discussions carried out by the project teachers played a significant role in stimulating the digital story analyses and promoting the learners' skills of interpreting/ relating. According to the data obtained from the research journals, the discussions were led by the teachers' questions in the first and second DST assignments including the personal information exchange and comparison and analysis tasks. In these tasks, the students provided brief responses to the questions respecting the similarities and dissimilarities between the project cultures and specified their concise opinions regarding the cultural practices in the target country. However, the students gained autonomy to initiate and maintain their own discussions in the following DST assignments. In other words, the role of the teacher evolved from the sage on the stage to the guide on the side (Tella, 1996). Both Turkish and Portuguese learners were reported to negotiate on the similarities and differences without their teachers' questions or forming correlations between the cultural systems of both cultures in the third and the fourth DST assignments. This case resulted in extending the spans of ZOOM discussions from 40 minutes to 80 – 100 minutes in the following assignments as given in Excerpt 60. Furthermore, the collaborative DST tasks were accounted to trigger higher cognitive engagement and analytical examination in the research journals. Specifically, the collaborative assignments enabled the Turkish and Portuguese participants to work on the same digital narratives and establish a form of online intercultural friendship. This occurrence rendered the participants to develop an empathetic perspective and interpret the events from their culturally-distinct partners' point of view. This finding is reflected in Excerpt 59 below.

Excerpt 59 (A Dialogue from the Overt Instruction Phase)
Turkish Student 8: Are their celebrations sinful?

Turkish Student 10: They wear costumes on Halloween, knock on the doors, say trick or treat, and collect sweets. It resembles our bairams. We also wear beautiful clothes, knock on the doors, and collect candies. They are the same thing.

Turkish Student 8: So, it is not a sin, then?

Turkish Student 10: No, it is not. Collecting candies cannot be a sin. (Turkish Teacher 1, Research Journal)

Excerpt 60

The students, who stated only the similarities between the cultures and spoke no more in earlier ZOOM discussions, acted more willing to evaluate the practices and talk on the differences and their possible reasons in the later discussions. In the beginning, one ZOOM meeting (40 minutes) was sufficient for the classrooms to examine the storybooks. However, we had to start one or sometimes two more ZOOM meetings in the later discussions. They even said that they felt as if they were a critic, and they loved it (Portuguese Teacher 1, Research Journal)

As stressed above, the transformation from the teacher-directed discussions to student-led negotiations and development of empathetic orientation indicated the development in the students' skills of interpreting/ relating. However, it should be noted that the intercultural interpretation and relating remained limited to the cultural practices and products of the respective cultures, and no evidence of negotiation on the processes and social groups was discovered. Since the participants were young learners, the intangible spheres of cultures (i.e. belief systems) necessitating the developed abstract thinking skills were not identified in the data; therefore, the development in this dimension remained at a superficial level due to the participants' ages and low language proficiency.

4.2.1.2.5 Skills of Critical Cultural Awareness

The present section aims to report the development in the young learners' ability to regulate analytical assessment of the practices, products, processes, and social groups in their heritage culture and the target culture. With this object, it extracts its data from the qualitative sources of semi-structured interviews, learner diaries, and research journals.

The data acquired from the semi-structured interviews and learner diaries had documented that the Turkish and Portuguese participants demonstrated some instances of egocentrism in their statements and expressed their extensive knowledge about their own culture. Since they were born into their heritage cultures, they stated that they were familiar with everything about them. Therefore, none of them reported learning any novel information about their own cultures. However, the assignment of the participants into local groups in the comparison analysis tasks enabled the learners to discuss the cultural practices and products in their own countries so as not to misinform their foreign partners. The local group discussions encouraged them to participate in critical negotiations and recognize the

social differences within their own national boundaries. In other words, these discussions assisted them to notice the practical and product-bound cultural differences among their friends even though they are united under the same national identity. This finding is illustrated in the excerpts below.

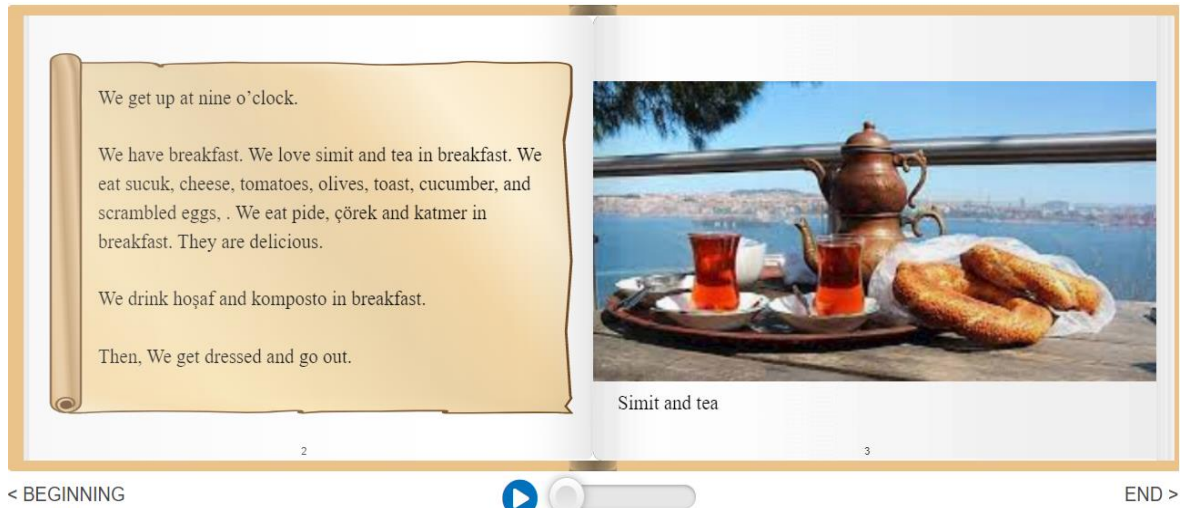


Figure 17. A DST extract to demonstrate the Turkish students' recognition concerning the intracultural differences in breakfast culture



Figure 18. A DST extract to demonstrate the Portuguese students' recognition concerning the wedding dress tradition in Minho region

Excerpt 61

My friend (Turkish Student 3) says that he drinks compost and hoşaf every morning. I have heard such a thing for the first time. The other friend (Turkish Student 2) says that she eats her breakfast in a metal tray called sini on a floor table. Drinking hoşaf was strange at first. Actually, it is still strange. But, I eat pine cone jam at home, and my friends say that it is also strange. So, they are okay (Turkish Student 11, Learner Diary).

Excerpt 62

I came from Kütahya here due to my father's job. It is very interesting to learn that people eat pita here even for breakfast. And they have pita with aubergine, zucchini or potato toppings. It is interesting. But, pita may be good for breakfast. (Turkish Student 5, Post-Interview)

Excerpt 63

My friend (Portuguese Student 13) says that his family does not celebrate Halloween. He has never worn a costume or carved a pumpkin before. It is really sad. But, we talked with my friends. Maybe, he and his family have their own reasons. Another friend (Portuguese Student, 12) says that they collect bread from the families, not candies. Halloween is approaching and I am excited about the Halloween celebration day at our school now. I think they should celebrate Halloween with us. It is really fun. I am gonna be a ladybug. (Portuguese Student 7, Post-Interview)

Excerpt 64

Sometimes, brides can wear black wedding gowns somewhere in Portugal that I cannot remember now. This was really interesting for me. My friend even showed me some photographs. I did not know it. I told it to my family as soon as I learnt it (Portuguese Student 14, Post-Interview).

As reported, the Turkish learners acknowledged some intracultural differences in breakfast habits and weekend activities. Portuguese learners; on the other hand, gained intracultural awareness of the regional differences concerning the traditional clothes and celebratory practices. This awareness encouraged them to step out of the comfort of their reality and develop critical self-cultural awareness.

The participants approached the intracultural differences negatively at first. However, the continuous interaction between the members of their local groups in comparison and analysis tasks rendered the establishment of friendship bonds between them. With the notion of friendship present, the students began to internalize and accept the cultural differences within their groups. The moderation in their reactions towards the intracultural differences contributed to the moderation towards the intercultural differences in the following stages. As discussed in the previous sections (Knowledge Dimension and Skills of Relating/ Interpreting Dimension), most of the participants did not possess any background knowledge about the partner nation. Many of them stated that they had not even heard the name of their partner country before. Notwithstanding their intercultural incognizance, their pre-interview utterances indicated the signs of high monocentric orientation. The monocentric perspectives of the research subjects were demonstrated in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 65

I can live in Portugal in the future. I do not know where Portugal is, but I think it is a country like Italy or Spain. I can live in Spain. In Portugal, people speak English, so I can improve my English. I can learn to speak English in a better way. They have better education (Turkish Student 6, Pre-Interview).

Excerpt 66

I would like to visit Portugal, but I do not want to live there. I can taste their food, walk-in their streets, speak with the people there. But, I do not want to move there. Turkey is more beautiful. And, I miss my family (Turkish Student 5, Pre-Interview)

Excerpt 67

I would love to visit Turkey. I would love to visit their museums, taste their most famous dishes, and come back and tell my friends what I learnt. But, I do not want to live there. We have lots of social clubs, and we have fun so much here. Our school even broke a world record and is very famous, So, I cannot leave my school. My school is better than the schools in Turkey (Portuguese Student 2, Pre-Interview).

As seen in Excerpt 65, some of the Turkish participants correlated Portuguese culture with other European cultures such as Spanish or Italian culture and idealized the country and its culture with its higher job opportunities, greater technological advancements, or better education system. In accordance with Excerpt 66, the others expressed the incomparability of the natural beauties and cuisine of their own country with another culture and exhibited a defensive mindset towards otherness. Pursuant to Excerpt 67, all Portuguese participants demonstrated a defensive mindset and articulated the superiority of their own culture owing to its natural beauties, academic conducts, foods, sportive activities, and music. Their lack of knowledge and defensive attitude yielded to faulty reasoning and resulted in the generation of false hypothetical knowledge. Specifically, the participants were asked to predict the possible similarities and differences between the target cultures. Most of the Turkish and Portuguese learners conducted accurate cognitive reckoning and related the similarities with daily routines, games and hobbies, and school subjects. However, they fell into error in terms of cultural differences since they associated the differences with the products sold in supermarkets, physical appearance, school staff, and technological commodities.

The telecollaborative DST exchanges between the Turkish and Portuguese learners allowed them to learn about the cultural products and practices of their culturally distinct partners. Through the exchanges, the participants were exposed to cultural information about their partners' living styles, games and hobbies, opinions and feelings, clothing preferences, eating regimes, holiday traditions, and school lives. In this way, they acquired both culture-specific and personal level knowledge about their partners. Furthermore, the teachers organized online meetings in the Overt Instruction phase in order to get the

learners to reflect on the digital stories, negotiate on the novel information, analyse the similarities and differences between the target cultures, predict or deduce the reasons behind certain practices, and relate the products and practices in the target culture to their own culture. This phase succeeded in engaging them in more demanding and critical discussions to evaluate the practices in both cultural systems and heighten their intercultural awareness. The intracultural and intercultural awareness and continuous intercultural dialogue enhanced the participants' attitudes and skills, which contributed to the development of learners' critical cultural awareness to a minimal extent. Byram (2012) states that critical cultural awareness contains the evaluation of one's own nation and culture as well as others. The author (2000) also highlights that this notion embodies the critique of one culture with reference to the other and comprehension of the fact that their thinking is culture-specific instead of estimating that it is culture-general. In line with the statements of Byram, the findings obtained from the research journals, learner diaries, and interview reports hinted at growth in the research subjects' critical cultural awareness. First, the shift in perspective was observed in all of the participants' statements. The participants identified striking correspondences between the cultures in terms of cultural products and practices. However, they also determined a few intercultural differences and correlated them with the geographical distance between the countries or their language orientation. The recognition of similarities and rationalization of differences enabled them to break down their previous faulty estimations and prejudices against the target culture. This finding is shown in the excerpts below.

Excerpt 68

Actually, they do what we do. They eat what we eat. They learn what we learn. They use what we use as computers and phones. There are almost no differences between us. Their education is not superior to ours. And, they learn English like us. But, I still want to go and live in Portugal. Learning English may be the same in Portugal and Turkey. But, if I go there, I can learn their language, and it may be fun. (Turkish Student 8, Post-Interview)

Excerpt 69

Turkey seems quite beautiful. The pictures they added to the cover of their digital stories were quite beautiful. The pictures of İstanbul resemble Figuera de Foz. If I go to Turkey to spend several weeks there, I think I will not feel lonely or foreign at all. Now, I have Turkish friends, so I will not feel alone. And the country and what they do, play and eat are quite similar to ours, so I will not feel strange. Turkey is also beautiful like my country. I would love to visit there one day. Not living, though. I would miss my family (Portuguese Student 15, Post-Interview)

As instanced in Excerpt 68, observing how similar the Portuguese lifestyle is to the Turkish lifestyle and how the technology used and the foreign language learnt resemble those of theirs caused the Turkish participants to grasp the equality between the respective

cultures in terms of educational opportunities and technological advancements and softened their idealization of the Portuguese culture. The Turkish learners stated that they were able to understand all the statements of their partners since they learn the English language as a foreign language at their school as they do in Turkey. Therefore, both cultures were identical in many aspects. From the Portuguese perspective, the participants recognized the parallelism in cuisine and engagement to football in male students as given in Excerpt 69. They also emphasized the beauty of the photographs of Turkey's landscapes attached to the digital narratives. These allowed the participants to moderate their initial judgments concerning living in Turkey. Most of the Portuguese students stayed loyal to their initial statements and voiced that they still do not want to leave their own country to live in another. However, they lessened the tension in their initial utterances signifying the excellence of their own country and imperfection of Turkey and communicated the reason behind their mobilization reluctance as the fact that they would miss their families or pets. Withdrawing judgment comes forwards as an important indicator of critical cultural awareness. In this sense, the aforementioned data suggests that all of the participants withdrew their initial judgments regarding the inferiority or superiority of their culture over the other and reached the understanding of "All cultures are fundamentally similar, and no culture is superior to the other ". The internalization of this notion yielded a shift from the participants' ethnocentric orientation towards the ethnorelativist mindset of acceptance of differences.

Second, 10 (66.66%) of the Turkish and 13 (86.66%) of the Portuguese subjects demonstrated some instances of accurate intercultural reasoning and evaluation by drawing on their knowledge, attitudes, and skills. Indicatively, the enhancement in the participants' knowledge, attitudes, and skills enabled them to rectify their initial false estimations, interpret the documents and events more accurately, and make more critical inferences out of them. This finding is instanced as below.

Excerpt 70

Our school has taken its name from a famous doctor. The Turkish school has taken its name from a famous wrestler. I think both Turkish and Portuguese people attach importance to art, music, sports, and science. (Portuguese Student 1, Learner Diary)

Excerpt 71

I think Turkish students are bored due to Covid-19 like us, you know due to staying at home all the time. Normally, we have Carnival and Halloween competitions and talent shows at school. Or, we have badminton, basketball, and volleyball training after school. But, due to Covid, we cannot do any of these. Turkish students also love sports and activities. They had lots of weekend activities in their online books. But, they said that they were unhappy now because

they cannot do these sports. Probably, their after-school activities are cancelled as in our school, and they are unhappy (Portuguese Student 14, Post-Interview).

Excerpt 73

Teacher, I had asked you why we learn English, but they (referring to all European countries) do not learn Turkish. And you had said that it is because of trade. Portuguese students learn German as well as English. I think they may be buying apples, bananas, and maybe onions from Germany. (Turkish Student, 9, Post- Interview)

Excerpt 74

They eat seafood a lot. Almost all of their recipes include seafood like shrimp. I have never eaten shrimp before. It is because it is not sold here. We do not have the sea in our city. But, Portuguese students live by the ocean. Not even sea, but an ocean. Because of that, they may be eating shrimp a lot (Turkish Student 4, Post- Interview)

Excerpt 75

We have a breakfast break at our school. It was surprising to see that Turkish students do not have breakfast breaks at their school. I saw in the digital stories that Turkish people eat lots of things for breakfast, so breakfast must be important for them. I think they do not have a big breakfast at school due to Covid. (Portuguese Student 7, Post Interview)

As portrayed above, The Portuguese school was named after a famous doctor whereas the Turkish school was named after a famous wrestler. Based on this fact, a Portuguese student deduced that both Portuguese and Turkish people attach importance to art, science, sports, and literature (*Excerpt 70*). Other Portuguese students related the Turkish students' expression of paucity in the extracurricular activities and non-presence of a breakfast break at their schools to the possibility of increment of Covid cases in Turkey (*Excerpt 71 & 75*). From the Turkish perspective, a student examining the Portuguese students' timetable reached the conclusion that if Portuguese students learn German at their schools, it may stem from the mercantile relationship between the countries (*Excerpt 73*). Another Turkish student reviewing the cookbooks of the Portuguese participants associated the richness of the seafood in the Portuguese diet with their geographical position (*Excerpt 74*).

Lastly, critical cultural awareness encompasses the acknowledgement of the existence of multiple acceptable behaviours and conducts for different people. According to Byram (2000), this awareness necessitates the participants to gain consciousness of the fact that perceptions are culture-specific rather than culture general. Therefore, this dimension includes not only the assessment of one culture with reference to the other but the evaluation of practices, processes, products, and beliefs within their own cultural mechanisms as well. In other words, it requires the participants to develop empathy and put themselves into others' shoes in order to understand them thoroughly. In this sense, 5 (33.33%) of the Turkish and 6 (40%) of the Portuguese participants demonstrated the signs

of empathic thinking and showed acceptance and respect towards the presence of multiple truths for different people. This outcome is reflected in the proceeding excerpts.

Excerpt 76

Our teacher said that they do not eat pork meat. Dishes with pork meat are delicious. And actually, we consume pork meat almost every week. But, they do not eat it. The teacher said that it is related to their religion. If it is in their religion, they should not eat it. Because they cannot eat it, we did not write any pork meat recipes in our cookbooks. If we had written them, they would not be able to cook them anyway. So, we did not. Seeing something they cannot try at home may upset them (Portuguese Student 5, Learner Diary)

Excerpt 77

We wear school uniforms at school, but they do not. I think wearing a uniform is important to be known as the student of that school due to security things. But, they may not be able to afford their school uniforms. Also, teachers can check out if one person belongs to that school or not during their school watch. So, I do not think wearing casual clothes is a problem there (Turkish Student 14, Post-Interview)

To illustrate the case with the example in Excerpt 76, the Portuguese students were reported to consume pork meat in their meals. However, they approached the nonconsumption of pork meat in Turkey insightfully due to their religious orientation and excluded the recipes including pork meat from their recipe books. Similarly, when the Turkish participants insisted on the necessity to wear a uniform at school and evaluated the flexibility in the dressing code of the Portuguese school negatively, the Portuguese students comprehended their need for educational order and harmony. Therefore, they asked for school uniform designs from their Turkish partners. The Turkish students, who produced negative reactions towards the non-enaction of a fixed dressing code at the Portuguese school in the initial stage, generated a more conciliatory and sympathetic attitude towards the practice in the following stages. As exhibited in Excerpt 77, when their Portuguese partners behaved friendly and asked for their assistance to design uniforms for their school, The Turkish students enjoyed the fact that their opinions and productions were valued by their foreign partners. It led them to mitigate their negative attitudes and reach the conclusion that discipline can be maintained via various enforcements other than uniform obligations with the efforts of teachers and school managers. Relying on the findings presented above, it should be noted that the participants did not question the accuracy or appropriateness of their own beliefs or behaviours, but they began to accept others' behaviours and perspectives within their own cultural context.

4.2.2 The IS of Turkish and Portuguese Young Learners (RQ2)

Since IS is viewed as a precondition to foster ICC and improve critical cultural awareness, the second research question (RQ2) aims to explore the young learners' early IS levels and the development in their IS over the telecollaborative DST intervention period so as to understand the advancement in their ICC and the shift in their frame of reference over time.

4.2.1.1 The Initial IS Perspectives of Young Learners (RQ2.1)

IS embodies 5 sub-spheres as *interaction engagement*, *respect for cultural differences*, *interaction confidence*, *interaction enjoyment*, and *interaction attentiveness* according to Chen and Starosta's (1997) framework. Therefore, RQ2.1 draws its findings from both a quantitative source of a 5-dimensional scale titled IS-15 (Wang and Zhou, 2016) and a qualitative source of pre-semi-structured interviews.

4.2.1.1.1 Quantitative Findings (IS-15 Scale)

Descriptive statistical values were estimated for each dimension and statement in the scale with the purpose of examining the responses of Turkish and Portuguese young learners to the IS-15 scale. The dimensional and total mean values of both Turkish and Portuguese participants are illustrated in Table 15 below.

Table 15

Comparative Statistics of IS-15 Factors between Turkish and Portuguese Young Learners' Pre-Test Scores

Dimensions	Country	N	Min	Max	M	SD
Interaction Engagement	Turkey	15	2.33	5.00	3.5111	.90108
	Portugal	15	2.66	5.00	3.5777	.87511
Respect for Cultural Differences	Turkey	15	2.00	4.66	3.1777	.88823
	Portugal	15	2.66	5.00	3.6000	.76473
Interaction Confidence	Turkey	15	2.33	5.00	3.4222	.93305
	Portugal	15	3.00	5.00	4.0889	.70182
Interaction Enjoyment	Turkey	15	3.66	5.00	4.2444	.75574
	Portugal	15	3.00	5.00	4.2666	.64994
Interaction Attentiveness	Turkey	15	2.00	4.66	3.4666	0.90586
	Portugal	15	2.00	4.66	3.5333	0.92975
Total IS	Turkey	15	2.4	4.86	3.5644	0.73988
	Portugal	15	2.66	4.93	3.8133	.78427

The statistics in Table 15 revealed that the Turkish participants partially agreed or agreed to the scale statements to a great extent and reported to have a high level of overall IS ($X = 3.56$, $SD = .74$). The dimensional descriptive analysis indicated that all dimensions produced a mean value greater than the value of 3.00, signifying the Turkish participants' readiness to engage in a multinational interplay before the project activities. Of the five dimensions, 'interaction enjoyment' notified the highest mean value with a score greater than 4.00 ($X = 4.24$, $SD = .76$) while 'respect for cultural differences' declared the lowest mean value ($X = 3.18$, $SD = .89$). On the other hand, the dimensions 'interaction engagement' ($X = 3.51$, $SD = .90$), 'interaction confidence' ($X = 3.42$, $SD = .93$), and 'interaction attentiveness' ($X = 3.47$, $SD = .91$) documented parallel results in the Turkish perspective. Similar findings were observed from the Portuguese perspective. The Portuguese students produced statistically higher results than their Turkish counterparts in the analysis ($X = 3.81$, $SD = .78$) and were declared to have a high level of overall IS. The dimensional scrutiny demonstrated that all dimensions disclosed a mean score higher than the value of 3.50, implying the Portuguese participants' willingness to involve in an intercultural dialogue prior to the telecollaboration project. In association with the five dimensions, 'interaction confidence' ($X = 4.09$, $SD = .70$) and 'interaction enjoyment' ($X = 4.27$, $SD = .65$) announced the highest mean scores with the values higher than 4.00

whereas ‘interaction attentiveness’ disclosed the lowest mean value ($X= 3.53$, $SD= 0.93$). Correspondingly, the dimensions ‘respect for cultural differences’ ($X= 3.60$, $SD= .76$) and ‘interaction engagement’ ($X= 3.58$, $SD= .88$) offered analogous results with the dimension of ‘interaction attentiveness’. In a nutshell, both Turkish and Portuguese participants were announced to have a high level of IS with mean values greater than 3.00. However, the Portuguese participants outperformed their Turkish peers by producing numerically more significant outcomes in every IS dimension.

Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted for each item in the IS-15 scale of Turkish participants, and the findings were illustrated in Table 16 below.



Table 16

Pre-Test Descriptive Statistics of IS-15 Scale for Turkish Young Learners

Dimensions	Items	N	Min	Max	M	SD
Interaction Engagement	1. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.	15	3.00	5.00	3.9333	.70373
	2. I often give positive responses to my culturally different counterpart during our interacting.	15	2.00	5.00	3.2667	1.09978
	3. I avoid those situations where I will have to deal with culturally-distinct persons.	15	2.00	5.00	3.3333	.89974
Respect for Cultural Differences	4. I don't like to be with people from different cultures.	15	2.00	4.00	3.1333	.83381
	5. I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.	15	2.00	5.00	3.0667	.96115
	6. I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.	15	2.00	5.00	3.3333	.89974
Interaction Confidence	7. I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.	15	2.00	5.00	3.4000	1.05560
	8. I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures.	15	2.00	5.00	3.4667	.91548
	9. I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.	15	2.00	5.00	3.4000	.82808
Interaction Enjoyment	10. I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures.	15	3.00	5.00	3.6667	.61721
	11. I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures.	15	4.00	5.00	4.5333	.51640
	12. I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures.	15	4.00	5.00	4.5333	.51640
Interaction Attentiveness	13. I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.	15	2.00	5.00	3.6000	.98561
	14. I am sensitive to my culturally-distinct counterpart's subtle meanings during our interaction.	15	2.00	5.00	3.4667	.91548
	15. I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures.	15	2.00	4.00	3.3333	.81650

As given in Table 15, the overall mean score represented in the subscale of 'interaction engagement' ($X = 3.51$, $SD = .90$) indicated that the Turkish informants generally held positive attitudes towards a possible intercultural communication in the future and viewed the idea of participating in an intercultural dialogue affirmatively. In this subscale, item 1 "I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures" received the highest mean value ($X = 3.93$, $SD = .70$) whereas item 2 "I often give positive responses to my culturally different counterpart during our interacting" obtained the lowest mean value ($X = 3.20$,

$SD= 1.10$). However, all items in this subscale yielded a mean value greater than 3.00, signifying that the participants showed eagerness and commitment to intercultural communication even before the project activities began. The rationale behind the lower scoring of item 2 was observed as the participants' caution about the fact that there might emerge some situations in which they might have to reject their culturally distinct partners' offers. For instance, one Turkish student spoke aloud and stated that he might give a negative response to play hopscotch since he does not like the game. The overall mean score displayed in the subscale of 'respect for cultural differences' exhibited similarly high outcomes ($X=3.18$, $SD= .89$) with the illustration of a mean value greater than the value of 3.00. In this subscale, item 6 "*I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.*" was reverse-coded and estimated with the greatest mean score ($X=3.33$, $SD=.90$) while item 5 "*I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.*" was detected with the minimum value ($X=3.07$, $SD= .96$). Nevertheless, all items in this subscale proposed a mean value between 3.00 and 4.00, which portends that the Turkish participants manifested a circumspect attitude against cultural differences with posing neither considerably positive nor considerably negative agreement towards them. Likewise, the overall mean score represented in the subscale of 'interaction confidence' ($X= 3.42$, $SD= .93$) reflected that the Turkish informants appeared moderately confident to initiate and sustain a multicultural interaction. Within the extremes of this subscale, item 8 "*I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures.*" noted the maximum mean score ($X=3.47$, $SD= .92$) whereas item 7 "*I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.*" ($X= 3.40$, $SD= 1.06$) and item 9 "*I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.*" ($X= 3.40$, $SD= .83$) produced corresponding mean values. The Turkish teacher recognized that the Turkish young learners demonstrated instances of anxiety in the form of communication apprehension. They expressed their potential failure to communicate their opinions and feelings easily; therefore, they preferred providing more average responses to the statements. Moreover, the overall mean score displayed in the subscale of 'interaction enjoyment' ($X= 4.24$, $SD=.76$) presented a relatively high outcome as opposed to the mean values in the aforementioned subscales. The significance in this subscale may be associated with the participants' lack of intercultural experiences. Since the respondents had not had any telecollaboration experience, they did not hold negative perceptions towards intercultural dialogue and approach the telecollaborative practices pessimistically.

Even though most of them portrayed some signs of communication apprehension in the previous dimension, they thought about asking for assistance from their teachers and parents or resorting to online translators when they encountered linguistic or cultural barriers. In other words, they considered continuing the interactive tradition via parent or teacher channels in the face of linguistic or cultural failure. To this end, they stated that they would not feel hopeless in these situations. In this subscale, item 11 *“I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures.”* and 12 *“I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures.”* exposed the same mean and standard deviation value ($X = 4.53$, $SD = .52$), yet item 10 *“I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures.”* pointed comparably lower mean score ($X = 3.67$, $SD = .62$). The reason behind the statistical meagerness of item 10 matches with the explanation above. Since the Turkish participants did not feel completely confident about their language proficiency, they provided meagre responses towards item 8. However, their reliance on their teachers and parents resulted in giving higher rates to items 11 and 12. Lastly, the overall mean score exhibited in the subscale of ‘interaction attentiveness ($X = 3.47$, $SD = .91$) demonstrated that the participants usually showed agreement to ask for and gather information from their culturally-distinct partners during an intercultural interaction. In this subscale, item 13 *“I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.”* received the greatest mean value ($X = 3.60$, $SD = 0.99$) while item 15 *“I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures.”* obtained the lowest mean value ($X = 3.33$, $SD = .82$). Nonetheless, it should be underlined that all mean values were above the value of 3.00 in each statement of this subscale, indicating that the respondents were open to involvement in multicultural communication and elicit cultural information. Drawn on the findings above, it should be proposed that the participants showed the general tendency to evaluate themselves more positively than negatively although they did not possess any previous intercultural experience.

Descriptive statistical scores were also computed for the items in the IS-15 scale of Portuguese participants, and the derived minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation values were delineated in Table 17 below.

Table 17

Pre-Test Descriptive Statistics of IS-15 Scale for Portuguese Young Learners

Dimensions	Items	N	Min	Max	M	SD
Interaction Engagement	1. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.	15	3.00	5.00	3.9333	.70373
	2. I often give positive responses to my culturally different counterpart during our interacting.	15	2.00	5.00	3.0667	1.03280
	3. I avoid those situations where I will have to deal with culturally-distinct persons.	15	3.00	5.00	3.7333	.59362
Respect for Cultural Differences	4. I don't like to be with people from different cultures.	15	3.00	5.00	3.8000	.67612
	5. I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.	15	3.00	5.00	3.6000	.63246
	6. I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.	15	2.00	5.00	3.4000	.98561
Interaction Confidence	7. I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.	15	3.00	5.00	4.0000	.75593
	8. I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures.	15	3.00	5.00	4.0000	.75593
	9. I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.	15	3.00	5.00	4.2667	.59362
Interaction Enjoyment	10. I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures.	15	3.00	5.00	4.0667	.59362
	11. I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures.	15	3.00	5.00	4.3333	.72375
	12. I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures.	15	3.00	5.00	4.4000	.63246
Interaction Attentiveness	13. I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.	15	2.00	5.00	3.6000	1.05560
	14. I am sensitive to my culturally-distinct counterpart's subtle meanings during our interaction.	15	2.00	5.00	3.5333	.99043
	15. I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures.	15	2.00	4.00	3.4667	.74322

In accordance with Table 15, the overall mean score of the subscale of 'interaction engagement' ($X = 3.58$, $SD = .88$) portrayed that the Portuguese participants perceived the idea of engaging in intercultural dialogues positively and demonstrated a willingness to function in multicultural interactions. In this subscale, item 1 "*I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures*" received the highest mean value ($X = 3.93$, $SD = .70$) whereas item 2 "*I often give positive responses to my culturally different counterpart during our interacting*" obtained the lowest mean value ($X = 3.07$, $SD = 1.03$). However, all

items in this subscale produced a mean value greater than 3.00, suggesting that the learners conveyed their enthusiasm and readiness to project a shared intercultural discourse with individuals from different socio-cultural backgrounds. The rationale behind the lower scoring of item 2 was observed as the participants' nonrecognition of their foreign partners. More clearly, one Portuguese student completing the scale aloud stated that giving positive or negative responses depends on whom he talks to or what they talk about. According to him, if the person he communicates with does not like Minecraft, he has to pose his contradictory opinion and say that it is his favourite game. Correspondingly, the overall mean score exhibited in the subscale of 'respect for cultural differences' yielded high outcomes ($X= 3.60$, $SD= .76$) with the illustration of a mean value greater than the value of 3.50. In this subscale, item 4 "*I don't like to be with people from different cultures.*" was reverse-coded in the computation phase and calculated with the greatest mean value ($X=3.80$, $SD= .68$). On the other hand, item 6 "*I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.*" was also reverse-coded and estimated with the lowest mean value ($X=3.40$, $SD= .99$). Nevertheless, all items in this subscale proposed a mean value close to the value of 3.50, which implied that the Portuguese young learners exposed high respectful approach to cultural differences. Furthermore, the overall mean score illustrated in the subscale of 'interaction confidence reflected significant outcomes ($X= 4.09$, $SD= .70$) by generating a mean value greater than the score of 4.00. Within the parameters of this subscale, item 9 "*I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.*" received the maximum mean score ($X=4.27$, $SD= .59$) while item 7 "*I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.*" and item 8 "*I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures.*" ($X= 4.00$, $SD= .76$) produced the same mean and standard deviation values. The pre-interview reports documented that the Portuguese participants were engaging in communicative assignments at school and home on a regular basis; therefore, they counted on their foreign language knowledge and skills to interact with foreign people. However, the participants showed some signs of digital apprehension. For example, one informant declared that if he failed to communicate with his foreign partners, it would result from his inability to use the platforms (e.g. eTwinning and Story Jumper), not from his linguistic knowledge. Another learner expressed his preference of face to face interaction over telecollaboration since he labelled himself as technologically incompetent. Of all the subscales of IS-15, the subscale of 'interaction enjoyment' proposed the greatest overall mean value ($X= 4.27$, $SD= .65$) in

the Portuguese version. According to the Portuguese teacher, the respondents did not consider that they might encounter circumstances in which they might feel useless or upset since they had a high linguistic ability to overcome the language-related problems. Hence, they provided positively high responses to the items in this dimension. In this subscale, item 10 *“I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures.”* ($X=4.07$, $SD= .59$), item 11 *“I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures.”* ($X= 4.33$, $SD= .72$), and item 12 *“I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures”* ($X=4.40$, $SD= .67$) illustrated high mean values with the score greater than 4.00, foreshadowing their contentment with their existing FL ability and readiness to engage in intercultural communication in the future. Finally, the overall mean score exhibited in the subscale of ‘interaction attentiveness’ ($X= 3.53$, $SD= 0.93$) demonstrated that the participants usually showed agreement to ask for and elicit information from their culturally-distinct partners during an intercultural interaction. In this subscale, item 13 *“I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.”* received the greatest mean value ($X= 3.60$, $SD= 1.06$) while item 15 *“I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures.”* obtained the lowest mean value ($X= 3.47$, $SD= .74$). Nonetheless, it should be underlined that all mean values were above the value of 3.00 in each statement of this subscale, indicating that the respondents were enthusiastic to involve in multicultural communication and acquire cultural information. Relied on the findings above, it should be proposed that the Portuguese young learners were also inclined to have high opinions about themselves as their Turkish peers.

4.3.1.1.2 Qualitative Findings (Pre-Interview)

Bennett’s DMIS (1986) was utilized to monitor the development in the Turkish and Portuguese young learners’ reference frames in the present thesis. To begin with the initial IS stances of the respondents, the pre-interview data were transcribed and coded into 6 categories in line with the sub-dimensions in the DMIS model: denial, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, and integration. The Turkish and Portuguese participants utilized a wide range of affective words and phrases to convey their predictions and emotions towards the target culture. These statements were categorized

under the six stages of DMIS in order to determine the earlier perspectives of the young learners. The initial perspectives of the research subjects are demonstrated as below.

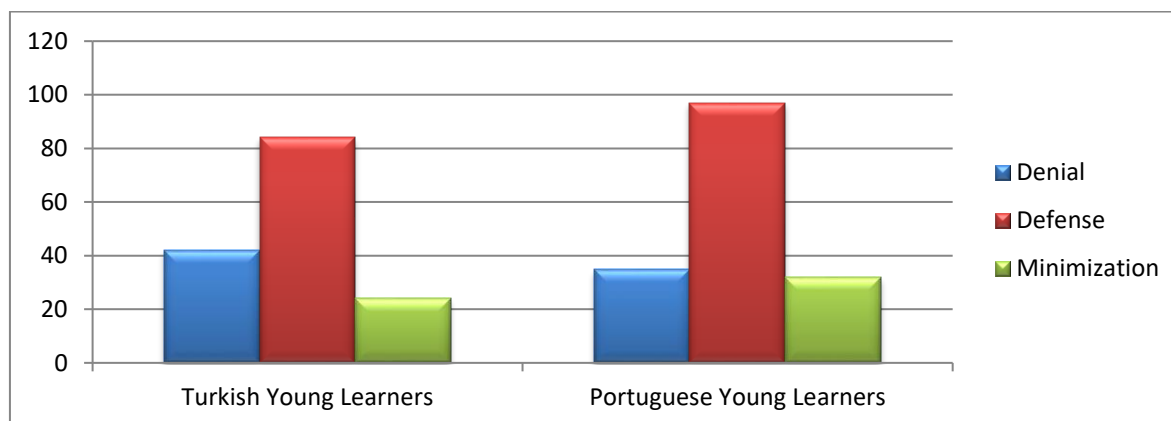


Figure 19. Instances of Turkish and Portuguese learners' initial IS perspectives

As provided in Figure 19, the data analysis exhibited a total of 150 instances in Turkish participants' utterances and a total of 164 instances in the Portuguese participants' utterances. The codification and categorization process highlighted that all of the instances signified strong characteristics of ethnocentric mindsets while no instance represented the existence of any stages of the ethnorelativist perspective. In addition, all of the Turkish and Portuguese participants displayed multiple stages of monocentrism in their pre-interview transcriptions. In fact, some of their statements portrayed either their lack of knowledge or the failure to form clear categories about the target culture and pinpointed the presence of Denial stage of monocentrism whereas the other statements included their belief concerning the superiority or inferiority of their culture to the target culture and manifested the presence of Defense stage of monocentrism. The perspectives are explicated in detail below.

4.2.1.1.2.1 Denial Stage

The pre-interview analysis uncovered 42 ($f= 28\%$) instances of the Denial stage of ethnocentrism out of 150 instances in the Turkish perspective and 35 ($f= 21.34\%$) instances of the Denial stage of ethnocentrism out of 164 instances in the Portuguese perspective.

The pre-interview data revealed that only 2 (13.33%) of the Turkish and 3 (20%) of the Portuguese participants had a superficial level of background knowledge about the target country prior to the project activities. Specifically, the Turkish participants (13.33%) voiced their second-hand knowledge respecting the food and sports in the target country while the Portuguese students expressed their perfunctory knowledge concerning the religious and celebratory differences between both countries. However, the remaining participants in both countries (83.33%) articulated the non-existence of their background knowledge about the target culture and its practices. Although 5 (33.33%) of the participants articulated their minimal amount of knowledge about the target culture, 10 (66.66%) of the Turkish students and 8 (53.33%) of the Portuguese students declared that they had heard the name of the target country for the first time. In addition, all of the Turkish and Portuguese participants including the ones with minimal background knowledge stated that they could not point at the target country on a world map. The participants' intercultural incognizance is demonstrated in the excerpts below.

Excerpt 78

I have not even heard of Portugal as a country before. Since it is a country that I do not know, its culture must be different from ours. Their sports may be similar to our sports because football, basketball, they are universal. Footballers have matches with other countries. So our sports may be similar. But other than that, everything must be different (Turkish Student 6, Pre-Interview)

Excerpt 79

I do not know Portugal at all. I cannot even show you where it is on the map. Is it similar to Spain? (Turkish Student 13, Pre-Interview)

Excerpt 80

I know the capital of Turkey is İstanbul. It is known as a great city. I have seen it in one of the movies that I have watched with my family. That's all. (Portuguese Student 5, Pre-Interview)

Excerpt 81

Turkish people do not celebrate Christmas, But, I do not know what they do at Christmas time instead. I am really curious about what they do in their winter holiday. And I am really curious whether they decorate trees or not. They might not be celebrating Christmas, but they might be decorating trees (Portuguese Student 15, Pre-Interview)

The aforementioned excerpts suggested that the young learners in both countries lacked even the geographical level of knowledge about the target culture. This case correlated with the Denial stage of monocentricism since the target countries were labelled as "foreign" or "external" in the participants' minds without bearing any familiarity and knowledge of them.

Since the Portuguese and Turkish young learners lacked thorough knowledge about the partner country and its practices, they were requested to specify their predictions

concerning the similarities and differences between their ancestry culture and the target culture. In this phase of the pre-interview session, 12 (80%) of the Turkish students and 10 (66.66%) of the Portuguese students engaged in accurate reasoning and related the similarities with their daily activities, weekend routines, playing cultures, and school schedule. However, as demonstrated in the excerpts below, some respondents ruled out the possible existence of cultural differences between the project countries. These learners reasoned that both countries must have been completely the same since daily activities such as waking up, brushing teeth, or having breakfast; school subjects such as maths, science, and music; sports such as football, basketball, and volleyball, and natural beauties such as mountains, plains, and forests exist in every country in the world.

Excerpt 82

Portugal and Turkey are completely the same. They also have Covid. They have schools, groceries, and bakeries. They wake up, wash their hands and face, go to school, have lunch and come back home. They eat like us and sleep like us. They have streets, mountains and beautiful places. What can be different? (Turkish Student 12, Pre-Interview)

Excerpt 83

They must be doing what we do every day. I mean, they must be going to school and coming back home. They must be cooking, eating, doing homework, reading, and sleeping. I think they are no different. (Portuguese Student 11, Pre-Interview)

As reported in the excerpts above, some participants evidenced complete rejection of probable cultural differences between nations, highlighting the robust scientific proof of the Denial stage of ethnocentrism. However, the others ratiocinated inaccurately and equated the similarities with the parallelism in their religious rituals, native language or celebrations. Furthermore, most of the participants were observed to conduct default reasoning and to imply the signs of false hypothetical knowledge on the basis of intercultural differences. In fact, 13 of the Turkish subjects (86.66%) and 13 (86.66%) of the Portuguese subjects expressed the possibility of dissimilarities in terms of food found in supermarkets, jobs and occupations, physical appearance, and technological advances. The instances of false reasoning were presented in the excerpts below.

Excerpt 84

Portuguese people speak in English. So, their education must be great. I would love to visit Portugal one day to improve my English. (Turkish Student 1, Pre-Interview)

Excerpt 85

Of course, Portuguese and Turkish cultures are different from one another. They live far far away from us. They speak English and we speak Turkish. They may have different food and eating styles. For example, Chinese people use chopsticks. China is a different country, they have different customs. Portugal is a different country. They can be using different spoons. (Turkish Student 9, Pre-Interview)

Excerpt 86

I saw it in Gravity Falls. The German love singing and dancing. I think Turkish people also love dancing. I do not know, they seem like the same country (Portuguese Student 2, Pre-Interview)

Excerpt 87

As I said, I saw Turkey in a movie. And, there, people were covering their heads. They were like people in Egypt. In Egypt, people play the flute, and snakes dance. In Turkey, Turkish people may also play the flute for snakes to dance. I would love to watch it (Portuguese Student 5, Pre-Interview)

Drawn on the aforementioned excerpts, their default estimations were originated from their correlation of the unknown foreign culture (i.e, Turkish or Portuguese culture) with the foreign cultures they were already familiar with (i.e. Italian or Spanish culture). Specifically, in Excerpt 84, the Turkish student made deductions about Portuguese culture by twinning it with English culture. The student thought that the native language of Portugal is English as in England; therefore, she made the conclusion that their education must have been well-developed. Likewise, another student reconciled Portuguese culture with Chinese culture by claiming that Portuguese participants may be using different kitchen utensils as Chinese folk (*Excerpt 85*). From the Portuguese perspective, one student established connections between Turkish culture and German culture due to a cartoon he watched and stated that Turkish people may love dancing (*Excerpt 86*). In addition, another student from Portugal associated Turkish culture with Egyptian culture based on a movie he watched with his family (*Excerpt 87*). The movie he watched was recorded in İstanbul, and people were wearing hijabs in the movie. The student recalling this scene connected Turkish culture with Egyptian culture and stated that Turkish people might also love serpent charming activity. As the excerpts put forward, most of the research subjects endeavoured to explain the cultural differences between their heritage culture and the target culture by interpreting the target culture in the light of another familiar cultural system. This case demonstrated another sign of the Denial stage of ethnocentrism.

Bennett (1993) proposes that individuals who are segregated from intercultural interactions usually have difficulty in building precise mental schemas to construe differences. The researcher (1993) points out that having difficulty in enunciating precise categories indicates the presence of the Denial stage of ethnocentrism. In line with this proposition, it was coded that most of the research participants achieved to express clear categories to define similarities and differences. For example, students generally labelled daily routines, free-time activities, school subjects, and sports categories to define similarities whereas

they designated cuisine, music, and celebrations to describe differences. However, few instances of categorization failure ($n = 7$) were detected in the pre-interview transcripts of Turkish and Portuguese participants. Two of them were exemplified below.

Excerpt 88

I do not know anything about Portuguese culture at all. (When asked to predict the differences)
They may have different things on their breakfast table. (Turkish Student 10, Pre-Interview)

Excerpt 89

I think both cultures are quite similar. I think we have different schools. We may also have different homes and streets (Portuguese Student 7, Pre-Interview)

As indicated in the former excerpt, the statement of differences in the breakfast table remained rather vague and incomprehensible. Whether the Turkish respondent meant the divergence in breakfast food or table manners between the project countries prevailed indecipherable. Correspondingly, the utterance of having different schools and houses in the latter excerpt offered imprecise categorical information. In this excerpt, if the student referred to the school discipline, physical condition, or academic subjects remained nebulous to understand. Briefly, the default ability to form clear mental schemas signalled the presence of the Denial stage of monocentricism.

4.2.1.1.2.2 *Defense Stage*

The pre-interview analysis uncovered 84 ($f = 56\%$) instances of the Defense stage of ethnocentrism out of 150 instances in the Turkish perspective and 97 instances of the Defense stage of ethnocentrism out of 164 ($f = 59.15\%$) instances in the Portuguese perspective. Of 84 instances, 46 ($f^{\text{Defense}} = 54.76\%$) displayed the monocentric case of Reversal while 38 ($f^{\text{Defense}} = 45.24\%$) demonstrated the monocentric case of Defense. Nonetheless, all instances identified in the Portuguese bloc ($n^{\text{Defense}} = 97$, $f^{\text{Defense}} = 100\%$) exhibited the monocentric case of Defense. This statistical data suggested that defensive mindset either in the form of Defense or Reversal prevailed as the main socialization of the research subjects at the initial phase of the study with the derivation of the highest number of instances from their pre-interview transcripts.

The data extracted from the respondents' pre-interview transcripts designated that the students' lack of linguistic and intercultural cognizance caused them to predict the probable similarities and differences between the target cultures. In this process, it was detected that most of the participants showed the tendency to produce their conjectures by

making inferences from other foreign cultural systems (e.g. Spanish or Chinese cultures). It resulted in the generation of false hypothetical knowledge about the target nations. For instance, since most of the Turkish participants perpetrated the logical fallacy that the mother tongue of the Portuguese participants was English, they falsely deduced that the Portuguese had better and more different educational opportunities than theirs. The occurrences of false hypothetical estimation as exemplified above operated as the agent of developing a defensive stance to differences. The inaccurate predictions led the Turkish participants to acquire a polarized orientation by exhibiting 46 instances ($f^{\text{Defense}} = 54.76\%$) of reversal mindset and 38 ($f^{\text{Defense}} = 45.24\%$) instances of defensive mindset while it conduced the Portuguese participants to adopt a complete defensive orientation by perceiving their own culture superior to the Turkish culture. The cases of the defensive view of monocentrism are illustrated below.

Excerpt 90

I would like to travel around Turkey. I think it is a beautiful country. If I can travel around, I can take photographs, taste their foods and see how people act there. Then, I can come back to my country and tell my friends. But I would not like to live there. My country is more beautiful than Turkey (Portuguese Student 6, Pre-Interview)

Excerpt 91

Of course, I would not want to live there. I can just go there and see what they do during the Christmas period. I think they do not celebrate Christmas. So, what do they do? And I think they do not go to the church. So I want to learn how they pray. That's all. I cannot live in such a country where Christmas is not celebrated (Portuguese Student 10, Pre-Interview)

Excerpt 92

My country is beautiful. I cannot leave the beauties of my own country behind and move to such a country. There is no other country that can be more beautiful than Turkey. And, I cannot say that Portugal is more beautiful. It is shameful (Turkish Student 2, Pre-Interview)

Excerpt 93

I cannot live in Portugal in the future. I do not know their language or culture. And, I love Turkey more (Turkish Student 3, Pre-Interview)

Excerpt 94

We have Cristiano Ronaldo and no one can beat Cristiano in football. We have the best footballers in the world. Also, we have the best beaches in the world. We go surfing every weekend here. So, I cannot live in Turkey. I do not want to. Our country is the best. I can just visit Turkey and come back (Portuguese Student 12, Pre-Interview)

Excerpt 95

Mostly, they thought that liking a foreign country or wanting to live in there would damage their cultural identity. Although they have no information about the partner country, they mostly thought their culture is the best, and wanting to live in another country is equal to some sort of treason (Portuguese Teacher 1, Research Journal)

Excerpt 96

My students did not sound completely confident about their foreign language skills. They said that they did not have any friends or family there. And, since they knew neither Portuguese nor English, they would not make any foreign friends there. Therefore, they stated that they did not

want to live in Portugal since their country was more comfortable. (Turkish Teacher 1, Research Journal)

In the excerpts above, the Turkish and Portuguese participants expressed the superiority of their own country to their project country although they did not have any background knowledge about it. They claimed the supremacy of their own culture without proposing any well-established grounds. The rationale behind this was explicated as the probable understanding that defining another country as more beautiful and better or leaving their own country to live in another is a form of sentimental treachery committed against their family and friends by the Portuguese teacher. In other words, since their family and friends live in their native country, they automatically regarded their partner country as inferior compared to theirs even though they did not even have visual information about the target country, indicating the resistance of their self-cultural identity. On the other hand, the reason behind was associated with the participants' low interaction confidence by the Turkish teacher. According to her, many participants could not count on their language skills to communicate with the folk, have an education, do grocery shopping, or play games in a foreign country and estimated that they would become lonely there. Thus, they were prone to define their country as more comfortable and better to accommodate. Nonetheless, some of the Turkish informants demonstrated the Reversal form of defensive mindset as below.

Excerpt 97

I would love to move to Portugal when I grow up. I can learn English and get a better education. Portuguese education is better than ours. (When asked why) I do not know why. They are foreigners. Their education must be better. Maybe because of the languages they learn. They may have lots of English lessons. (Turkish Student 8, Pre-Interview)

Excerpt 98

I would love to visit Portugal I would love to learn their languages and see their tourist attractions. I would also love to move there. If I move there, I can learn their language and have a better education. Education in Portugal is better than our education (When asked why) – Hımm, they are foreigners, they must have better education (Turkish Student 11, Pre-Interview)

Excerpt 99

I think they have better technology and jobs. My father does not have a job right now. If I can go there, I can learn more and my father can find a job. You know, more technological jobs. Then, we can come back to Turkey and contribute to Turkey (Turkish Student 14, Pre-Interview)

The excerpts above signalled that most of the Turkish participants idealized Portugal as the perfect country by relating it with other countries such as England, America, and Italy and rating its education system highly owing to its native language. However, their definition of superiority remained restricted to educational and economic dimensions. In other words,

no instances of social or moral superiority were determined in their pre-interview transcripts.

4.2.1.1.2.3 Minimization Stage

The pre-interview data revealed 24 instances ($f= 16\%$) of the Minimization stage of ethnocentrism out of 150 instances in the Turkish perspective and 32 instances ($f= 19.51\%$) of the Minimization stage of ethnocentrism out of 164 instances in the Portuguese perspective.

As clarified in the previous sections, the Turkish and Portuguese participants were asked to predict the possible similarities between the project cultures since they had no background knowledge about the target community and its conducts. In this phase, most of the Turkish (80%) and Portuguese (66.66%) respondents succeeded in expressing broad and clear categories of commonalities such as daily routines, weekend activities, family tree, playing cultures, sports, and school subjects. Some of these instances were demonstrated in the excerpts below.

Excerpt 100

Our families must resemble. (When asked why) You know they must have a mother, father, brother, and sister. They may be visiting their grandparents and uncles like us (Turkish Student 15, Pre-Interview)

Excerpt 101

What we do and what they do must be similar. You know we wake up, go to school, have lunch, do homework, and more. They must be doing these as well. What we learn at school also must be similar. They must be learning maths and science. Everybody learns maths and science. (Portuguese Student 1, Pre-Interview)

In line with these excerpts, the participants anticipated that daily activities including waking up, having breakfast, or having a shower must be similar in both countries. Likewise, their partners must be learning the same school subjects respecting maths, science, art, and music. They must also have a mother, father, siblings, and grandparents. As seen, the informants specified categories which are estimated as universal for each nation. However, the instances portrayed a rather vague and superficial level of Minimization orientation. Principally, the Minimization stage necessitates a certain amount of knowledge and awareness on cultural correspondences and divergences in order to emphasize the similarities over differences. Nonetheless, the research subjects lacked the essential intercultural knowledge, and their minimalization comments were based solely on

predictions. In this respect, these instances manifested a weak and incomplete form of Minimalization.

4.2.1.2 The Development in Young Learners' IS Perspectives and its Extent (R2.2 & RQ2.3)

The RQ2.2 and RQ2.3 derive their findings from a quantitative source of a 5-dimensional scale titled IS-15 (Wang and Zhou, 2016) and qualitative sources of post-semi-structured interviews, learner diaries, and research journals. In this section, the researcher endeavours to compare the pre-and post- quantitative and qualitative results so as to determine the degree of enhancement in the research subjects' IS.

4.2.1.2.1 Quantitative Findings (Post-Test - IS-15 Scale)

Descriptive statistical analysis was carried out after the telecollaborative DST intervention to compute the responses of the Turkish and Portuguese young learners to the post-IS-15 scale and observe the dimensional and statemental improvement between pre-and post-interventions. The statistics in Table 15 and 18 revealed that the overall mean value of each subscale in the pre-test showed a drastic increment in the post-test.

Table 18

Comparative Statistics of IS-15 Factors between Turkish and Portuguese Young Learners' Post-Test Scores

Dimensions	Country	N	Min	Max	M	SD
Interaction Engagement	Turkey	15	4.00	5.00	4.51	.51019
	Portugal	15	3.66	5.00	4.58	.55137
Respect for Cultural Differences	Turkey	15	3.33	5.00	4.33	.48795
	Portugal	15	4.00	5.00	4.60	.49684
Interaction Confidence	Turkey	15	4.00	5.00	4.62	.49374
	Portugal	15	3.66	5.00	4.62	.54052
Interaction Enjoyment	Turkey	15	4.00	5.00	4.58	.50381
	Portugal	15	3.66	5.00	4.73	.49391
Interaction Attentiveness	Turkey	15	3.66	5.00	4.38	.56464
	Portugal	15	4.00	5.00	4.64	.47917
Total IS	Turkey	15	3.79	5.00	4.48	.51206
	Portugal	15	3.79	5.00	4.63	.51236

As illustrated in Table 18, the Turkish informants portrayed either agreement or strong agreement to the items in the IS-15 scale and produced a significantly high total mean value ($X = 4.48$, $SD = .51$) close to the score of 4.50. The dimensional descriptive examination uncovered that all dimensions yielded relatively higher mean values with the indices greater than 4.30 in each subscale compared to the pre-questionnaire scores with indices greater than 3.00 in each subscale. This statistical comparison showed that the Turkish participants enhanced their willingness, level of commitment, respectful attitude, communication esteem, and interaction attention considerably through the telecollaborative DST exchanges. Of the five dimensions, ‘interaction confidence’, which was identified as one of the lowest scored subscales in the pre-questionnaire, acquired the highest mean index ($X = 4.62$, $SD = .49$) in the post-questionnaire. Following this dimension, the subscales of ‘interaction engagement’ ($X = 4.51$, $SD = .51$) and ‘interaction enjoyment’ ($X = 4.58$, $SD = .50$) generated correspondingly significant results in comparison to their mean and standard deviation indices in the pre-test form. In addition, the subscales ‘respect for cultural differences’ ($X = 4.33$, $SD = .49$) and ‘interaction attentiveness’ ($X = 4.38$, $SD = .56$) displayed a noteworthy escalation between pre-and post-questionnaires by cultivating significantly high mean values greater than 4.30. The Portuguese faction reflected similarly positive results as well. The Portuguese students generally responded to the scale items with either agreement or strong agreement and produced a considerably high total mean score ($X = 4.63$, $SD = .51$) greater than the value of 4.50. The dimensional scrutiny unfolded that each dimension also reflected remarkably higher mean indices with mean values greater than 4.50 in the post-questionnaire than the ones in the pre-questionnaire. This numerical contrast signified that the Portuguese participants improved their enthusiasm, engagement, respectful demeanour, communication esteem, and interactional alertness to a significant extent by exchanging telecollaborative digital narratives. Among five dimensions, ‘interaction enjoyment’ demonstrated a notable improvement in the post-test and documented the highest mean value ($X = 4.73$, $SD = .49$). Correspondingly, the dimensions ‘interaction attentiveness’ ($X = 4.64$, $SD = .48$), ‘interaction confidence’ ($X = 4.62$, $SD = .54$), ‘respect for cultural differences’ ($X = 4.60$, $SD = .50$), and ‘interaction engagement’ ($X = 4.58$, $SD = .56$) offered analogous results and manifested outstanding enhancements in the post-test. In conclusion, both Turkish and Portuguese subjects were announced to improve their overall and dimensional IS over a 7-week telecollaborative intervention period by yielding mean indices close to or greater than the value of 4.50 in all

dimensions of the post-questionnaire. Nonetheless, the Portuguese participants represented greater mean values in each dimension whereas the Turkish participants revealed higher improvement between pre-test ($X = 3.56$, $SD = .44$) and post-test values ($X = 4.48$, $SD = .51$). The comparative analysis is presented in detail in the following sections through paired samples t-test and independent samples t-test statistics.

Descriptive statistics were estimated for each statement in the post-IS-15 scale of the Turkish subjects, and the results were represented in Table 19 below.

Table 19

Post-Test Descriptive Statistics of IS-15 Scale for Turkish Young Learners

Dimensions	Items	N	Min	Max	M	SD
Interaction Engagement	1. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.	15	4.00	5.00	4.6000	.50709
	2. I often give positive responses to my culturally different counterpart during our interacting.	15	4.00	5.00	4.4000	.50709
	3. I avoid those situations where I will have to deal with culturally-distinct persons.	15	4.00	5.00	4.5333	.51640
Respect for Cultural Differences	4. I don't like to be with people from different cultures.	15	4.00	5.00	4.3333	.48795
	5. I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.	15	4.00	5.00	4.3333	.48795
	6. I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.	15	2.00	5.00	4.3333	.48795
Interaction Confidence	7. I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.	15	4.00	5.00	4.7333	.45774
	8. I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures.	15	4.00	5.00	4.5333	.51640
	9. I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.	15	4.00	5.00	4.6000	.50709
Interaction Enjoyment	10. I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures.	15	4.00	5.00	4.4667	.51640
	11. I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures.	15	4.00	5.00	4.6667	.48795
	12. I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures.	15	4.00	5.00	4.6000	.50709
Interaction Attentiveness	13. I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.	15	3.00	5.00	4.4667	.63994
	14. I am sensitive to my culturally-distinct counterpart's subtle meanings during our interaction.	15	4.00	5.00	4.4667	.63994
	15. I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures.	15	4.00	5.00	4.2000	.41404

In line with Table 19, the total mean value given in the subscale of 'interaction engagement' ($X = 4.51$, $SD = .51$) displayed that the Turkish respondents promoted their attitudes towards cultural otherness in the post-questionnaire to great extent. They found

the asynchronous narrative exchanges entertaining; therefore, their commitment to project activities showed a meaningful enhancement between the pre-test ($X = 3.51$, $SD = .90$) and the post-test ($X = 4.51$, $SD = .51$). In this subscale, item 1 “*I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures*” received the highest mean value ($X = 4.60$, $SD = .51$) whereas item 2 “*I often give positive responses to my culturally different counterpart during our interacting*” obtained the lowest mean value ($X = 4.40$, $SD = .51$). However, all items in this subscale yielded a mean value greater than 4.00, signifying that the participants enhanced their willingness towards and engagement in intercultural communication over the intervention period. The statistical increase in this dimension was correlated with the participants’ growing curiosity about the similarities and differences between the target cultures in each task. In fact, as they learnt more about the products and practices in the Portuguese culture, they desired to acquire more information about other traditions and customs in this country. The overall mean score displayed in the subscale of ‘respect for cultural differences’ exhibited similarly high outcomes ($X = 4.33$, $SD = .49$) with the illustration of a mean value greater than the value of 4.00 in the post-test. In this subscale, item 4 “*I don’t like to be with people from different cultures.*”, item 5 “*I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.*”, and item 6 “*I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.*” were reverse-coded and estimated with the same high mean indices ($X = 4.33$, $SD = 0.49$). The statistics above conveyed that there was observed substantial escalation between the pre-questionnaire ($X = 3.18$, $SD = .89$) and post-questionnaire scores. This case could be explained by the fact that as the Turkish subjects were exposed to authentic experience, they demolished their negative stereotyping regarding the target culture and began to see their foreign partners more like themselves. Therefore, they ameliorated their initial biased attitude and developed respect towards the foreign. In a similar vein, the overall mean score presented in the subscale of ‘interaction confidence’ ($X = 4.62$, $SD = .49$) reflected that the Turkish informants gained more self-confidence to launch and maintain intercultural dialogues. Within the extremes of this subscale, item 7 “*I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.*” ($X = 4.73$, $SD = .46$), item 8 “*I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures.*” ($X = 4.53$, $SD = .52$), and item 9 “*I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.*” ($X = 4.60$, $SD = .51$) all yielded significantly high mean scores greater than the value of 4.50. This subscale was identified as the dimension with the greatest numerical improvement between the pre- ($X = 3.42$, $SD =$

.93) and post-interventions ($X = 4.62$, $SD = .49$). The young learners achieved reducing their early communication apprehension as they succeeded in completing each asynchronous task and exchanging digital narratives on a timely basis. The achievement strengthened their reliance on their communication skills and obliterated their belief of linguistic inferiority to their Portuguese counterparts, all contributing to their interaction confidence considerably. Furthermore, the total mean score displayed in the subscale of 'interaction enjoyment ($X = 4.58$, $SD = .50$) presented a high mean index in the post-test. This subscale had brought in a similarly high outcome ($X = 4.24$, $SD = .76$) in the pre-test as well. In the pre-test, the students' high scoring of the subscale statements was related to their lack of negative perceptions towards intercultural dialogue due to their experiential paucity. In other words, the Turkish participants did not possess resistance to intercultural exchanges since they had not been involved in a transnational project before and were curious about the process itself. In addition, they rejected the idea of discouragement and failure during the virtual exchanges since they relied on the teachers' correction and parental assistance. However, their high scoring of the items was linked to their achievement in asynchronous interaction and improvement of their self-confidence in the post-test. Specifically, the Turkish respondents began to count on their linguistic ability more and to feel more courageous and delighted to pursue international communication over time. In this subscale, item 11 "*I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures.*" ($X = 4.67$, $SD = .49$) received the greatest mean value whereas item 10 "*I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures.*" produced the lowest mean value ($X = 4.47$, $SD = .52$). Nonetheless, all mean values generated prominent indices in this dimension, which symbolized that the Turkish participants possessed feelings of contentment and enthusiasm to engage in intercultural interaction. Finally, the total mean index exhibited in the subscale of 'interaction attentiveness ($X = 4.58$, $SD = .56$) demonstrated that the participants showed strong agreement to ask for and gather information from their culturally-distinct partners during an intercultural interaction. In this subscale, item 13 "*I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.*" and item 14 "*I am sensitive to my culturally-distinct counterpart's subtle meanings during our interaction.*" obtained the same high mean value ($X = 4.47$, $SD = .64$) while item 15 "*I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures.*" adopted the lowest mean value ($X = 4.20$, $SD = .41$). Nevertheless, all statements indicated meaningful statistical improvements between the

pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire scores. This finding suggested that the participants enhanced their willingness to ask for and elicit further intercultural information and acted more sensitive towards their partners' meanings over time. Derived from the results above, it should be proposed that the Turkish learners fostered their affective stance towards intercultural learning to a great extent in the post-test.

Descriptive statistics were computed for each item in the post-IS-15 scale of the Portuguese subjects as well, and the findings were illustrated in Table 20 below.

Table 20

Post-Test Descriptive Statistics of IS-15 Scale for Portuguese Young Learners

Dimensions	Items	N	Min	Max	M	SD
Interaction Engagement	1. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.	15	4.00	5.00	4.6000	.50709
	2. I often give positive responses to my culturally different counterpart during our interacting.	15	4.00	5.00	4.6000	.50709
	3. I avoid those situations where I will have to deal with culturally-distinct persons.	15	3.00	5.00	4.5333	.63994
Respect for Cultural Differences	4. I don't like to be with people from different cultures.	15	4.00	5.00	4.5333	.51640
	5. I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.	15	4.00	5.00	4.5333	.51640
	6. I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.	15	4.00	5.00	4.7333	.45774
Interaction Confidence	7. I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.	15	4.00	5.00	4.5333	.51640
	8. I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures.	15	4.00	5.00	4.6667	.48795
	9. I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.	15	3.00	5.00	4.6667	.61721
Interaction Enjoyment	10. I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures.	15	4.00	5.00	4.6000	.50709
	11. I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures.	15	3.00	5.00	4.8000	.56061
	12. I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures.	15	4.00	5.00	4.8000	.41404
Interaction Attentiveness	13. I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.	15	4.00	5.00	4.6000	.50709
	14. I am sensitive to my culturally-distinct counterpart's subtle meanings during our interaction.	15	4.00	5.00	4.8000	.41404
	15. I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures.	15	4.00	5.00	4.5333	.51640

In accordance with Table 20, the overall mean score of the subscale of 'interaction engagement' ($X = 4.58$, $SD = .55$) portrayed that the Portuguese students enhanced their

attitudes towards transnational interplays markedly. They began to take pleasure from virtual DST exchanges; thus, their engagement in asynchronous weekly assignments showed a significant statistical increase in the pre-test ($X = 3.58$, $SD = .88$) and the post-test ($X = 4.58$, $SD = .55$). Within the parameters of this subscale, item 1 “*I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures*” and item 2 “*I often give positive responses to my culturally different counterpart during our interacting*” obtained the same high mean index ($X = 4.60$, $SD = .51$) while item 3 “*I avoid those situations where I will have to deal with culturally-distinct persons.*” adopted a similarly significant mean value ($X = 4.53$, $SD = .64$) in the post-test. However, all items in this subscale produced a mean value greater than 4.50, standing for the participants’ enhanced enthusiasm and commitment to project activities over the intervention period. The statistical increase in this dimension from the mean value of 3.58 in the pre-test to 4.58 in the post-test could be explicated with the participants’ growing interest to learn about the resemblances and divergences between the target cultures. In fact, as their knowledge about the cultural products and practices in Turkish culture increased, their desire to acquire more information about other traditions and customs in this country increased in a parallel fashion. The total mean score displayed in the subscale of ‘respect for cultural differences’ exhibited a correspondingly high value ($X = 4.60$, $SD = .50$) with the illustration of a mean score greater than the value of 4.00 in the post-test. In this subscale, item 6 “*I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.*” generated the greatest mean value ($X = 4.73$, $SD = .46$) while item 4 “*I don’t like to be with people from different cultures.*” and item 5 “*I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.*” were computed with the samely high mean and standard deviation indices ($X = 4.53$, $SD = .52$). The statistics above suggested that there was noted considerable growth between the pre-questionnaire ($X = 3.60$, $SD = .76$) and post-questionnaire scores ($X = 4.60$, $SD = .50$). This case could be clarified with the fact that as the Portuguese subjects learnt about the cultural similarities between their own culture and the Turkish culture, they challenged their defensive mindset concerning the superiority of their own culture to the other. Therefore, they developed a more respectful approach to Turkish culture over time. Moreover, the overall mean score illustrated in the subscale of ‘interaction confidence’ reflected a significant outcome ($X = 4.62$, $SD = .54$) by generating a mean value greater than the score of 4.50. In this subscale, item 7 “*I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.*” $X = 4.53$, $SD = .52$), item 8 “*I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures.*” ($X = 4.67$, $SD = .49$), and

item 9 *“I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.”* ($X= 4.67$, $SD= .62$) all generated considerably high mean indices with mean scores higher than 4.50. This subscale had also represented a high mean value ($X= 4.09$, $SD= .70$) in the pre-questionnaire since the Portuguese subjects were confident about their foreign language skills at the beginning. However, as the participants exchanged telecollaborative digital narratives on a regular basis, their reliance on their communicative skills was enhanced more. With the further enhancement in their confidence, they began using different communication strategies (e.g. thanking, asking for clarification, and using humour) in their statements and exploiting different platforms (e.g. discussion boards and the Forum section) to communicate with their Turkish counterparts. Hence, their interaction confidence demonstrated substantial growth in the post-test. Of all the subscales of IS-15, the subscale of ‘interaction enjoyment’ proposed the greatest overall mean value ($X= 4.73$, $SD= .49$) in the Portuguese version. In this subscale, item 11 *“I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures.”* ($X=4.80$, $SD= .56$) and item 12 *“I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures”* ($X=4.80$, $SD= .41$) manifested the highest mean indices whereas item 10 *“I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures.”* ($X=4.60$, $SD= .51$) demonstrated the lowest mean index. Nonetheless, all mean values generated prominent values in this dimension, which symbolized that the Portuguese participants possessed feelings of contentment and eagerness to involve in intercultural interaction. Lastly, the total mean value exhibited in the subscale of ‘interaction attentiveness’ ($X= 4.64$, $SD= .48$) revealed that the Portuguese respondents manifested more excitement to elicit cultural information from their Turkish counterparts in the post-questionnaire. Within the extremes of this subscale, item 14 *“I am sensitive to my culturally-distinct counterpart’s subtle meanings during our interaction.”* obtained the greatest mean value ($X=4.80$, $SD= .41$) while item 15 *“I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures.”* adopted the lowest mean value ($X= 4.53$, $SD= .52$). Nevertheless, all items signified meaningful statistical improvements between the pre-questionnaire ($X= 3.53$, $SD= 3.93$) and post-questionnaire scores ($X= 4.64$, $SD= .48$). This circumstance implied that the Portuguese informants gained more enthusiasm to acquire information from their culturally-distinct peers as they learnt more about the cultural products and practices of Turkish culture and recognized the cultural conformities between their cultural systems. Drawn from the statistics above, it should be noted that the Portuguese subjects

improved their commitment to intercultural interaction, respect towards otherness, confidence to engage in transnational dialogue, enthusiasm for polilithic socialization, and participatory alertness to multicultural conversations through the telecollaborative DST treatment.

Separate statistical examinations were carried out to compare the means of pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire data of the Turkish and Portuguese subjects (Table 21) and determine their IS development between pre-and post-interventions (Table 22). With this purpose, the normal distribution of the data sets was estimated via Skewness and Kurtosis analysis since it functions effectively both for small and larger samples compared to other normality assessment methods (Kim, 2016). As Huck (2012) states, the indices ranging between +1 and -1 symbolize the normal distribution of the variables in this analysis. Based on the aforementioned clarification, the Skewness and Kurtosis results illustrated the normal distribution of the thesis data in pre-and post questionnaires in both Turkish (*Skewness (Pre)*= .059, *Std. Error of Skewness (Pre)*= .580; and *Kurtosis (Pre)*= -.902, *Std. Error of Kurtosis (Pre)*= 1.121; *Skewness (Post)*= -.201, *Std. Error of Skewness (Post)*= .580; and *Kurtosis (Post)*= -1.087, *Std. Error of Kurtosis (Post)*=1.121) and Portuguese factions (*Skewness (Pre)*= -.046, *Std. Error of Skewness (Pre)*= .580; and *Kurtosis (Pre)*= -.505, *Std. Error of Kurtosis (Pre)*= 1.121; *Skewness (Post)*= -.901, *Std. Error of Skewness (Post)*= .580; and *Kurtosis (Post)*= -.450, *Std. Error of Kurtosis (Post)*=1.121). Since the quantitative data were identified to be normally distributed, the Independent Samples T-Test was administered to study the correlation between the Turkish and Portuguese learners' pre-test and post-test scores whereas Paired Samples T-Test was utilized to monitor the IS advancements within the Turkish and Portuguese subject groups between pre-and post-assessments.

Table 21

Independent Samples T-Test Results for the Comparison of Turkish and Portuguese Young Learners' Pre- and Post Test

Country	M	SD	T	Sig	df	M Difference	SE Difference	95% CI for Mean Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Turkey (Pre)	3.5640	.44460	-1.657	.847	28	-.24933	.15049	- .55760	.05893
Portugal (Pre)	3.8133	.37688							
Turkey (Post)	4.4840	.14618	-3.246	.275	28	-.15067	.04641	- .24504	-.05560
Portugal(Post)	4.6347	.10460							

As given in Table 21, the results acquired from the Independent Samples T-Test revealed that the significance level was higher than 0.05 ($t_{28} = -1.657$, $p < .05$) between the Turkish and Portuguese young learners with respect to their pre-questionnaire values. This finding demonstrated that there was no statistical difference between the pre-questionnaire scores of the Turkish and Portuguese participants. The similarity in their initial IS levels was an anticipated outcome since the Turkish and Portuguese students possessed neither overseas experience nor telecollaborative encounters before and began the virtual exchanges with a correspondingly low level of intercultural knowledge. After the telecollaborative DST intervention which lasted for 7 weeks, t-test scores were computed with regards to post-questionnaire values. The post-questionnaire results manifested no statistical difference between the post-test scores of Turkish and Portuguese learners with a significance level greater than 0.05 ($t_{28} = -3.246$, $p < .05$) as in pre-test scores. Even though the Portuguese bloc exhibited slightly higher mean indices in both pre-test and post-test in comparison to the Turkish bloc, their pre-test and post-test values yielded considerably equivalent outcomes.

Table 22

Paired Samples T-Test Results for the Comparison of Turkish and Portuguese Young Learners' Pre- and Post Test

Country	Test	N	M	SD	95% CI for Mean Difference		t	df	P (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Turkey	Pre-Test	15	3.5640	.44460					
	Post-Test	15	4.4840	.14618	-1.12974	-.71026	-9.408	14	< 0.01
Portugal	Pre-Test	15	3.8133	.37688					
	Post-Test	15	4.6347	.10460	-1.01801	-.62466	-8.957	14	< .001

On the other hand, as specified in Table 22, the statistics obtained from the Paired Samples T-Test highlighted that the significance level was below the score of 0.05 in both Turkish ($t_{14} = -9.408$, $p < .05$) and Portuguese blocs ($t_{14} = -8.957$, $p < .05$). This finding pointed out that there observed a statistically meaningful enhancement between the pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire scores of both subject groups. Although the Turkish learners displayed slightly higher improvement between pre-and post- questionnaire compared to the Portuguese learners, both groups achieved to increase their initial cross-cultural sensitivity to correspondingly substantial extents. The significant development between pre-and post- implementation signified that the telecollaborative DST intervention operated successfully to contribute to the overall IS of Turkish and Portuguese young learners and enhance their intercultural engagement, enjoyment, confidence, attentiveness, and respectful demeanour.

4.2.1.2.2 Qualitative Findings (Post-Interview, Learner Diary, Research Journal)

IS and ICC are two terms that have strong connections with each other. In this regard, the RQ2.2 and RQ2.3 aim to interpret the qualitative and quantitative findings so as to monitor the enhancement in the research subjects' IS levels and contribute to the findings of RQ1. For this purpose, the present section focuses on the qualitative sources to extract data and transcribe them into 6 categories of defense, denial, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, and integration in accordance with Bennett's (1986) DMIS. Figure 20 and Figure 21

present the DMIS instances of Turkish and Portuguese participants through a 7-week telecollaborative DST period.

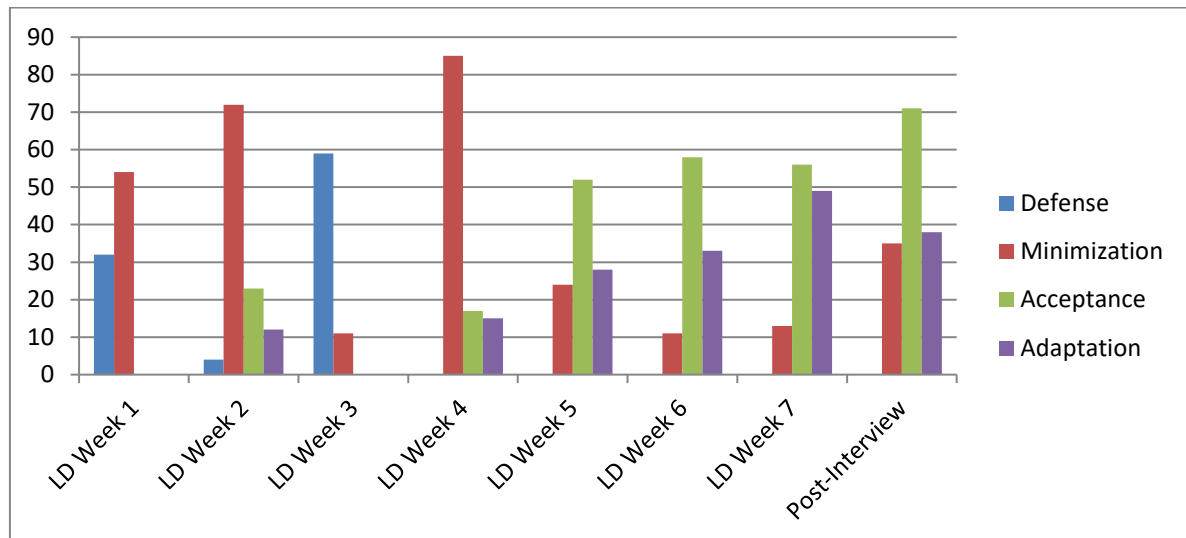


Figure 20. Instances of Turkish Participants' IS Perspectives through Intervention

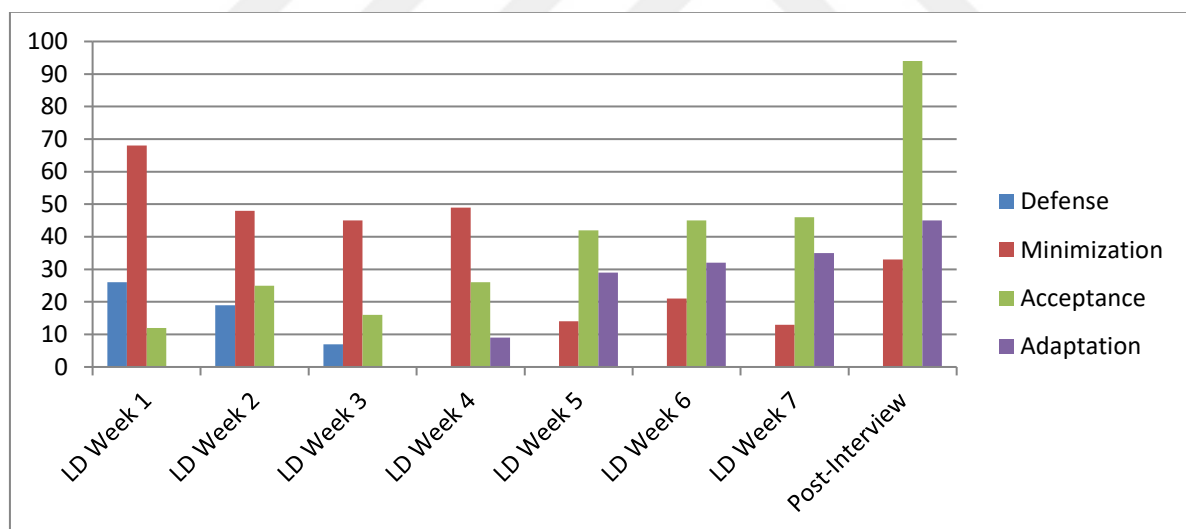


Figure 21. Instances of Portuguese participants' IS perspectives through intervention

As illustrated in Figure 20 and Figure 21, the coding process of learner diaries (LD) and post-interview transcripts reflected a total of 852 (f^{Total} 100%) instances in Turkish participants' statements whereas a total of 799 (f^{Total} 100%) instances in the Portuguese participants' statements. The coding and categorization process revealed that the respondents exhibited multiple stages of IS each week. However, they reduced their

ethnocentric defensive mindset and demonstrated a higher ethnorelativist orientation over time. The instantial data were discussed in detail in the sub-sections below.

4.2.1.2.2 1 Minimization Stage

The learner diaries and the post-interview transcripts produced 305 ($f^{\text{Total}} = 35.80\%$) instances of minimization mindset in the Turkish bloc and 291 ($f^{\text{Total}} = 36.42\%$) instances of minimization mindset in the Portuguese bloc. The Minimization mindset was identified to be the dominant IS orientation of Turkish subjects in Week 1, 2, and 3 and Portuguese participants in the first four weeks of the present study.

The personal information exchange task (Week 1) and the comparison and analysis tasks (Week 2, 3, and 4) allowed the Turkish and Portuguese participants to enhance their intercultural knowledge about their partners' daily routines, hobbies, school lives, weekend activities, and favourite digital and conventional games as well as the cuisine, dressing styles, holiday customs, and traditional dances of their partner countries. In the personal information exchange task, the Turkish and Portuguese students introduced themselves individually by depicting their daily activities, mentioning their favourite games and cartoons, and describing their favourite free-time activities. They also presented the disciplines at their schools to their partners and expressed their most and least favourite classes. In comparison and analysis tasks; on the other hand, students created their digital stories about the important products (music, clothes, and dishes) and dominant practices (holiday customs and celebrations) in their own countries. In these weeks, the Turkish and Portuguese students met with their local group members on an online platform called ZOOM at the weekends and interpreted the similarities and differences between their own culture and the target culture. The data accumulated from the participants' learner diaries indicated that both Turkish and Portuguese participants determined good number of commonalities between the respective cultural systems, which resulted in minimizing their initial defensive attitude towards otherness and enabling them to move onto the transitional stage of minimization. The minimization perspectives of the learners were demonstrated in the excerpts below.



Figure 22. An extract from the Portuguese students' digital narratives concerning their playing culture

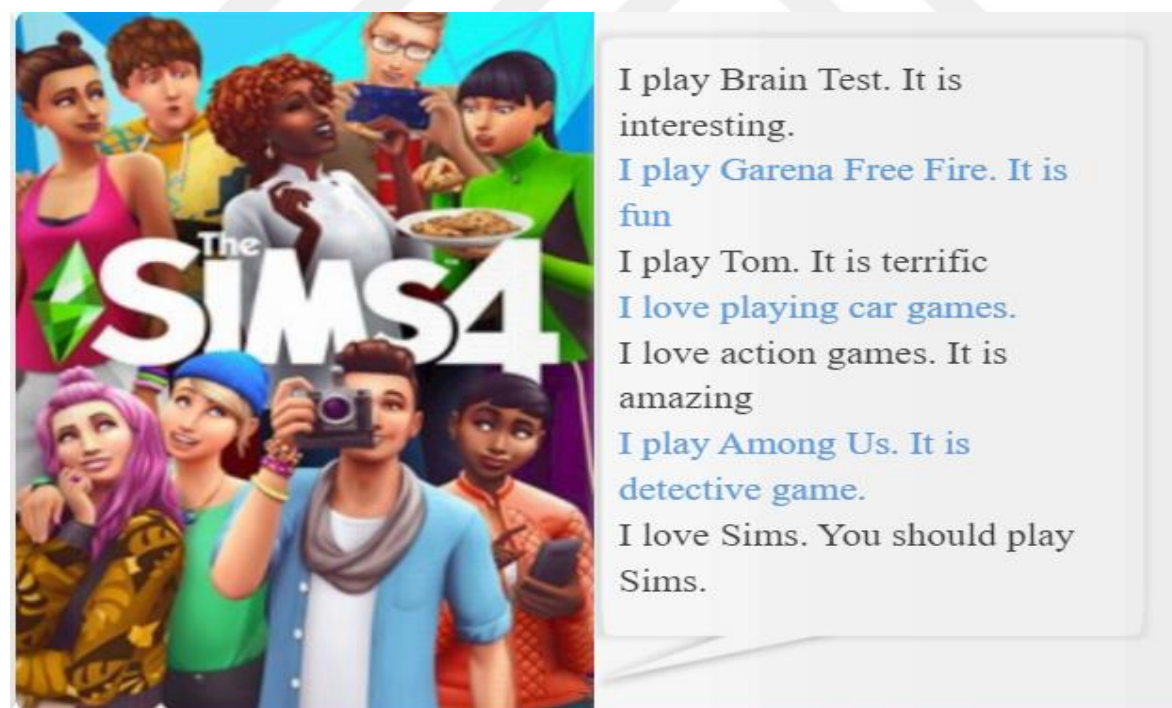


Figure 23. An extract from the Turkish students' digital narratives concerning their playing culture

Excerpt 102

It is interesting to see how similar our cultures are. Because of Covid, our schools start at the same time. So, we wake up at similar hours, do the same activities, have similar subjects, and do similar weekday and weekend activities. Our games are also similar. I know all the games they mentioned in their videos. I also know some of the cartoons they watch. I watch them too. (Portuguese Student 7, Learner Diary)

Excerpt 103

Even food is the same in both countries. We drink tomato soup they drink tomato soup. We have Espetada, they have kebab. We love pastries and they have lots of pastries. Food is the same, activities are the same. I had guessed that some things would be similar between both countries. But almost everything was similar (Portuguese Student 3, Learner Diary)

Excerpt 104

Our school has taken its name from a famous doctor. The Turkish school has taken its name from a famous wrestler. I think both Turkish and Portuguese people attach importance to art, music, sports, and science. (Portuguese Student 1, Learner Diary)

Excerpt 105

I thought they may be wearing different clothes. For example, wearing hijabs. But, they said that some wear hijab and some do not. And their clothes were the same as ours. We are really similar (Portuguese Student 14, Learner Diary)

Excerpt 106

We play the same computer games. But, the most surprising thing is that even the games we play on the streets are the same. So, when they come here, we can play games together. It is great (Turkish Student 5, Learner Diary)

Excerpt 107

The traditional clothes are similar. They are almost the same. Even the colours of the traditional clothes are the same in both countries. And wedding dresses also resemble one another. The dances seem similar too (Turkish Student 6, Learner Diary)

Excerpt 108

They only eat more seafood than us. Other than that, we eat the same foods. They have Arroz Doce and it is like Sütlaç in Turkey. Rabanadas is like fried bread we eat in the mornings. Bolo de Mel is a cake with cocoa. Mix kebab is Espetada there. So, the names are different, but the food is the same food (Turkish Student 9, Learner Diary)

Excerpt 109

They learn what we learn actually. They learn German at school, but we will learn German when we go to high school. Other than that, we learn the same subjects. They even learn English like us. I had thought of English as their native language. But no, they learn English like us (Turkish Student 2, Learner Diary).

As illustrated in the excerpts above, the research subjects identified correspondences in daily routines, gaming culture, free-time activities, eating habits, modern and traditional clothes and dances, and school subjects. Even though they identified some differences between the respective cultural systems such as learning German as another foreign language or preferring wearing hijab, these differences were downplayed in their statements since they concentrated more on similarities than differences. Overall, the Turkish participants showed significant enhancement in their Minimization mindset in the first month by demonstrating an almost linear growth between weeks ($n^{\text{Week1}} = 54$, $f^{\text{Week 1}} = 62.79\%$; $n^{\text{Week2}} = 72$, $f^{\text{Week 2}} = 64.86\%$; $n^{\text{Week4}} = 85$, $f^{\text{Week 4}} = 72.65\%$). The retrieval to defense

stage in the second week is explained in a separate paragraph below. The Portuguese participants; on the other hand, lowered their Minimization mindset each week in the first month ($n^{\text{Week1}} = 68$, $f^{\text{Week 1}} = 58.62\%$; $n^{\text{Week 2}} = 48$, $f^{\text{Week 2}} = 52.17\%$; $n^{\text{Week3}} = 45$, $f^{\text{Week 3}} = 66.18\%$; $n^{\text{Week4}} = 49$, $f^{\text{Week 4}} = 58.33\%$). However, the Minimization orientation remained as the highest coded IS mindset both in the Turkish and Portuguese blocs in the first month. Moreover, as the Minimization perspective exhibited significance in each week over the first month, the Turkish and Portuguese learners reduced their defensive attitude towards interculturality. Since they perceived the present cultural systems as fundamentally similar, they eliminated the belief regarding the superiority or inferiority of their own culture to the other. In a nutshell, the identification of similarities in cultural products and practices assisted the young learners to weaken their initial negative monocentric demeanour and develop a more positive attitude towards otherness.

The comparison and analysis tasks enabled the Turkish participants to go through the phase of Over-Minimization through the exchanges. As they exchanged telecollaborative digital narratives with their Portuguese counterparts and engaged in critical discussions in the Overt Instruction phase to identify cultural similarities and differences between the respective countries, they began to minimize even the cultural differences. Specifically, they began to develop cultural blindness towards the differences and otherness by inferring similarities out of differences. This circumstance is exemplified as below.

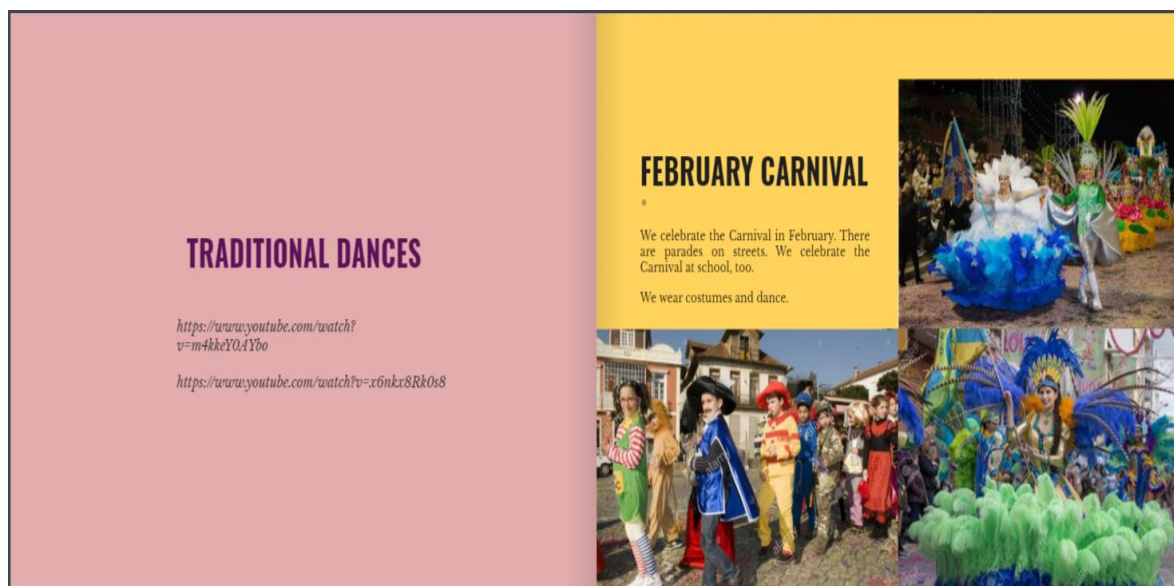


Figure 24. Turkish students' association of Portuguese Carnival with the theatre plays at their school

Excerpt 110

It was interesting how students focused on similarities more than differences. They even found similarities out of differences. When they found out that they play the same games, have similar routines and learn the same subjects, they began to perceive their partners as someone like them. Then, even in celebrations quite different from their own celebrations, they began to detect some similarities. (Turkish Teacher, Research Journal)

Excerpt 111

They wear costumes on Halloween, knock on the doors, say trick or treat, and collect sweets. It resembles our bairams. We also wear beautiful clothes, knock on the doors, and collect sweets. They are the same thing. (Turkish Student 1, Learner Diary)

Excerpt 112

Their carnival resembles our theatre plays. They wear costumes, and we wear costumes as well. They just wear different costumes. We sometimes wear Ottoman costumes for our plays at school. They are the same thing. (Turkish Student 4, Learner Diary)

Excerpt 113

In Turkey, we spend a lot of time with our family a lot. We also visit our relatives regularly. From their videos, I can see that they cook with their family at home, help their parents, run errands, and spend time with their siblings. We saw their photographs with their siblings. Turkish and Portuguese families both have intimate bonds and resemble one another. (Turkish Student 7, Learner Diary)

Excerpt 114

Festa dos Tabuleiros is the same as the festival of sacrifice in Turkey. They sacrifice oxes and give people meat sandwiches. We sacrifice cows and distribute meats to people in need. That is the same thing. (Turkish Student 8, Learner Diary)

Excerpt 115

Bridesmaids are similar to the sisters of the bride. Bridesmaids help brides. Sisters help brides. And the grooms' dresses are the same. There is nothing different. (Turkish Student 15, Learner Diary)

As indicated in the excerpts, the Turkish respondents began to correlate even irrelevant and separate constructs with one another. For instance, the Carnival in Portugal which is an annual religious festival held before Easter to herald the end of the harsh winter period was associated with school plays in Turkey in Excerpt 112. Similarly, Festa dos Tabuleiros which is a festival necessitating the decoration of the whole city with paper flowers and organization of parades every four years was likened to the Feast of Sacrifice in Turkey in Excerpt 114. As seen from the incorrect correlations above, the learners developed a blindness to cultural differences, and it hindered them from moving towards ethnorelativist mindsets. Since ethnorelativism requires recognition of cultural differences as well as similarities to respect them (i.e. Acceptance stage of ethnorelativism), include them into their cultural repertoire (i.e. Adaptation stage of ethnorelativism), and juxtapose them with other worldviews to develop a unique subjective affiliation (i.e. Integration stage of ethnorelativism), the developed cultural blindness impeded their IS development.

The Over-Minimization phase was challenged by the presentation of the third comparison and analysis task. In this task, the Turkish and Portuguese participants were requested to introduce their everyday clothes, school uniforms, and traditional garments. In the Overt Instruction phase of this task, the Turkish learners approached the Portuguese school's civil dress code policy with disturbance and denunciation. They defined 'wearing uniform' as an imperative symbol of discipline and order and argued that wearing casual attire would cause a chaotic scene since the teachers would be unable to differentiate the students from non-students. Then, they intensified their condemnation further by defining this policy as 'madness' and 'insanity'. Once they regarded the non-uniform code negatively, they commenced approaching each clothing preference of their Portuguese peers negatively as well. For instance, the young learners evaluated the winter outfits featuring skirts and summer outfits featuring sports shoes adversely after the uniform crisis. They could not comprehend how their Portuguese counterparts were able to wear skirts in the harsh weather conditions. They described this preference as 'ridiculous' and 'nonsense' since wearing skirts could cause them to become ill and obstruct them to go to school. Similarly, they ridiculed wearing sports shoes and socks in summertime although this outfit selection was quite widespread and appropriate in their own country. Moreover, they addressed the tradition of wearing a black wedding gown paired with a veil named 'mantilla' in the Minho region with mockery. Even though they were informed about the fact that this practice was specific to only the Minho region, held a special meaning behind it, and was not prevalent to all Portuguese families by the Portuguese teacher, the Turkish participants still made generalized comments and directed harsh criticism towards the Portuguese culture. These cases are exhibited in the excerpts below.

Excerpt 116

Wearing a black wedding gown? They must be out of their minds. A wedding dress must be white. It is ridiculous. It is a bunch of malarkey. (Turkish Student 3, Overt Instruction Phase – Research Journal)

Excerpt 117

You cannot wear a dress or skirt in winter. You catch the flu and cannot go to school. I see that the Portuguese do not know what to wear at all. (Turkish Student 4, Overt Instruction Phase – Research Journal)

Excerpt 118

They do not wear school uniforms at school? It is not orderly. How can their teachers know their students? It is meaningless. Somebody can come to school and walk in the corridors, and teachers may not be able to understand who he is. When it comes to dresses, they know nothing. (Turkish Student 12, Overt Instruction Phase – Research Journal)

As portrayed in the excerpts, the dress code was a critical subject for the Turkish participants. The difference in the dress code was of significant importance for them; therefore, they remained unable to downplay the divergences in this subject area as they did in the first two weeks. Concordantly, their learner diaries contained 59 instances of Defensive orientation ($f^{\text{Week3}} = 84.29\%$) while 11 instances of Minimization orientation ($f^{\text{Week3}} = 15.71\%$), signifying that their negative evaluations led them to break down their over-minimized mindset and retrieve back to the Defense stage of ethnocentrism. However, the retrieval phase functioned as a potent occurrence for them to develop more ethnorelativist perspectives over time, which is explained in the Acceptance section below.

Compared to their Turkish counterparts, the Portuguese students demonstrated fewer complexities in the Minimization phase. They identified the cultural resemblances and divergences between the respective cultural systems skilfully, yet they emphasized the similarities more than differences. However, the overemphasis of the similarities for 4 subsequent weeks conduced them to lose their initial enthusiasm and engagement to the project activities. The downturn in the original interaction eagerness and commitment is displayed as below.

Excerpt 119

Almost everything is similar. I participated in this project to see the differences and compare the Turkish culture with my culture. But, almost everything is similar. If they prepare another book with their customs, I know it will be similar again. So, why do we keep on exchanging stories? We can do something different like videoconferencing (Portuguese Student 1, Overt Instruction – Research Journal)

Excerpt 120

Food, similar. Daily actions, similar. Games, the same. Turkish children eat like us, behave like us, play like us. Traditions, yes they are a little different, but they still resemble to some extent. If we exchange another storybook, what we exchange will be similar again. So, what is the meaning? I really like my partners, but we must do something different. This is really boring (Portuguese Student 5, Overt Instruction – Research Journal)

In line with the instance-based statistics in Figure 21, the Minimization stage prevailed as the highest instanced subcategory for 4 weeks in the Portuguese bloc ($n^{\text{Week1}} = 68$, $f^{\text{Week 1}} = 58.62\%$; $n^{\text{Week 2}} = 48$, $f^{\text{Week 2}} = 52.17\%$; $n^{\text{Week3}} = 45$, $f^{\text{Week 3}} = 66.18\%$; $n^{\text{Week4}} = 49$, $f^{\text{Week 4}} = 58.33\%$). This suggested that the Portuguese respondents processed the cultural similarities and differences in successful fashion, but exerted more emphasis on the similarities in this period. However, one significant finding in Figure 21 was that the number of overall instances diminished over the 4 week period owing to the participants' increasing reluctance between the weekly assignments. As exemplified in the excerpts, the Portuguese participants desired to acquire information about different and interesting facts about

Turkey and Turkish people, yet encountering similarities consistently caused them to lose their initial curiosity and interest. Hence, their learner diary entries were shortened over time.

The data from the learner diaries and research journals in the first 4 weeks documented that even though the Turkish and Portuguese participants achieved to internalize the cultural similarities and demonstrate the Minimization perspective of ethnocentrism in the first month, they failed to foster an integrative perspective. In other words, they perceived the Portuguese and Turkish cultural systems as rather resembling each other; nonetheless, they did not utilize ‘we’ or ‘us’ personas even when articulating the commonalities between them. Conversely, they exploited ‘us’ versus ‘them’ binary opposites. They used ‘I’ or ‘we’ personas to refer to the practices and outputs in their own country whereas they utilized ‘they’ persona to address their foreign partners. This circumstance was correlated with the nature of the comparison and analysis tasks. Inasmuch as this task motivated the learners to engage in a comparative examination of digital narratives, they refrained from using more integrative pronouns such as ‘we’ and ‘us’.

4.2.1.2.2.2 Acceptance Stage

The learner diaries and post-interview transcripts produced 277 instances ($f^{\text{Total}} = 32.51\%$) of Acceptance mindset in the Turkish bloc and 306 instances ($f^{\text{Total}} = 38.30\%$) of acceptance mindset in the Portuguese bloc. These instances documented weekly improvement in both Turkish bloc ($n^{\text{Week4}} = 17$, $f^{\text{Week 4}} = 14.53\%$; $n^{\text{Week5}} = 52$, $f^{\text{Week5}} = 50\%$; $n^{\text{Week6}} = 58$, $f^{\text{Week6}} = 56.86\%$; $n^{\text{Week7}} = 56$, $f^{\text{Week 7}} = 47.46\%$; $n^{\text{Post-Int}} = 71$, $f^{\text{Post-Int}} = 62.28$) and Portuguese bloc ($n^{\text{Week4}} = 26$, $f^{\text{Week 4}} = 30.95\%$; $n^{\text{Week5}} = 42$, $f^{\text{Week5}} = 49.41\%$; $n^{\text{Week6}} = 45$, $f^{\text{Week6}} = 45.92\%$; $n^{\text{Week7}} = 46$, $f^{\text{Week 7}} = 48.94\%$; $n^{\text{Post-Int}} = 94$, $f^{\text{Post-Int}} = 54.65\%$) and were revealed as the highest scored perspective in the the last 3 weeks of the project in both blocs. It signified that the Acceptance perspective was generated as the dominant IS orientation of both groups at the end of the telecollaborative project.

As discussed in the previous section, the comparison and analysis tasks yielded to over-minimizing the differences in the Turkish perspective and loss of initial enthusiasm in the Portuguese perspective even though they functioned effectively to enable the participants to identify similarities and differences between the respective cultural systems. They also

caused the participants to be involved in critical comparisons of both cultures and construct ‘us’ versus ‘them’ opposition. In addition, the DST assignment of Week 3 led to the uniform crisis in the Turkish faction and resulted in retrieval to the Defense stage of ethnocentrism. However, the collaborative phase of the project (Week 5, 6, and 7) was regulated successfully to solve the aforementioned complications. First, the Portuguese participants were informed about their Turkish partners’ objections towards the casual attire policy at their schools. The Portuguese students approached this complication with a friendly attitude and asked for uniform designs from their Turkish peers. The Turkish students enjoyed the fact that their opinions and productions were valued by their foreign partners; therefore, they drew several uniforms for their partners with pleasure and shared them on the Twinspace of their project. The Portuguese participants provided positive responses for these designs by using several communication strategies including praising and thanking. This process led the Turkish students to mitigate their early negative attitudes as below.



Figure 25. Portuguese group designing uniforms for their school

Excerpt 121

The Portuguese students loved my uniform ideas. I think they can have their tailors sew them and wear them at school. Actually, I do not think that not wearing a uniform is such a bad thing. When our mothers wash our uniforms, and they do not dry up, we go to school by wearing tracksuits. But, if they wear the uniform I drew, I become really happy (Turkish Student 3, Overt Instruction – Research Journal)

Excerpt 122

They wrote 'I love it.', 'Thank you', and 'Beautiful' to my uniform. I also translated the Portuguese teacher's comment. I think she said that her students loved them a lot and could not wait to wear them. Or something like that. I am really happy. Can I draw more uniforms? I have lots of ideas. They can love them more (Turkish Student 4, Overt Instruction – Research Journal)

Excerpt 123 (A Dialogue Extracted from the Overt Instruction Phase)

Turkish Student 1: They can wear the uniforms that we drew. But, not wearing a uniform is also fine. It does not matter.

Turkish Student 8: But, how can teachers know who is who at school?

Turkish Student 1: Our teachers know us. They keep watch in the hall during break times. And if you say so, we do not wear uniforms in P.E. class and our teachers can still know us.

As demonstrated in the excerpts above, when their Portuguese students behaved amicably and asked for their assistance to design uniforms for their school, it helped the Turkish students to soften their initial negative judgment and reach the conclusion that school discipline can be maintained via various enforcements other than uniform obligations with the efforts of teachers and school managers. The students, who produced negative responses to the non-enaction of a fixed dressing code at the Portuguese school in the initial stage, generated a more conciliatory and tolerant attitude towards the practice in the following weeks, indicating their development of the Acceptance stage of ethnorelativism.

Second, the collaboration and product creation tasks (Week 5, 6, and 7) contributed to the amendment of the 'us' versus 'them' binary division and strengthened the use of 'we' and 'us' personas to refer to both cultural systems. In this task type, the Turkish and Portuguese participants were assigned into global groups and given an introductory entry to transform it into a digital narrative with their global group members. Since the project activities were designed in asynchronous mode, they were regulated in the format of Story Chains in which the Turkish participants resumed completing the narrative where the Portuguese students left off or vice versa. Specifically, the participants had equal effort and contributions to these digital outputs. The characters were selected and given names collaboratively as they added their own characters and provided one Turkish and one Portuguese name for them. Similarly, the background was embellished by the participants in a joint fashion. The plotline was elaborated in tandem as well by taking turns to complete the narrative and providing feedback to their peers' productions. Since they played a dominant role in each stage of the story creation project collectively, they did not differentiate the digital narratives as 'ours' or 'theirs'. On the contrary, they exploited the

‘us’ persona to refer to both themselves and their culturally-distinct counterparts. This case was exemplified in the excerpts below.

She does exercise with her father. She plays soccer, does aerobics, and runs.
Her father lifts weights and goes jogging.



Figure 26. An extract from the Turkish and Portuguese students’ collaborative digital narratives

Excerpt 124

Writing a story together was so entertaining. We selected the pictures and completed the story together. We also helped each other. When we made a mistake, our Turkish friends warned us. When they made a mistake, we corrected them. And, in the end, we wrote a beautiful book. Even our headmasters loved them. (Portuguese Student 2, Learner Diary)

Excerpt 125

We share similar interests, so we did not encounter any problems. We included activities like reading a book, doing homework, or playing computer games in our stories. Even our likes and dislikes were the same. So, we wrote our stories easily without any arguments or problems (Turkish Student 10, Post-Interview)

As illustrated in the excerpts, the Turkish and Portuguese participants fostered a more embrative attitude towards their partners and the target cultures. This embrative attitude was identified not only in their utterances but also in their digital stories. To exemplify, the Portuguese students used the phrase “our Portuguese sutlac” to refer to Arroz Doce in the digital storybooks, which signalled their acceptance of the Turkish products and practices and their willingness to form associations between these cultural systems. It must be noted that establishing cooperation and developing an embrative attitude remedied the Portuguese students’ loss of excitement and engagement in the previous weeks. The

Portuguese participants approached the idea of creating international storybooks positively and regained their initial high eagerness to perform these tasks.

The collaboration enabled the young learners to develop shared ownership in the digital narratives and to form a global group identity. With the shared ownership, the participants promoted a sense of responsibility towards one another and showed enthusiasm to enhance the quality of their digital outputs by providing feedback and presenting creative and fun recommendations for one another's productions. Expressively, the participants left short notes or triple dots on the pages of their digital storybooks and conveyed their corrections and opinions accordingly. For instance, they underlined their friends' linguistic errors and noted down their corrected versions underneath. Similarly, they thanked their foreign partners for their feedback on the same digital story page. In addition, they suggested adding alternatives from both Turkish and Portuguese cultures to their storybooks and left triple dots on pages so that their foreign partners could incorporate their options. For example, they offered various names for the imaginary country that their story character would live in and selected among them together. Likewise, they recommended various desserts from both cultures and chose among them for their characters' teatime. Receiving reciprocal feedback enhanced their engagement to the project activities and allowed them to pay more attention to the cohesion and coherence of their own productions before sending them to their partners and to correct their partners' mistakes in a constructive and kind manner. The feedback exchanged in a constructive and positive fashion developed mutual acceptance and respect between both research groups since they began to rely on one another's knowledge. Correspondingly, communicating through digital storybook pages for suggestions enabled the participants to look forward to their partners' notes. This continuous constructive interaction in global groups fostered the notion of online intercultural friendship in learners. The participants began to attribute to their project partners as friends as in the excerpts below.

Excerpt 126

We made a mistake while telling the time. I confuse quarter past and half past a lot, teacher. But, our Portuguese friend warned us and corrected us. I liked it. You know, Portuguese students are really careful. I really like having a careful friend. (Turkish student 14, Post – Interview)

Excerpt 127

In our story, our character Mary was going to have dinner. Our Turkish friends wrote a short note on the corner of the storybook's page and recommended adding different foods from Turkish and Portuguese cuisine. And I loved it. Our character can choose what she wants to eat now. Then, I wrote a note on the corner of another page of this storybook and recommended

adding their favourite computer games and our favourite computer games together. Our character can play whatever she likes now. (Portuguese Student 5, Post-Interview)

Excerpt 128

We had to complete our part in two days so that our Turkish friends can complete the rest of the story in two days. We had to be quick and correct because our partners were waiting for us (Portuguese Student 9, Learner Diary)



She has dinner with her family. She drinks milk and eats Pastel de Nata. Her mother and father drink coffee and eat Turkish delight.

Figure 27. An extract from the Story Chain activity to demonstrate the students' provision of food alternatives from both the Turkish and Portuguese cultures

The aforementioned excerpts highlighted that collaborating with the same goal and producing a collective output rendered both Turkish and Portuguese participants shift their initial ethnocentric mindset and cultivate IS in the form of online intercultural friendship. Although the participants did not meet in person and communicate continuously, sharing a common goal and putting equally significant effort to achieve it enabled them to accept their partners as their online friends and accept and respect their feedback and recommendations.

The notion of 'online friendship' demolished their initial defensive ethnocentric thinking thoroughly. In the pre-interview form, the participants had either rejected the idea of living in the partner country due to their belief that their culture was superior to the other or welcomed the idea of moving in the future owing to their idealizations of it. However, they eliminated their defensive orientation as they established more sincere and friendly interactions with their partners. These are demonstrated as below.

Excerpt 129

I still do not want to move to Turkey completely. But I can stay there for months. Now I have a friend there. I am not afraid of getting lost or feeling alone. If I cannot speak their language, I can show what I need to say with my hands and body, or we can simply play games and have fun together. (Portuguese Student 1, Post-Interview)

Excerpt 130

Moving to Turkey? Maybe in the future. I am a child now. When I grow up, I can go to a university there. Until I grow up, we can continue talking on Twitter and Instagram. We can be closer (Portuguese Student 10, Post-Interview)

Excerpt 131

We have similarities and differences. Some celebrations are similar, some are not. Some food is similar, and some are not. But they live far away from us, so it is quite normal to be different. I can go and stay there for weeks with my friends. (Turkish Student 6, Post-Interview)

Excerpt 132

I still do not want to move there, I miss my family. But, if my family comes with me, I can live there. I have friends there, now. They can help me at school, and we can play together. (Turkish Student 13, Post-Interview)

In line with the excerpts above, all of the Turkish and Portuguese students voiced their willingness to visit Turkey and Portugal, but only 5 of the Turkish students and 3 of the Portuguese students articulated their eagerness to move to a foreign land. However, their attitudes changed drastically between the pre-examination and post-examination. In the pre-examination, they had communicated their desire to visit the partner country with the aim of comparing the respective countries and seeing the superiority of their nation or learning the differences and boosting their knowledge. Moreover, they had shown strong rejection to inhabit in the partner nation due to their description of their own country as more beautiful or comfortable. Nonetheless, the post-questionnaire revealed moderation in their attitudes. The participants still refused the idea of living in a foreign region, yet their statements included no signs of superiority or inferiority. They displayed wholehearted acceptance and respect to the products and practices in the target nation and remarkable tolerance and appreciation to the otherness. They turned down the offer simply because they would miss their family and friends. Nonetheless, the Portuguese students uttered that they would love to sleepover in their Turkish friends' house and eat their delicious foods while the Turkish students pointed out that they would love to visit the partner country for one or two months or have an education there for some years, exposing intense ethnorelativist orientation of Acceptance.

4.2.1.2.2.3 Adaptation Stage

The qualitative sources in this study yielded 175 instances ($f^{\text{Total}} = 20.54\%$) of the Adaptation mindset in the Turkish perspective and 150 instances ($f^{\text{Total}} = 18.77\%$) of the Adaptation mindset in the Portuguese perspective. Following the Week 4, the Adaptation mindset demonstrated gradual improvement in the Turkish ($n^{\text{Week4}} = 15$, $f^{\text{Week 4}} = 12.82\%$; $n^{\text{Week5}} = 28$, $f^{\text{Week5}} = 26.92\%$; $n^{\text{Week6}} = 33$, $f^{\text{Week6}} = 32.35\%$; $n^{\text{Week7}} = 49$, $f^{\text{Week 7}} = 41.53\%$; $n^{\text{Post-Int}} = 38$, $f^{\text{Post-Int}} = 26.39\%$) and Portuguese contexts ($n^{\text{Week4}} = 9$, $f^{\text{Week 4}} = 10.71\%$; $n^{\text{Week5}} = 29$, $f^{\text{Week5}} = 34.11\%$; $n^{\text{Week6}} = 32$, $f^{\text{Week6}} = 32.65\%$; $n^{\text{Week7}} = 35$, $f^{\text{Week 7}} = 37.23\%$; $n^{\text{Post-Int}} = 45$, $f^{\text{Post-Int}} = 26.16\%$) on a weekly basis. Even though the Adaptation stage of ethnorelativism became more prevalent in the research subjects' utterances over time, the Acceptance mindset performed as the predominant outlook of both groups.

Adaptation perspective was observed at a micro-level in the form of cultural empathy with the concept of 'online intercultural friendship' in the analysis. The resolution of the uniform contradiction in Week 4 and the introduction of collaborative asynchronous tasks in Week 5 enabled the participants to develop the ability to decenter in two forms. In the first form, the learners desired to present the strange and interesting products and practices in their country as opposed to the ones with worldwide recognition due to their own willingness to learn different and astonishing facts about foreign cultures. This case was illustrated in the excerpts below.

Excerpt 133

My students did not want to introduce Christmas and Halloween celebrations in their digital stories. They thought that these celebrations were not specific to only Portuguese culture and were ubiquitous in films and TV shows. They said that if they had been Turkish students, they would have wanted to learn something other than what they had already known and something unique. In the end, they removed the well-known celebrations off their lists and added more interesting ones for their partners such as Carnival. (Portuguese Teacher 1, Research Journal)

Excerpt 134

Some learners recommended including dishes such as 'Stuffed Eggplants' (Karniyarik), White Beans' (Kuru Fasulye), and Madımak (knotweed) in their digital cookbooks since these dishes would surprise and arouse the curiosity of their Portuguese partners. The students estimated that these dishes were specific to only Turkish culture, so they decided on attaching them to catch the interest of their partners. They also stated that they were really excited to see their interesting foods (Turkish Teacher 1, Research Journal)

As seen in Excerpt 133, the Portuguese students showed reluctance to introduce familiar celebrations such as Halloween and Christmas for their Turkish counterparts in their digital stories. They expressed their willingness to represent the unfamiliar and entertaining operations in their country since Halloween and Christmas were recognized and known across borders due to TV shows and movies and were not specific to their own country.

They put themselves into their Turkish counterparts' shoes and stated that they would want to learn new information specific to only Portuguese culture if they were Turkish students. Therefore, they decided upon presenting the celebrations that could grab the attention of their partners such as Carnival and Festa dos Tabuleiros. Similarly, in Excerpt 134, the Turkish students agreed on showcasing some national dishes such as Stuffed Aubergines (Karnıyarık) and Knotweed (Madımak) by contemplating that the Portuguese might not be accustomed to these tastes and might endeavour to cook them at home for a change. They also voiced their own expectation to be surprised by their exotic recipes. All in all, the excerpts documented that both research groups placed themselves in their foreign partners' shoes and incorporated what might be perceived as interesting by their partners into their digital narratives by drawing on their own desire to learn about novel and familiar facts about the partner culture.

In the second form, the participants fostered an understanding approach to otherness by evaluating the divergences within their own cultural mechanisms. In other words, they did not evaluate the cultural differences in accordance with their own belief system; on the contrary, they endeavoured to weigh the cultural conduct from their partners' perspectives. It resulted in the participants developing the ability to decenter from their own worldview and judge events from their foreign peers' point of view. This circumstance was instanced as below.

Excerpt 135

We should not judge them because they do not wear school uniforms. They may feel upset if they had heard our conversations. Maybe they do not have enough money to buy uniforms. We also should not say bad things about what they eat. This is what their mothers cook at home. (Turkish Student 15, Overt Instruction – Research Journal)

Excerpt 136

They do not have the sea where they live. So, although we love surfing and swimming here, and these are our hobbies, we did not put them into our stories. Also, some Turkish friends of mine do not like some games like hopscotch and blind man's buff. So, we did not put them into our stories. This is our story after all. It should include what we love. And putting what they do not like may upset them (Portuguese Student 4, Post-Interview)

Excerpt 137

(When asked why they included both Turkish and Portuguese dishes in their collaborative digital stories) They may not be able to eat our karnıyarık or yaprak sarma every day. I know they are delicious, but their pastel de nata also looks delicious. But I do not want to eat them every day. I can miss Turkish food. They may miss Portuguese food similarly. So, we put both Portuguese and Turkish food on their lunch and dinner table so that they can eat anything they want. (Turkish Student 12, Post – Interview)

Excerpt 138

My teacher said that Turkish people do not eat pork meat. So, we will not put any dish with pork meat on the dinner table. If we put these foods, they cannot eat them and go hungry. I do

not want them to go hungry (Portuguese Student 11, Overt Instruction Phase - Research Journal)

Excerpt 139

They may be wearing a black wedding dress. It is strange, but our brides wear Bindalli, and it may seem strange for them too. If they had said something bad about Bindalli, we would be upset. So, if you say anything to their black wedding gown, they may be upset, too. (Turkish Student 5, Overt Instruction Phase – Research Journal)

Excerpt 140

They may be eating street foods in Turkey. We do not have such foods here. But, it does not mean that they are unclean. You should not speak badly just because we do not have them here. (Portuguese Student 7, Overt Instruction Phase – Research Journal)

As illustrated in the excerpts above, both Turkish and Portuguese participants demonstrated instances of the Adaptation stage of ethnorelativism in their statements by decentring from their own perspectives and viewing the situations from others' points of view. Drawn on the excerpts, the Turkish students demonstrated a major shift in their initial defensive orientation and approached the casual outfit policy in and eating habits of Portugal more politely (*Excerpt 135*). Similarly, the Portuguese students excluded the dishes containing pork meat from their digital narratives when they learnt about the Turkish students' nonconsumption of pork meat due to religious reasons (*Excerpt 138*). The Turkish participants also offered to attach both Turkish and Portuguese dishes and RQ desserts to the digital stories so that the characters of their stories can select among the food options in line with their preferences (*Excerpt 137*). Moreover, they withdrew their early negative judgments concerning the Portuguese dressing style in wedding ceremonies by referencing the strange clothing traditions in their own country (*Excerpt 139*). In all of the instances, the learners situated themselves into their friends' place and expressed the emotional weight of the harsh criticism. Specifically, they uttered how bothered they would feel if they were the ones receiving the criticism. The development of empathy enabled them to demolish their monolithic point of view and transit towards a more polilithic and understanding mindset. In addition, it assisted the participants to promote their sensitivity towards critical differences and to attach more importance to the subtle meanings of their culturally-distinct partners.

In conclusion, the Turkish and Portuguese participants enhanced their Adaptation perspective of ethnorelativism over the last 4 weeks of the telecollaboration project by developing sensitivity towards subtle meanings and otherness. However, the Adaptation phase was identified only at the micro-level through the development of empathetic orientation. The development of empathy was witnessed to be correlated with the concept

of online intercultural friendship by the project teachers. Since the learners began viewing their foreign partners as their online friends, they acted more willing to associate themselves with them and process the circumstances and practices from their perspectives. This situation not only facilitated the development of the Adaptation stage of ethnorelativism but strengthened the previous stage, Acceptance further. In fact, the enthusiasm to perceive the incidents from their partners' mindsets heightened their acceptance and tolerance of differences to a greater extent.



CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The present chapter aims to discuss the findings of the RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3 with their sub-questions in the light of previous young and adult learner studies conducted in the literature.

5.2 Discussion of Findings Regarding RQ1

The present section intends to discuss the findings of the RQ1 in the light of previous academic endeavours conducted at both young and adult learner levels so as to evaluate the findings from a broader perspective and bridge between the young and adult learner research. Since Byram's (1997) MMICC is selected as one of the theoretical foundations of the current study, it analyses intracultural understanding (RQ1.1) and intercultural awareness (RQ1.2 & RQ1.3) of the young learners under separate sub-research questions. Moreover, it discusses the findings of intercultural awareness under 5 ICC categories as *knowledge, attitudes, skills of discovery/ interacting, skills of interpreting/ relating, and critical cultural awareness*.

5.2.1 The Development in Young Learners' Own Cultural Identity and its Extent (RQ1.1)

The first research question of the present study focused on intracultural knowledge and awareness of the young Turkish and Portuguese learners in its initial sub-questions. The

findings acquired from the semi-structured interviews, learner diaries, and research journals revealed that intracultural learning remained at a superficial level in this study since all of the Turkish and Portuguese learners stated that they did not study on unfamiliar subjects or acquire new information about their national culture from their local partners. In fact, the digital narratives mainly addressed the cultural products (i.e. clothing and cuisine) and practices (i.e. holiday traditions and daily routines) and failed to transmit their culturally-determined or personal values and beliefs as well as the knowledge of sub-social groups accommodating in their country. Hence, the local group discussions and DST creation phases remained restricted to provide novel intracultural knowledge to the participants. This evidence showed parallelism with the findings of Okumura's (2020) research which emphasized that young learner learning tends to remain restricted to observable aspects of cultures due to the participants' age and the insufficiency of allocated time. This finding also received support from the perspective of the scholars arguing that young learners are more responsive to the visible components than the less visible knowledge of communities, belief systems, and civil processes (Peiser, 2015; Zhu Hua, Jiang, & Watson, 2011).

Even though no intracultural learning occurred between the exchanges, the findings of the present study highlighted that most of the Turkish and Portuguese learners demonstrated instances of cultural self-awareness in their learner diaries. They began to recognize the product and practice-oriented differences within their own society in spite of the uniformity in their cultural identity. It should be underlined that this recognition was restricted to the cultural products and practices, which encompass only the observable part of the cultures. However, the small-scale intracultural awareness went beyond the mere recognition of intranational differences in the studies regulated with teenage and adult language learners (Göncü Ergün, 2016; Helm, 2009; Kuusisto et al., 2016; Sasani, 2018). In a more clear sense, the present study could not render the young learners to understand that their own frame of reference was not prevalent to all human races as opposed to the study carried out by Kuusisto et al. (2016) on adult learners. Similarly, it did not prompt them to question their own prejudices and monocentric attitude towards other cultures and exercise politeness strategies during interactions in opposition to Göncü Ergün's (2016) investigation on university learners. Moreover, it did not provide a critical understanding of the existence of different values, products, and practices in different social groups within their own country and for the political or educational processes in their own nation

contrary to other adult learner studies including Helm's (2009), Sasani's (2018), and Lenkaitis et al.'s (2019).

As seen, young learners adopt a more pragmatic approach to cross-cultural training by concretizing the cultural information as an observable entity and associating it with their regular activities (Zhu Hua et al., 2011) whereas teenage and adult learners develop more sophisticated perspectives by internalizing both observable and non-observable cultural information as well as questioning the cultural systems and their practices critically. In other words, cultural self-awareness of young learners tends to remain limited to the visible aspects of cultures including cultural practices and products due to their lack of abstract thinking skills whereas the teenage and adult learners are able to gain a thorough understanding of the visible elements of cultures concerning practices and products and invisible aspects of cultures respecting processes, belief systems, and social groups simultaneously. However, it should be underlined that starting telecollaborative activities at an early age may enable learners to form accurate background knowledge about foreign practices and intercommunication procedures; thus, hinder the development of stereotypical knowledge and ethnocentric mindset. This accurate background knowledge and weakened monocentrism may enable the participants to begin the forthcoming virtual exchange projects with higher self-esteem and motivation, to engage in more careful and interculturally appropriate discussions, and to perform a more systematic and accurate critique and interpretation of the target cultural systems in the later stages of their lives. In other words, exposure to telecollaborative projects at the young learner level may enable the participants to develop a positive attitude towards otherness and strengthen their acceptance of differences, and this may facilitate the processes of future intercultural practices and enable learners to develop higher critical cultural awareness and IS.

5.2.2 The Development in Young Learners' ICC Domains and its Extent (RQ1.2 & RQ 1.3)

Since ICC triangulates knowledge, attitudes, skills, and critical cultural awareness, the third and fourth sub-research questions of RQ1 explore the development in young learners' aforementioned ICC domains.

5.2.2.1 Discussion of Knowledge Dimension

The data were collected from various qualitative sources including research journals, learner diaries, and interview transcripts for the knowledge dimension and triangulated with one another so as to attain a broader understanding of the enhancement in this sphere. Since the previous sub-research questions (RQ1.1) addressed the improvement in the participants' intracultural knowledge and cultural identity, the knowledge dimension concentrated on the enhancement in their intercultural knowledge of processes, practices, products, and social groups as well as their understanding of communication principles and styles. The acquired data generated several findings in this dimension.

First, all of the Turkish and Portuguese participants stated that they acquired new information about their partners' lifestyle, hobbies, clothing preferences, school life, eating regimes, traditions and favourite celebrations and enhanced their intercultural knowledge. However, the learnings remained limited to the products and practices of the target culture, and no instances were identified about the living conditions of different social and ethnic groups or the belief systems, values, and moral codes of their foreign partners. In addition, the presentation of culture (i.e. cuisine and traditions) and personal information (i.e. favourite classes and hobbies) enabled the participants to engage in critical discussions regarding the similarities and differences between both cultures and to deepen their intercultural understanding. These results are reflected in Peiser's (2015) study which revealed that the young learners act more enthusiastically to learn about the observable aspects including the products and practices compared to the less observable elements respecting the social groups, belief systems, and social and historical processes. They are also in line with the findings of Szuba (2016) who found out that young learners are more likely to pose culture-dependent questions to their partners and elicit factual knowledge of products and practices in the implementation process; therefore, abstract learning in terms of cultural processes, social groups, and belief mechanisms remains blind-sighted in this age group. However, the academic research regulated with teenage and adult learners produced more exhaustive results by producing data that encompass all knowledge spheres of products, processes, practices, social groups, and belief systems in the literature (Demir and Kayaoğlu, 2021; Sasani, 2018; Tecedor & Vasseur, 2020).

Second, some of the Turkish and Portuguese participants of the present thesis exhibited a growing understanding of the conflicting practices between the respective countries. They

began to acquire consciousness of the differences in school clothing, celebratory traditions, and religious practices and provide simple solutions for problems emerging from these differences. For instance, the Portuguese students suggested collaborative designing of school uniforms when they learnt about their Turkish partners' negative attitudes towards the casual dressing code in the Portuguese school. However, these participants recognized their partners' negative evaluations via the teacher channel. Byram's (1997) knowledge dimension objectives include the acquisition of general communication principles and comprehension of the types and processes of cultural misunderstandings. In this sense, the Portuguese and Turkish students were incapable of diagnosing the source of misunderstandings alone. They needed the assistance and guidance of their teachers in the process. However, they were capable of providing effective and creative solutions for the identified communication hindrances. The academic research conducted with teenage and adult learners; on the other hand, contravened with this finding (Tecedor & Vasseur, 2020; Wang, 2018) since the agents of misunderstandings were labelled as the lack of their linguistic knowledge and intercultural competence by the learners in these studies. All in all, it can be stated that even though young learners may fail to determine the sources of misconceptions, they may succeed in offering a remedy for the hindrances stemming from these sources thanks to their openness for interaction and creative demeanour.

Third, the qualitative analysis revealed that the comparison and analysis tasks strengthened the construction of *us* versus *them* division in young learners. The data extracted from the learner diaries pointed out that the Portuguese and Turkish students utilized 'I' or 'we' personas to pinpoint their own culture while they use the 'they' persona to address their foreign counterparts. This binary construction was observed in another academic production as well (Tecedor and Vasseur, 2020). As given, feasible cross-cultural interaction necessitates delving into the 'us' versus 'them' duality (Kramsch, 2005); hence, comparison and analysis tasks are valued to create cultural awareness in telecollaborative exchanges. However, mere comparison of cultures strengthens the monolithic perspective of culture both in young learner and adult learner levels. Therefore, the inclusion of collaborative tasks into telecollaborative projects holds significant importance to enhance the polyethnic view of culture in learners.

Lastly, the ability to change perspective is of prominence in the knowledge dimension of MMICC. In the present thesis, the improvement in the participants' intracultural and

intercultural knowledge contributed to the transformation in the previous ethnocentric perspectives of young learners. The learner diary data analysis uncovered that the recognition of similarities between the respective cultures softened the learners' initial negative attitudes towards the partner culture, and continuous virtual interaction between the culturally distinct learners enhanced the notion of online intercultural friendship. The resemblance and the concept of friendship rendered the participants to reduce their monocentric attitudes and demonstrate the signs of ethnorelativist perspectives in their following learner diary accounts. This finding is challenged in many teenage and adult learner studies (Çiftçi et al., 2020; Garrett-Rucks, 2014; Tabatadze & Gorgadze, 2018) since their IS development generally shows a non-linear development or fluctuations between monocentricism and ethnorelativism in learners' frame of reference. Since this finding is correlated with the IS of the participants, it will be explained further in the RQ2 section.

In conclusion, the present thesis has ascertained that young learners adopt a more practical and pragmatic approach to intercultural learning. They generally construct their intercultural knowledge by internalizing more observable and visible elements of cultures concerning their practices and products and overlooking the intangible aspects of them regarding their sub-social groups, processes, and values. On the other hand, teenage and adult learners approach intercultural learning from a broader perspective by building upon their knowledge of both concrete and abstract concepts regarding the partner cultures. Nonetheless, learnings on social groups are likely to remain minimal in young and adult learner levels inasmuch as the telecollaborators in partner countries demonstrate a tendency towards presenting the dominant national culture of their countries to their partners. It causes the participants to process the general cultural information about their partner countries and remain unconscious of the sociocultural differences within the nations. The reason behind the young learners' concentration on the discernible features of cultures correlates with their undeveloped abstract reasoning skills and low foreign language proficiency. Since young learners experience difficulty in understanding intangible concepts such as freedom, social exclusion, or politics due to their developing abstract reasoning skills, they either absorb concrete information or concretize the abstract notions to make sense of the world. In addition, since they have low foreign language skills, their questioning of abstract notions generally fails to transcend the mere investigation of the likes and dislikes of the foreign partners. To this end, teenage and adult

learners demonstrate higher development in the knowledge dimension in most of the studies. In addition, the findings of the present thesis and the aforementioned studies have underlined that young learners need more assistance and guidance to understand the sources of misconceptions whereas adult learners possess more autonomy to detect them individually. However, the studies indicate that both young and adult learners are capable of generating effective solutions to cure these mishaps. However, it should be proposed that the young learners managed to change their monocentric attitude within the parameters of asynchronous transnational interplays and the age factor easily while teenage and adult learner studies generally show more resistance and slowness towards the shift in their mindsets. Based on this finding, the present thesis suggests that starting the telecollaborative practices at an early age may help learners to weaken their monocentric mindset towards the otherness and inhibit the formation of stereotypical knowledge and prejudices against the stranger. The enhancement in their mindset may contribute to their acceptance and tolerance towards the differences and enhance their openness to learn about other cultures. This circumstance may render the learners to begin the future telecollaboration projects with accurate background knowledge, communication strategies, and unprejudiced mindset and to develop a higher critical cultural awareness and IS in the later stages of their education.

5.2.2.2 Discussion of Attitude Dimension

The data were extracted from various qualitative sources including research journals, learner diaries, and interview transcripts for the attitude dimension, merged with one another, and interpreted in the light of previous research with the aim of obtaining a more comprehensive perspective about the enhancement in this sphere. The data analysis revealed 3 significant findings in this dimension.

First, it found out that both Turkish and Portuguese participants communicated their willingness and enthusiasm to establish international contact with their culturally distinct counterparts before beginning the project activities. According to the data extracted from the pre-semi structured interviews, the participants' enthusiasm stemmed from their curiosity to engage in a transnational dialogue for the first time and the sense of being selected by their teachers. Even though the participants possessed positive attitudinal orientations at the beginning, they demonstrated some signs of anxiety. The Turkish

students expressed communicational concerns due to their insufficient language skills whereas the Portuguese students manifested digital apprehension. However, the guidance of their teachers and the analysis of digital narratives enabled the Turkish participants to observe the ease of creating digital stories and the resemblance in the language proficiency levels between the partner groups. Since the Portuguese learners had a European identity, the Turkish learners had unreachable expectations from the linguistic ability of their Portuguese peers. Thus, recognizing the correspondence in their language proficiency reduced the sense of inferiority and initial anxiety. On the other hand, the Portuguese students lessened their technology apprehension with the facilitation of their IT teacher. Although the participants' initial eagerness originated from their lack of experience of and curiosity towards cross-cultural interaction, the learner diary and post-interview data set highlighted that the enhancement in the knowledge sphere contributed to the improvement in the attitude dimension. Learning about cultural and personal similarities and differences between the target groups yielded the participants to learn more about the correspondences and divergences in other product or practice-oriented areas such as religion, music, and traditions and boosted their willingness and curiosity. The findings of this study are in line with the findings of Szuba (2016) who argue that young learners exhibit more instances of acceptance and tolerance towards the foreign traditions and more positive attitudes and interaction-seeking demeanour for the intercultural dialogue whereas they demonstrate fewer cases of negative attitudes including denial, defense, or contradiction against their peers through virtual exchanges over time. The academic research regulated with teenage and adult learners mostly yielded similar outcomes to the present study in the attitude dimension as well (Demir and Kayaoğlu, 2021; Helm, 2009) by communicating that even though foreign language learners may exhibit some signs of communication apprehension in the earlier stages of exchanges, they are able to dispel their anxiety with the assistance of their teachers and the feedback of their peers through the process and enhance their positive stance towards otherness. However, Duran Martinez, Gutiérrez, Beltran Llavador and Martinez Abad's (2016) outcomes contradict the aforementioned results since it proposes that virtual exchanges restore the first impressions or idealizations by more correct understandings, and the acquisition of correct information may challenge initial overly positive attitudes and lead to devaluation.

Second, the present thesis proposed that peer feedback held significant importance to promote the young learners' attitudes towards the virtual exchange assignments. In

comparison and analysis tasks, the peer feedback provided by the local group members assisted the learners to negotiate the cohesion and coherence of their digital productions before presenting them to their telecollaboration partners. The consensus on the grammatical accuracy and rationality of their stories increased their willingness to publicize them to a global audience. In collaborative assignments; on the other hand, the peer feedback provided by the global group rendered the learners to form joint ownership on the digital narratives. In fact, the Turkish and Portuguese participants corrected one another's mistakes and made cooperative contributions and suggestions to the plotline, which heightened the 'us' notion among them and allowed them to establish more intimate bonds with one another. Akdemir (2017) declares that teachers' correction is possibly perceived as a form of assessment; hence, peer feedback is welcomed more than teacher feedback in virtual collaborations and advanced learner engagement. Since students are all imperfect language learners who can make mistakes in the learning process, they generally estimate that their peers will not judge them adversely as opposed to their teachers (Demir and Kayaoğlu, 2021).

Lastly, the analysis of post-interview data suggested that all of the Turkish and Portuguese participants expressed their willingness to engage in further intercultural dialogue on the completion of the project activities. Specifically, all of the research subjects stated their desire to participate in another telecollaboration project with a different country such as Spain, Italy, America, or Germany. Furthermore, some of them asked for continuing the interaction with their Turkish and Portuguese partners via other social networking sites including Instagram or Twitter. This finding is reflected in some teenage and adult learner research as well (Vahed & Soleimani, 2020; Wach, 2013) proposing that telecollaborative enthusiasm during the project activities broaden the scope of learners' intercultural contact and render them to utilize different CMC technologies to communicate with foreigners with numerous reasons such as entertainment, academic study, and social needs. The learners generally begin to seek further intercultural communication opportunities to construct upon their ICC on the finalization of the project activities (Vahed & Soleimani, 2020). To conclude, the present study generally generated parallel outcomes with adult learner studies in the attitude dimension. The research evidence revealed that telecollaborative exchanges have the potential to lower communication apprehension and heighten the willingness and openness towards otherness both at young and adult learner

levels. It also unearthed that the teacher's facilitation and peer feedback play important roles in the effectiveness of the virtual exchange projects (Lee & Markey, 2014).

5.2.2.3 Discussion of Skills of Discovery/ Interacting Dimension

The present study explored the change and development not only in the knowledge and attitude dimensions but the skills of discovery and interacting dimension as well. For this purpose, it combined the qualitative data derived from interview protocols, learner diaries, and research journals. The exploration yielded 3 important findings as below.

First, the telecollaborative practices encouraged the Turkish and Portuguese participants to transfer their knowledge, attitudes, and skills into operation. The data acquired from the learner diaries and research journals announced that students had the opportunity to study the grammatical structures and vocabulary items instructed in the classroom, receive teacher and peer feedback on the cohesion and coherence of their studies, and practice on main and sub-language skills regularly in the DST creation and showcase processes. In line with the data analysis, most of the participants expressed learning new vocabulary and grammatical structures each week. The time allocated for the DST writing process and the amount of corrective feedback was reported to diminish over the exchange period. In addition, recording their voices for their digital narratives and listening or reading their partners' digital productions were declared to improve their listening, reading, and pronunciation skills in the analysis. Briefly, exchanging telecollaborative digital narratives on a regular cycle made positive contributions to the learners' listening, reading, and writing main skills as well as pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar sub-skills. However, the asynchronous design of the project made it difficult to observe their impact on the participants' speaking skills. The findings of Demir and Kayaoğlu (2021) who claim that the utilization of online platforms for verbal negotiations and experimenting on new communication methods advance learners' language skills and Dugartsyrenova and Sardegna (2019) who argue that virtual interplays assist learners to study on the instructed linguistic items at phonological, lexical, and syntactic levels and foster their language skills are consistent with the results of the current study.

Second, peer interaction and feedback at local and global levels prompted the Turkish and Portuguese participants to examine their DST products from their own culturally determined perspectives and their culturally-distinct interlocutors' point of view. This

practice enabled them to develop the ability to decenter from their own standpoints and function well in intercultural interplays. Peiser (2015) suggests that young learners are open to posing questions about the existence or absence of certain processes and systems in the target country by estimating that these are exclusive to their own country, and this practice acts as a major step forwards the learners' ability to decenter. The ability to decenter was identified in two forms in the present study. In the first form, the learners behaved determined to introduce the exotic and interesting practices in their own culture judging from their personal desire to learn the strange traditions and behaviours in other cultures. This finding is consistent with the findings of Peiser (2015) who discovered that the young learners were willing to attach strange and surprising information about their schools to their digital stories, which served as a potent indicator of the growth in their ability to decenter. In the second form, they portrayed the skill to negotiate on the issues that might present their heritage culture wrongfully or be evaluated adversely by their foreign partners before disseminating their digital stories. Corresponding results are manifested in Ruan and Medwell's (2020) study which revealed that the learners negotiated on the meaning their digital narratives could transmit to the target audience and ameliorated the controversial and questionable information with the assistance of their peers and teachers.

Finally, the enhancement in the Turkish and Portuguese learners' knowledge, attitudes, and skills weakened their teacher-dependent attitude. Most of the learners who were eliciting information and communicating via the teacher channel in the first asynchronous assignments began to feel more confident and less anxious to form direct connections with their foreign partners in the following tasks. In fact, they began to ask sophisticated questions about the products and practices in the target culture on the discussion boards of eTwinning in a straightforward fashion and to provide responses for their peers' questions and comments by exerting some communication strategies including thanking, congratulating, using humour, providing alternatives, giving feedback, using some basic statements in their partners' language, and collaborating. The effective employment of communication strategies functioned as a robust indicator of the enhancement in the learners' skills of discovery and interacting. With regard to strategy use, the present study findings are, to a high extent, in line with those of several young learner (Szuba, 2016) and adult learner research (Lenkaitis et al., 2019; Priego and Liaw, 2017) which reveal that learners are able to succeed in solving the emergent conflicts by using various

communication strategies such as humouring, apologizing, praising, suggesting options, giving instructions, asking for assistance, and providing assistance during telecollaborative exchanges.

Judging from the findings above, regular virtual exchanges have the potential to contribute to the language skills of both young and adult learners. However, the non-observant development in the speaking skills of young learners may be correlated with the asynchronous mode of this thesis. Since asynchronous mode allocates learners enough time to study the unfamiliar linguistic items, resort to translation, receive external assistance or clarification, and reflect on the communicated messages, it is destitute of real-time communication and feedback. To this end, the juxtaposition of asynchronous communication with the synchronous mode of interaction may require higher cognitive demand for young learners and lead to higher enhancement in their language skills and awareness. Furthermore, telecollaborative practices seem to encourage the use of communication strategies both in synchronous and asynchronous modes in young and adult learner researchers. Although strategy use is a complex phenomenon for young learners, it is likely that young age eases the process rather than complicating it (Szuba, 2016). Young learners seem to succeed in transmitting their feelings to their conversationalists despite their low language proficiency. Although they lack the skill to elicit deep-level knowledge, their unprejudiced mindset and readiness to suspend negativity appear to enhance their attitude and encourage them to generate strategies to maintain the dialogue with their foreign partners. In this respect, early telecollaborative initiations may construct the foundation for further telecollaborative exercises and facilitate learners' ICC development over time.

5.2.2.4 Discussion of Skills of Interpreting/ Relating Dimension

As the fourth factor of MMICC, the present study examined the enhancement in the skills of interpreting and relating dimension as well. The examination yielded two significant outcomes in this sphere.

The data obtained from the qualitative sources illustrated that exchanging digital narratives about the products and practices of Turkish and Portuguese cultures allowed the young research subjects to learn about one another's daily lives, playing cultures, clothing preferences, eating habits, celebratory traditions, and schooling systems. The Overt Instruction phase run by the responsible teachers after the exchanging process rendered the

participants to examine the narratives critically and negotiate on the similarities and differences between both cultures. Promoting intercultural knowledge and engaging in critical examinations deepened the participants' analytical skills and enabled them to produce more accurate interpretations and establish more authentic connections between the target cultures. Specifically, the learners began to associate the practices and products in their own culture with the ones in the target culture, cogitate on the reasons behind the bizarre and interesting practices in the target culture, and develop empathy towards the differences.

Another prominent finding in this dimension was the fact that both Turkish and Portuguese students gained autonomy to initiate and maintain their own discussions and to express their empathetic views without the facilitation of the teacher over time. The research journal data underscored that the participants began to discuss the resemblances and divergences and make empathetic inferences from the products and practices without the teachers' encouragement through questions and feedback. These findings are reflected in several adult learner research (Belz & Thorne, 2006, Ruan & Medwell, 2020; Sasani, 2018) which represent that Overt Instruction discussions broaden the teachers' presence beyond the teachers' authoritative control and dominance and enable learners to develop an e-leadership to establish their own arguments, launch their own creative content, and initiate spontaneous conversations with their peers. However, the self-regulated negotiations render learners to mediate between merely concrete elements in young learners whereas these discussions go beyond the critique of tangible elements (i.e. products and practices) and embody abstract aspects (i.e. beliefs, values, behaviours and processes) as well in adult learners.

In conclusion, the research evidence above illustrated that telecollaboration projects generally produced positive outcomes in the skills of interpreting and relating dimension in young and adult learner studies. However, young learners stayed within the parameters of tangible elements of the target cultures in the present study whereas adult learners mainly read between the lines, searched for the hidden meanings under the practices and processes, and interpreted the abstract and concrete similarities and differences in the target cultural systems. The present finding may be explicated with young learners' insufficient abstract reasoning skills to decipher the invisible phenomena and their low language skills to elicit intangible information from their partners. Moreover, the notion of

empathy differed in young and adult learner research. Although both adult and young learners portrayed an empathetic attitude towards the practices and understandings in the partner culture, young participants exhibited less tendency towards finding fault in their own nation's practices. The young learners in the present thesis manifested no instances of questioning the systems or products in their own country, but they displayed acceptance and tolerance towards the understandings and traditions in the target nation. Nonetheless, adult learners generally assessed the values, norms, perceptions, processes, and practices in target cultures objectively and discussed the inaccurate understandings, behaviours, and exercises in their own culture and the target culture in most cases. This enabled adult learners to demonstrate robust signs of critical cultural awareness. However, it should be remarked that early introduction to telecollaborative practices increases the potential to attain higher critical cultural awareness.

5.2.2.5 Discussion of Critical Cultural Awareness Dimension

As the core element of ICC, the sphere of critical cultural awareness was interpreted in the light of preceding factors of knowledge, attitude, skills of discovery/ interacting, and skills of interpreting/ relating. It also drew from the findings of RQ1.1 since it contains the evaluation of social groups and perspectives in both one's heritage culture and other cultures. Then, this dimension generated two notable outcomes.

First, the data elicited from the learner diaries, semi-structured interviews, and research journals revealed that the shift in the perspective was observed between the Turkish and Portuguese participants' initial and subsequent statements. The participants demonstrated a high monocentric orientation at the beginning of the study. Although they did not possess any background knowledge respecting the target country and its culture, they conducted faulty reasoning and perceived the potential differences negatively by adopting a defensive attitude in the form of idealization or contempt. Nonetheless, the asynchronous intercultural exchanges allowed the participants to process personal and cultural information about their partner country and culturally-distinct peers and to enhance their intercultural knowledge and attitude in the process. Identifying the correspondences and divergences between the target cultural systems weakened their previous faulty estimations and prejudices and acquiring personal information about their peers strengthened the bond of online intercultural friendship, which enabled them to withdraw their antecedent

negative judgements respecting the inferiority or superiority of their culture over the other and interiorize the understanding of equality of cultures. This understanding resulted in transformation from defensive ethnocentric orientation to acceptance and adaptation level of ethnorelativism.

Second, the data extracted from the qualitative sources highlighted that the Turkish and Portuguese young learners evaluated the cultural products and practices in the target culture in relation to those of theirs and began to perceive that thinking is fundamentally culture-specific. Precisely, they began to form empathetic connections with their foreign peers and acknowledge the existence of different acceptable behaviours and conducts for different people. Past research conducted with teenage and adult learners shares some common characteristics with the findings presented above (Dugartsyrenova and Sardegna, 2019; Garrett-Rucks, 2014; Helm, 2009; Kuusisto et al., 2016) since they also announced that reflecting on experiences critically increase participants' self-cultural understanding and intercultural awareness as well as render them to recognize that their perspectives are not ubiquitous to all cultures, contributing to the transition from the Denial and Defense stage of monocentricism to the Acceptance and Adaptation stage of ethnorelativism. Nonetheless, The findings of Garrett-Rucks (2014) report broader results than the current study findings as adult participants are also capable of demonstrating the ability to criticize their own cultural system with reference to other cultures and determine the defective and problematic areas in their own practices, unlike young learners who act reluctant to demonstrate a fault-finding demeanour about their own culture. Likewise, the outcomes of Dugartsyrenova and Sardegna (2019) document more extensive evidence as adult learners are more skilful to notice how their stereotypes about their own country differ from other cultural representatives' stereotypes about their own country. In other words, they are more competent to grasp how their auto perceptions of their people and culture diverge from how other countries' representatives actually perceive or stereotype them.

To conclude, it can be stated that telecollaboration projects generally yield fruitful results in the critical cultural awareness sphere in young and adult learner research. Several studies administered with young learners (Okumura, 2020; Peiser, 2015; Szuba, 2016) including the present study and adult learners (Belz & Thorne, 2006; Çiftçi et al., 2020; Helm, 2009; Garrett-Rucks, 2014; Kuusisto et al., 2016; Mellizo, 2017; Ruan & Medwell, 2020, Tecedor & Vasseur, 2020) indicate that the enhancement in learners' knowledge,

attitude, and skills contribute to the evolution of learners' initial monolithic frame of reference into a more ethnorelativist reference in both young and adult learner levels. However, the literature review suggests that young and adult learners demonstrate some differences in terms of developmental parameters. The young language learners in the present study managed to acknowledge that there exist several correct behaviours, attitudes, or practices for different people due to geographical proximity or parental culture. Therefore, they managed to withdraw their negative judgments towards the target culture and demolish their monocentric demeanour. However, they manifested no instances of questioning their own values or integrating the target cultural system into their own. On the other hand, adult learners showed more incidents of questioning the products, practices, processes, social groups, and norms and belief systems of their own country with respect to those of their partner countries compared to the young learner research. These learners projected less hesitation to judge the wrong practices and beliefs in their own country and more eagerness to produce solutions by benefiting from their learnings about their partner countries. In some cases, they even managed to understand how they look from others' perspectives. The first possible explanation for this difference is correlated with young learners' lack of cognitive intricacy to regulate such sophisticated abstract analytical processes. Since young learners' abstract reasoning skills are still in progress, they may lack the ability to deal with the complications of decentring from their own point of view and perceiving themselves from others' references. The second possible explanation is associated with the differential improvement in young and adult learners' knowledge, attitudes, and skills dimensions. Adult learners generally have a higher linguistic ability to derive more information about tangible, intangible and even critical subjects. Hence, they are more likely to engage in a deeper level of interaction with their partners and perceive incidents from their partners' points of view. The last possible explanation is related to the fact that young learners tend to show reluctance to value foreign viewpoints over their parents' and teachers' viewpoints. Nonetheless, the present study suggests that early introduction to telecollaborative exchanges makes a difference in learners' attitudes, knowledge, and skills. In this respect, including primary and lower secondary school students in virtual exchange projects may prevent the formation of stereotypical learnings, prejudices, and inaccurate calculations and assist them to develop some communication strategies to interact with others effectively as illustrated in the present thesis. Moreover, they may play a prominent role in hindering learners to develop a monocentric frame of

reference by encouraging the notion of intercultural friendship. This process may permit learners to start with their following virtual exchange projects with higher knowledge, skills, attitudes and autonomy and yield to higher improvement in their critical cultural awareness accordingly.

5.3 Discussion of Findings Regarding RQ2

The present section intends to discuss the findings of the RQ2 in the light of previous academic endeavours conducted at both young and adult learner levels with the aim of interpreting the findings from a broader perspective and bridge between the young and adult learner research. Since RQ2 concentrates on the young learners' IS, it benefits from the IS-15 Scale developed by Wang and Zhou (2016) as its quantitative basis and adopts Bennett's (1986) DMIS framework to interpret the qualitative sources of interview transcripts, research journals, and learner diaries. The current section discusses RQ2.1 first in order to illustrate the early IS levels of the Turkish and Portuguese participants before telecollaborative DST intervention, then it examines RQ2.2 and RQ2.3 so as to represent the development in their IS perspectives over the 7-week telecollaborative practice.

5.3.1 The Initial IS Perspectives of Young Learners (RQ2.1)

The RQ2.1 of the present study aimed to identify the initial IS perspectives of Turkish and Portuguese young learners to intercultural communication and derived its findings from two sources: IS-15 scale as the quantitative reference and pre-interview protocol as the qualitative reference. The quantitative data yielded meaningful results to strengthen the qualitative data in this study. To begin with the qualitative reference, the student respondents utilized a good number of affective words and phrases to express their subjective stance towards cultural differences during the interview session. These affective utterances were transcribed and coded under 6 categories in accordance with Bennett's DMIS (1986). In the codification process, the Turkish pre-interview transcripts highlighted 150 instances of monocentrism whereas the Portuguese transcripts revealed 164 instances of monocentrism. All of the Turkish and Portuguese participants displayed the characteristics of different DMIS stages at the same time. In other words, they stated their lack of knowledge about the target country (i.e. Denial stage), expressed the superiority or

inferiority of their own culture to the other (i.e. Defense stage), and accepted the possible similarities between the project cultures (i.e. Minimization stage) within the same interview session. Nevertheless, their perspective dominantly leaned towards the defensive stage of ethnorelativism ($n^{\text{Turkey}} = 84$, $f^{\text{Turkey}} = 56\%$; $n^{\text{Portugal}} = 97$, $f^{\text{Portugal}} = 59.15\%$). The participants' multiple representations of IS ethnocentric mindsets were reflected in their scale rating as well.

To begin with the Turkish participants, they produced a mean value greater than 3.00 in each dimension of the IS-15 scale, indicating that they generally provided a partial agreement to the scale items. It signified that the Turkish bloc had a certain degree of openness to begin and conduct the asynchronous tasks prior to the project activities.

Of these dimensions, 'respect for cultural differences' declared the lowest mean value ($X=3.18$, $SD= .89$). In this dimension, item 5 "*I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.*" ($X=3.07$, $SD= .96$) and item 6 "*I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.*" ($X=3.33$, $SD=.90$) were reverse-coded and received lower mean values compared to other statements of the scale. This case was complemented with the defensive orientation of the Turkish learners. Since many participants believed in the supremacy of their own culture to the Portuguese culture, they specified lower agreement to accept their partners' opinions or recommendations. Similarly, their defensive mindset led them to approach the possible differences with caution and resulted in scoring item 6 lowly. Buchori and Dobinson (2015) argue that students generally manifest instances of hesitation with regards to respecting a certain foreign culture regardless of their age. They show the tendency to evaluate strange foreign practices as preposterous and senseless and develop a defensive orientation towards them although they do not possess thorough information about them (Sasani, 2018). This case may be stemmed from the initial inflexible cognitive state of learners which restricts them accepting differences easily (Bredella, 2003) owing to their inexperience of intercultural contact.

Correspondingly, the dimension 'interaction confidence' ($X= 3.42$, $SD= .93$) was statistically computed to be the second lowest-rated subscale of the IS-15 scale. Within the extremes of this subscale, item 7 "*I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.*" ($X= 3.40$, $SD= 1.06$), item 8 "*I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures.*" ($X=3.47$, $SD= .92$), and item 9 "*I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.*" ($X= 3.40$, $SD= .83$)

produced relatively lower mean values as opposed to the remaining scale items. This statistical data set showed agreement with the defensive mindset of the Turkish young learners in the form of Reversal. In other words, the interviewees did not rely on their foreign language skills to move to and accommodate in another country; therefore, they described their own country as more comfortable and better. This finding is reflected in the studies of Coleman (2002) and Pourakbari and Chalak (2015) who discovered that most of the students possessed poor interaction confidence to communicate with people from different socio-cultural backgrounds. This circumstance could be explicated with learners' apprehension of making mistakes and fear of being disgraced before their foreign partners (Alaei & Nosrati, 2018).

The dimension 'interaction enjoyment' notified the highest mean value with a score greater than 4.00 ($X = 4.24$, $SD = .76$). In this subscale, item 11 "*I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures.*" and 12 "*I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures.*" exposed the same high mean and standard deviation value ($X = 4.53$, $SD = .52$). Lee (2009) proposes that the fundamental factors for effective communication and perspective shift are individual commitment and eagerness to construct personal bonds which run into interaction engagement and interaction enjoyment dimensions of the IS-15 Scale. This proposition provides an optimistic judgment for the present research since it hints that even though the Turkish participants had lower interaction confidence and a defensive ethnocentric mindset, their openness to participate in a telecollaboration project and understand the differences between the respective cultural systems could act potently for them to pursue the telecollaboration activities and ameliorate their current monocentric perspectives.

In a similar sense, 'interaction engagement' ($X = 3.51$, $SD = .90$) and 'interaction attentiveness' ($X = 3.47$, $SD = .91$) documented parallel results with mean scores close to 3.50. These significant values conformed with the Minimization instances in the pre-interview protocols. Even if the young learners acquired defense and denial perspectives to cultural differences and stated the superiority or inferiority of their own culture albeit their cultural incognizance, they still declared their willingness to travel to Portugal and spend time with their foreign partners. They refused to move to the partner country; however, they accepted spending weeks in Portugal, engaging in intercultural learning (interaction engagement), and obtaining cultural information concerning the cuisine, natural beauties,

and traditions of Portugal (interaction enjoyment and interaction attentiveness). Their openness to intercultural experience stemmed from their desire to verify their predictions concerning the similarities and differences between the target cultures. To exemplify, the Turkish participants conceived that there might be similarities in daily routines and school schedules. Therefore, they acted enthusiastically to visit Portugal and affirm their estimations. As it is seen, they predominantly had a monolithic point of view. However, the signs of the transition stage of Minimization in their utterances indicated their willingness for engagement, attentiveness to intercultural learning, and enjoyment of the transcultural experience. This situation signalled their readiness to develop an ethnorelativist mindset through the telecollaborative DST interplays over time. Wach (2013) who obtained a similar finding in her study perceives this case as promising to encourage the young generation to seek virtual exchange opportunities to establish intercultural dialogues and construct upon their ICC.

The Portuguese participants generated a mean index greater than 3.50 in each dimension of the IS-15 scale by providing partial agreement to the scale items. It signified that the Portuguese bloc had a higher degree of openness to initiate and regulate the asynchronous tasks than the Turkish bloc prior to the project activities.

Among these dimensions, 'interaction attentiveness' disclosed the lowest mean value ($X=3.53$, $SD=0.93$). In this subscale, item 14 "*I am sensitive to my culturally-distinct counterpart's subtle meanings*" ($X=3.47$, $SD=.92$) and item 15 "*I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures.*" ($X=3.33$, $SD=.82$) obtained the lowest mean indices. To some extent, this finding is inconsistent with the research findings of Jantawej (2011), Alaei and Nosrati (2018), and Piechurska-Kuciel and Rusieshvili (2021) who discovered that students self-reported their willingness to elicit information from their culturally distinct partners and received high scores in the dimension of interaction attentiveness. The inconsistency between the present thesis and preceding studies may result from learners' previous intercultural contacts with other cultures. Since countries such as Iran, Montenegro, Belgium, and Bosnia and Herzegovina are multi-ethnic countries, learners in these countries are more able to develop the senses of co-operation and harmony instead of exclusion and ignorance from an early age (Akhbari & Zolfeghari, 2009; Portera, 2008) in opposition to countries hosting fewer sub-cultures. Therefore, they learn how to act more sensitive to the subtle meanings of groups living within the same national borders with them. However, since Portugal is a country

that mainly consists of people with indigenous Portuguese backgrounds, the Portuguese subjects may have scored lower in the attentiveness dimension due to their lack of intercultural encounters.

Correspondingly, the dimensions ‘respect for cultural differences’ ($X = 3.60$, $SD = .76$) and ‘interaction engagement’ ($X = 3.58$, $SD = .88$) offered analogous results with the dimension of ‘interaction attentiveness’. Item 2 “*I often give positive responses to my culturally different counterpart during our interacting.*” in the subscale of ‘interaction engagement’ was estimated with the lowest mean value ($X = 3.07$, $SD = 1.03$) among all other statements in the scale. Following this, item 5 “*I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.*” ($X = 3.60$, $SD = 0.63$) and item 6 “*I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.*” ($X = 3.40$, $SD = .99$) on the scale of ‘respect for cultural differences’ were reverse-coded and received similarly low mean scores. The descriptive statistics above exhibited agreement with the defensive orientation of the Portuguese participants. According to the Portuguese teacher, the informants possessed inflexible cultural identity; hence, they described their own country as superior to the target country. According to her, they most likely had the understanding that idealizing another nation or leaving their own country to live in another is a form of sentimental disloyalty committed against their family and friends. Therefore, they adopted a cautious approach to the idea of offering positive responses to their foreign partners (interaction engagement) or acknowledging their opinions (respect for cultural differences) easily on the scale. This finding is also reflected in the findings of Levine, Prosser, Evans, and Reicher (2005) who assert that individuals are inclined to prize their own culture above the others, assess it more affirmatively than the foreign ones and segregate it from them. Ting-Toomey and Chung (2012) labels this inclination as ‘ingroup favouritism’ and states that individuals tend to have an emotional attachment to and predilection for the cultural patterns of their own nation; therefore, they are prone to reject the foreign identities.

On the other hand, ‘interaction confidence’ ($X = 4.09$, $SD = .70$) and ‘interaction enjoyment’ ($X = 4.27$, $SD = .65$) announced the highest mean scores with values higher than 4.00 on the scale. The highness of the descriptive values in these subscales was correlated with the Minimization instances in the pre-interview protocols. Notwithstanding their predominant defensive and denial IS orientation to cultural divergences and beliefs of the superiority of their own culture to the Turkish culture despite their intercultural

illiteracy, they still acted enthusiastic to visit Turkey for a brief period of time and spend time with their Turkish peers. This finding was entirely equivalent to the data set elicited from the Turkish bloc. Connected to the opinions of Turkish counterparts, the Portuguese interviewees also negated the idea of moving to Turkey, yet they confirmed to travel to Turkey for touristic reasons so as to involve in multicultural communication (interaction engagement) and acquire cultural information about the customs, traditions, and behaviours of the Turkish people (interaction enjoyment). Their readiness for intercultural experience originated in their keen interest to compare the cultural systems of both countries and authenticate their estimations respecting the similarities and differences between the target cultures. For instance, the Portuguese learners guesstimated that there might be similarities in some of the customs and behaviours. Thus, they voiced their willingness to visit Turkey and validate their estimations. Ferraro (2006) postulates that the desire for comparisons lies in humans' nature since individuals construct their own identity by being exposed to certain cultural norms and principles; hence, they are more likely to assess foreign norms and principles on the basis of their own standards. In this respect, the Portuguese participants' initial enthusiasm to assess the Turkish culture in accordance with their own standards is quite reasonable. As it is discussed, they primarily had an ethnocentric worldview. However, the instances of the transition stage of Minimization in their statements represented their eagerness for commitment, vigilance to transnational learning, and appetite for intercultural exchanges. This case suggested their openness to make changes in their monocentric perspectives and foster an ethnorelativist orientation over time.

In conclusion, the statistics obtained from the Independent Samples T-Test highlighted that the significance level was computed to be greater than 0.05 ($t_{28} = -1.657, p < .05$) between the Turkish and Portuguese young learners with regards to their pre-test indices. This finding reported that the Portuguese and Turkish respondents demonstrated relatively similar IS levels prior to telecollaborative exchanges. This finding is inconsistent with the findings of Piechurska-Kuciel & Rusieshvili (2021) who found out that nations that have comprehensive cultural connections with miscellaneous communities and cultures are apt to be more open-minded and tolerant to cultural dissimilarities compared to countries with limited intercultural experiences and outperform these nations in terms of IS. Relying on this proposition, it can be stated that since the populations of Turkey and Portugal are mainly composed of people with indigenous backgrounds, the research subjects in both

blocs had limited intercultural contact with other cultures within their own country. They also had neither overseas experience nor telecollaborative encounters before the project activities. Therefore, the correspondence in their initial IS levels was an anticipated outcome inasmuch as they all began the virtual exchanges with a similarly low level of intercultural knowledge. Moreover, the data acquired from the interview protocols of the participants demonstrated that both the Turkish and Portuguese blocs manifested robust ethnocentric tendencies, and no instances of ethnorelativism were identified in their utterances before the project activities. This result has parallelism with various telecollaborative studies in the literature (Piechurska-Kuciel & Rusieshvili, 2021; Fretheim, 2007; Gedevanishvili, 2011; Hertel, 2003; Schenker, 2012; Tabatadze & Gorgadze, 2014; Tecedor & Vasseur, 2020; Tirnaz & Haddad Narafshan, 2020). Even though the participants exhibited some cases of Minimization which is regarded as a transition stage to ethnorelativism, their primary IS orientation remained within the Defense stage. However, the Minimization instances in their utterances indicated that the participants were eager to function in a telecollaborative project and experience cultural differences.

5.3.2 The Development in IS Perspectives of Young Learners and its Extent (RQ2.2 & RQ2.3)

The RQ2.2 and RQ2.3 of the present study explored the degree of enhancement in the Turkish and Portuguese young learners' IS through the provision of telecollaborative DST intervention for 7 weeks. The research questions drew their findings from one quantitative source (i.e. IS-15 questionnaire) and three qualitative sources (i.e. semi-structured interview, research journal, and learner diary). The quantitative computation in the analysis afforded significant outcomes to reinforce the qualitative data in the study. To initiate the present interpretation with the qualitative references, the participants exploited a wide range of affective statements to set forth their mental state towards differences and otherness. These affective propositions were classified under 6 categories in line with Bennett's DMIS (1986) in the codification process. The codification and classification phase reflected a total of 852 ($f^{\text{Total}} = 100\%$) IS instances in the Turkish perspective and a total of 799 ($f^{\text{Total}} = 100\%$) IS instances in the Portuguese perspective. Of the total instances, 95 ($f^{\text{Total-Defense}} = 11.18\%$) indicated defense and 305 ($f^{\text{Total-Min}} = 35.80\%$)

displayed minimization stage of ethnocentrism while 277 ($f^{\text{Total-Accept}} = 32.51\%$) portrayed acceptance and 175 ($f^{\text{Total-Adapt}} = 20.54\%$) signified adaptation stage of ethnorelativism in the Turkish faction. On the other hand, among the total instances, 52 ($f^{\text{Total-Defense}} = 6.51\%$) revealed defense and 291 ($f^{\text{Total-Min}} = 36.42\%$) unveiled minimization stage of ethnocentrism whereas 306 ($f^{\text{Total-Accept}} = 38.30\%$) exhibited acceptance and 150 ($f^{\text{Total-Adapt}} = 18.77\%$) presented adaptation stage of ethnorelativism in the Portuguese bloc. No instance of the Integration stage of ethnorelativism was determined in the statements. As illustrated, the respondents featured both ethnocentric and ethnorelativist stages in each week. Specifically, they still continued to embrace a defensive approach towards some critical differences between the respective cultures (i.e. Defense stage), concentrated more on similarities rather than differences (i.e. Minimization stage), acknowledged the cultural differences (i.e. Acceptance), and developed the ability to decenter to see events from others' perspectives (i.e. Adaptation) simultaneously. However, the representation of ethnorelativist perspectives showed increment over the 7 week telecollaborative digital narrative exchanges, and the participants' IS orientation leaned towards the Acceptance stage of ethnorelativism dominantly ($n^{\text{Turkey}} = 277$, $f^{\text{Turkey}} = 32.51\%$; $n^{\text{Portugal}} = 306$, $f^{\text{Portugal}} = 38.30\%$) on the completion of project activities. The presence of multiple IS perspectives were reflected in the IS-15 questionnaire as well.

The Turkish participants produced a mean value greater than 4.30 in each dimension of the IS-15 scale in the post-implementation in comparison with its pre-implementation in which the dimensions had yielded a mean value between 3.00 and 4.25. The statistical augmentation in each dimension proved that they generally provided agreement or strong agreement to the scale items in the post-implementation and portrayed higher commitment to the project activities, respect and tolerance towards the foreign, interactional self-esteem, eagerness to communicate, and caution to latent meanings.

Of these dimensions, 'interaction engagement' evinced improvement from a lower mean index ($X=3.51$, $SD= .90$) in the pre-implementation to a higher mean index ($X=4.51$, $SD= .51$) in the post-implementation. The Turkish participants overcame their early communication apprehension once they recognized that the Portuguese and Turkish foreign language education show syllabic parallelism, and they succeeded in narrating their digital stories and comprehending their partners' digital outputs. The sense of achievement and loss of anxiety enhanced their self-confidence and rendered them to provide more

positive responses to item 1 *"I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures"* ($X=4.60$, $SD= .51$) and more negative responses to item 3 *"I avoid those situations where I will have to deal with culturally-distinct persons."* ($X=4.53$, $SD= .64$) in the post-questionnaire. This finding is in line with the findings of Demir and Kayaoğlu (2021) who discovered that overcoming the early communication anxiety plays a prominent role to promote learners' confidence and willingness to participate in virtual exchange projects. The learners also examined the similarities and differences between their own culture and the partner culture in comparison and analysis tasks (Week 2, 3, and 4) and minimized the differences by perceiving the cultures as essentially similar. It helped them to give more benign responses to item 2 *"I often give positive responses to my culturally different counterpart during our interacting."* ($X=4.60$, $SD= .51$). As they identified more resemblances between the respective cultural systems, they felt closer to their Portuguese partners; therefore, they acted more willing to give positive answers to their propositions and understand the differences. The aforementioned circumstances promoted the concepts of tolerance and respect in learners, allowing them to develop the Acceptance stage of ethnorelativism. Since telecollaborative exchanges provide opportunities for interactive cooperation, they enable individuals to have personal attachment to their culturally distinct partners and enhance their eagerness to build personal connections with them. The exposure to similarities achieves them to develop a sense of relatedness to their partners through virtual exchanges (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 1999) and to strengthen a feeling of emotional engagement to them (Tirnaz & Haddad Narafshan, 2020), which cultivates acceptance and tolerance towards cultural differences in them. In this respect, similar results are observed in a number of studies (Lee, 2009; Ruan & Medwell, 2020; Tirnaz & Haddad Narafshan, 2020) as well.

The second dimension, 'respect for cultural differences' reflected a significant difference between pre-employment index ($X=3.18$, $SD= .89$) and post-employment index ($X=4.33$, $SD= .49$) as well. The comparison and analysis tasks in weeks 2, 3, and 4 assisted the Turkish subjects to form a genuine connection between their own culture and the Portuguese culture. With these tasks, the participants began viewing Portuguese culture as quite similar to Turkish culture and developed a sense of closeness towards it. The collaborative tasks in weeks 5, 6, and 7 allowed them to work with their foreign partners and make cooperative contributions to their joint digital output, which fostered the notion of online intercultural friendship in the learners. Guth and Helm (2010) support this finding

by stating that collaborative assignments necessitate cooperation, reciprocation among participants, shared responsibility and respect for due dates, which develop a sense of connectedness between learners (Hauck & Youngs, 2008) and cultivate the notion of international friendship in them. With the perception of the Portuguese learners as their friends, they demonstrated higher agreement to the scale items in the post-test. In this subscale, item 5 *"I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures."* ($X=4.53$, $SD= .52$) and item 6 *"I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded."* ($X=4.73$, $SD= .46$), which were among the lowest scored items in the pre-implementation, appeared as one of the highest scored items in the post-implementation. These qualitative and quantitative references symbolize that the Turkish students promoted a more tolerant and open-minded attitude towards differences through the concept of intercultural friendship, which contributed to their Acceptance orientation.

In a similar vein, the third dimension 'interaction confidence' generated a more significant outcome in post-implementation ($X=4.62$, $SD= .49$) contrary to its overall mean value in the pre-implementation ($X=3.42$, $SD= .93$). The asynchronous mode of communication provided flexibility for the young learners to receive feedback from their partners, ask for teacher's guidance, and resort to online dictionaries to complete their digital narratives. The presence of instructors as facilitators and opportunities for translations and peer feedback in telecollaboration serve as beneficial to lower apprehension to a significant extent and promote communicative self-esteem (Demir & Kayaoğlu, 2021). In this sense, receiving assistance from multiple channels helped them to create potent digital stories and comprehend the others' digital narratives and comments easily, which eliminated their initial communication apprehension and enhanced their interaction esteem. Moreover, minimizing the differences between the project cultures and reinforcing the notion of online friendship broke down their early stereotypical knowledge concerning the educational and foreign language learning related superiority of Portugal to Turkey and demolished their initial defensive mindset. Seeing their partners more like themselves augmented their interaction confidence and contributed to their Acceptance of otherness.

Correspondingly, the dimension 'interaction enjoyment' was computed with a greater mean score in the post-implementation ($X= 4.58$, $SD= .50$) than its pre-implementation score ($X= 4.24$, $SD= .76$). The collaborative tasks were performed effectively to divide the Portuguese and Turkish subjects into the same global groups and occupy them with equal

workload with Story Chain tasks. They also cultivated cultural empathy in both Turkish and Portuguese participants, and it allowed both groups to evaluate the occurrences from one another's perspective and to form more sincere online friendship bonds. For instance, the empathetic attitude of the Portuguese participants in the uniform incident and their asking for uniform designs from their Turkish counterparts drew them closer to their Portuguese partners and allowed them to establish more genuine connections. A positive setting in which individuals decentre from their own values to understand others acts potent to promote negative IS states (Zhang & Han, 2019). Therefore, this empathetic friendly atmosphere rendered them to communicate through the Forum section or discussion boards on eTwinning additionally and exchange peer-feedback in a reciprocal fashion, which resulted them in providing more nonparticipant scorings to item 10 "*I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures.*" ($X=4.60$, $SD= .51$), item 11 "*I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures.*" ($X=4.80$, $SD= .56$) and item 12 "*I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures.*" ($X=4.80$, $SD= .41$) in the post-questionnaire. Since both groups functioned with equal effort, approached to one another with empathy (i.e. Adaptation stage), corrected one another's mistakes constructively through peer-feedback, and welcomed one another's linguistic and content-based recommendations (i.e. Acceptance stage), they generally rejected the idea of feeling useless or discouraged. These findings are reflected in several studies as well (Lee & Song, 2019; Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008) which set forth that frequent effective intercultural collaborations heighten mutual understandings and empathetic thinking whereas they decrease negative perceptions and feelings, which eventually yield to a sense of friendship and a feeling of comfort and enjoyment.

Lastly, the dimension 'interaction attentiveness' revealed statistically important growth between pre- intervention ($X=3.47$, $SD= .91$) and post- intervention processes ($X=4.38$, $SD= .56$). Once the Turkish participants defined the Portuguese students as their friends, they began to approach the cultural differences with empathy. They developed the ability to decenter from their own cultural mindset and mediate between others by situating themselves into others' places. This ability enabled the participants to act sensitive to their partners' feelings and execute politeness strategies in their collaborative digital stories. Drawn on this clarification, the participants scored item 13 "*I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.*" ($X=4.60$, $SD= .51$), and item 14 "*I am sensitive to my culturally-distinct counterpart's subtle meanings during our interaction.*"

($X=4.80$, $SD= .41$) remarkably higher in the post- intervention process. This finding corresponds with the findings of studies carried out by a number of researchers (Alaei & Nosrati, 2018; Gilmore, 2019; Jantawej, 2011; Gholami Pasand, Amerian, Dowlatadabi, & Mohammadi, 2021; Petrović & Zlatković, 2009) who discovered that empathetic thinking enables learners to cultivate an introspective attitude towards their own culture and perceive intercultural and interpersonal relations better, which contribute to their intercultural attentiveness.

The Portuguese informants; on the other hand, generated significantly higher mean scores in each dimension of the post-questionnaire ($X=4.63$, $SD= .51$) counter to the mean values produced in its pre-implementation ($X=3.81$, $SD= .78$). The dramatic improvement in each dimension highlighted that the participants showed a tendency to agree or strongly agree to the scale items in the post-implementation and stated to possess higher engagement in intercultural communication, respect and openness to cultural variations, confidence to initiate and maintain multicultural dialogues, willingness for intercultural interplays, and attentiveness to communicational patterns and subtle meanings.

Among the dimensions, ‘interaction engagement’ manifested numerical betterment from the value of ($X=3.58$, $SD= .88$) in the pre-questionnaire to the value of ($X=4.58$, $SD= .55$) in the post-questionnaire. Even though the Portuguese students gave considerably affirmative responses to item 1 “*I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures*” ($X= 3.93$, $SD= .70$) and item 3 “*I avoid those situations where I will have to deal with culturally-distinct persons.*” ($X= 3.73$, $SD= .59$) in the pre-intervention process, they displayed less according to item 2 “*I often give positive responses to my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.*” ($X= 3.07$, $SD= 1.03$). The rationale behind the agreement to items 1 and 3 and partial agreement to item 2 was correlated with their cautiousness before the project activities. The participants showed readiness to involve in telecollaboration project activities; however, they expressed that their positive or negative responses would be shaped in accordance with their partners’ personal opinions and conducts. In other words, since they did not have any acquaintanceship with their Turkish partners, they approached the idea of accepting all of their partners' statements with alertness. Nonetheless, once they acquired knowledge about their partners’ daily activities, school schedule, hobbies, and likes and dislikes in the personal information exchange task, the similarity between the practices and opinions established a sense of closeness to their

culturally-distinct peers and enabled them to see their partners as more like themselves. Similarly, the comparison and analysis tasks in weeks 2, 3, and 4 allowed them to compare the products and practices in both cultures and define the cultural systems as reasonably identical. In other words, they minimized the differences not only at the intercultural level (i.e. cultural products and practices) but at the personal level (i.e. similarity in likes and dislikes) as well, which demolished their initial cautious and defensive attitude and fostered the Acceptance stage of ethnorelativism in learners. The findings of the study conducted by Tecedor and Vasseur (2020) support the present findings since they put forth that exchanging personal information enables learners to establish more intimate relationships while sharing commonalities in cultures and experiences construct these relationships on the basis of equality, resulting in them to overcome their ethnocentric mindset and to develop acceptance to otherness. Therefore, Belz and Thorne (2006) highlight the significance of emphasizing personal and cultural similarities rather than differences to bridge over the individuals raised into diverse cultural systems.

The second dimension, 'respect for cultural differences' reported a meaningful growth in mean indices between pre-implementation ($X=3.60$, $SD= .76$) and post-implementation ($X=4.60$, $SD= .50$) as well. The personal information exchange task in week 1 rendered the Portuguese subjects to detect the parallelism between their own and partners' lifestyles and correspondence between their own and partners' likes and dislikes. The comparison and analysis tasks in weeks 2, 3, and 4 assisted them to identify the product and practice-oriented similarities between the respective cultures. The collaborative tasks in weeks 5, 6, and 7 allowed them to function with their Portuguese counterparts and make cooperative contributions to their joint digital narrative. This process aimed to draw the Portuguese and Turkish factions closer first by reducing the differences through the dynamic comparison of the respective cultural systems and the emphasis on similarities over differences. Then, it intended to assemble all participants into global groups and encourage them to create cooperative digital products by encouraging them to collaborate with one another. With the process of minimization and cooperation, the Portuguese participants began viewing their Turkish peers as one of them and developed the notion of 'online intercultural friendship'. Therefore, they not only perceived the cultures as basically parallel but accepted the differences with tolerance and respect as well. The conceptualization of Turkish students as their friends led them to score items 5 "*I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.*" ($X=4.53$, $SD= .52$) and 6 "*I think people from other cultures are*

narrow-minded.” ($X=4.73$, $SD= .46$) more adversely. Since the Turkish participants were their online friends, they regarded the divergences as fairly normal due to the geographical distance between both countries and developed an empathetic orientation to differences and otherness. It led them to strengthen their Acceptance orientation by respecting the differences and develop some cases of the Adaptation mindset of ethnorelativism by decentring from their own worldview to understand the other. The aforementioned findings are consistent with the study findings of various researchers (Alaei & Nosrati, 2018; Galante, 2014; Tirnaz & Haddad Narafshan, 2020; Alvarez Valdivia & Gonzales Montoto, 2018) who found out that the concept of friendship encourages learners to understand the opinions and conducts of their culturally-distinct counterparts and embrace acceptive and empathetic attitudes to differences.

In the same vein, the third dimension ‘interaction confidence’ generated a higher overall mean index in the post-implementation ($X=4.62$, $SD= .54$) contrary to its overall mean value in the pre-implementation ($X=4.09$, $SD= .70$). The Portuguese participants had provided considerably positive scores to the scale items in the pre-questionnaire and generated a mean value greater than 4.00 in this subscale due to their reliance on their foreign language skills. However, this scale documented a higher mean score in each item of the post-questionnaire due to two reasons. First, the participants possessed digital apprehension although they had high regard for their foreign language skills prior to project activities. The learners had neither regulated an eTwinning project nor utilized any DST tools before. Therefore, asynchronous mode of communication caused a disturbance in the Portuguese bloc. This case is also reflected in the findings of the study carried out by Baker (2012) who pointed out that FL learners may provide favourable responses to the content of the telecollaborative projects, yet they may react against their cybernated nature due to their lack of digital skills; hence, they may display a preference for face to face interaction over cybernated communication. However, receiving assistance from their IT teacher and utilizing a DST medium they had previous knowledge and experiences on eradicated their technological anxiety and promoted their confidence to engage in asynchronous communication. It assisted the participants to count on their digital skills as well as their English language proficiency and score items 7 “*I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.*” ($X= 4.53$, $SD= .52$) and 8 “*I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures.*” ($X= 4.67$, $SD= .49$) more positively. Second, using similar vocabulary items and grammatical structures to create collaborative

digital stories enabled them to score item 9 “*I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.*” more affirmatively ($X=4.67$, $SD= .62$) in the post-implementation. Since the Portuguese held a defensive orientation and perceived their foreign language education superior to the Turkish foreign language education at the beginning, they were expecting some communication mishaps in the DST creation process. Nevertheless, the successful completion of the digital narratives and intelligibility of the stories drew forth the belief that they could forge effective dialogue with their Turkish partners not only in an asynchronous mode but in person as well. This case also contributed to the Portuguese learners’ willingness to continue the telecollaborative tradition on the completion of project tasks and augmented their ethnorelativist mindset. These results have parallelism with the studies of Jantawej (2011), Gilmore (2019), Hagley (2020), and Gholami Pasand et al. (2021) who detected that the improvement in learners’ confidence levels fosters the effectiveness of intercultural contact, alters their monocentrism, and contributes to their open-mindedness and adaptive capacity.

Of all the subscales of IS-15, the subscale of ‘interaction enjoyment’ proposed the greatest overall mean value both in pre-questionnaire ($X= 4.27$, $SD= .65$) and the post-questionnaire ($X= 4.73$, $SD= .49$). Nonetheless, the Portuguese students’ interaction enjoyment manifested fluctuations over a 7 week period. Prior to the project activities, the students were enthusiastic to learn about the products and practices in Turkish culture, process the interesting and strange facts about it, and compare it with their own culture. However, the comparison and analysis tasks lowered the differences between the respective cultures and enabled the respondents to comprehend both cultures as almost the same. Diminishing the differences rendered them to develop higher IS mindsets as Minimization and Acceptance stages in Bennett’s DMIS, yet it caused them to dampen their initial curiosity and enthusiasm. Inasmuch as the Turkish and Portuguese cultures showed robust commonalities, the participants felt as if they did not grasp any novel information and lost their interest to pursue the project activities. The collaborative tasks; on the other hand, encouraged the Portuguese and Turkish learners to function within international groups and produce joint digital stories. This task form heightened their curiosity and willingness and enhanced their interactional enjoyment. Specifically, the Portuguese students exhibited responsibility for their joint digital stories; therefore, they provided corrective and personal feedback to their partners’ narrative parts and communicated through the Forum section and the discussion boards so as to improve the

quality of their digital productions. Communicating via other channels and expecting their culturally distinct partners' narrative parts and corrections awakened their lost curiosity in the previous task form and intensified their interaction enjoyment further. In this respect, they provided disagreement to items 10 "*I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures.*" ($X=4.60$, $SD= .51$), 11 "*I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures.*" ($X= 4.80$, $SD= .56$), and item 12 "*I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures*" ($X=4.80$, $SD= .41$) in the post questionnaire. This finding demonstrates correspondence with the propositions of Deardorff (2012) and MacIntyre and Legatto (2011) who discuss that interaction enjoyment is a dynamic occurrence which shifts its intensity even within one interactive phenomenon or on a daily basis. It also signifies robust correlation with the findings of studies administered by McKenzie (2000), Miller (2004), Motteram and Forrester (2005), O'Rourke (2007), and Garrett-Rucks (2014) who state that learners in virtual exchange projects undergo different stages of adjustment (e.g. early enjoyment and excitement being proceeded by retraction and denial). Since an individual's willingness to communicate and enjoyment arise from an amalgam of several proximal and secluded factors including cognitive, semantic, scholarly, and communicative spheres of language that can manifest frequent variation (Mystkowska-Wiertelak & Pawlak, 2014), the fluctuation of the participants' interaction enjoyment was an expected outcome in this study.

Lastly, the dimension 'interaction attentiveness' reported a notable enhancement between pre-DST intervention ($X=3.53$, $SD= .93$) and post-DST intervention processes ($X=4.64$, $SD= .48$). The collaborative tasks necessitated the Portuguese students to cooperate with their Turkish peers, exchange constructive feedback, and produce joint digital outputs, which reinforced the concept of 'online intercultural friendship in them. According to Gholami Pasand et al. (2021), being counselled and directed towards the same learning objectives creates a common ground for learners and reinforces intercultural cohesion. In this respect, functioning together towards the same objective and building a constructive relationship resulted in them seeing their Turkish partners as their online friends. Defining the Turkish students as their friends not only enabled them to respect the cultural and personal differences between the Portuguese and Turkish blocs and strengthened the Acceptance stage of ethnorelativism but also assisted them to develop the ability to decenter from their own cultural reality and perceive things from others' perspectives. This empathetic ability allowed them to advance to the Adaptation stage of ethnorelativism and

take their partners' feelings and subtle meanings into consideration before articulating their judgments. With the potency of the empathetic orientation, the Portuguese respondents yielded more affirmative scoring to items 13 "*I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.*" ($X=4.60$, $SD= .51$) and item 14 "*I am sensitive to my culturally-distinct counterpart's subtle meanings during our interaction.*" ($X=4.80$, $SD= .41$) in the post-questionnaire. Similar findings are extracted from studies carried out by various researchers (Arasaratnam & Banerjee, 2011; Demir & Kayaoğlu, 2021; Godwin-Jones, 2019; Miller, 2004; Nadeem et al., 2018; Pederson, 1997; Peiser, 2015; Zhu Hua et al., 2011) who suggest that collaborative assignments create challenges overcome only by the cooperation of group members and yield to the development of online intercultural friendships, and these friendships exert a positive influence on their interactional sensitivity and attentiveness and increase their ethnorelativist orientation in the form of Acceptance of Adaptation.

To conclude, the statistics acquired from the Paired Samples T-Test demonstrated that the significance level was below the score of 0.05 in both Turkish ($t_{14}= -9.408$, $p<.05$) and Portuguese blocs ($t_{14}= -8.957$, $p<.05$). This finding pointed out that the observed a statistically meaningful IS enhancement between the pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire scores of both subject groups. The data extracted from the Independent Samples T-Test; on the other hand, revealed that the significance level was higher than 0.05 in both pre-questionnaire ($t_{28}= -1.657$, $p<.05$) and post-questionnaire ($t_{28}= -3.246$, $p<.05$) between the Turkish and Portuguese young learners. This signified that their pre-test and post-test values yielded considerably equivalent outcomes. In a more clear sense, the Turkish and Portuguese respondents began the telecollaborative DST project with relatively similar IS levels. They achieved to augment their sensitivity towards cultural differences via fostering their intercultural engagement, respect for cultural differences, interaction confidence, interaction enjoyment, and interaction attentiveness to a substantial extent. However, the degree of improvement through 7-week DST interplays also displayed correspondence, and both blocs generated similar IS levels in the post-test. These findings manifested parallelism with the findings of studies carried out by a number of researchers (Alaei & Nosrati, 2018; Jantawej, 2011; Lee, 2009; Nieto, 2008; Paige, 1993; Gholami Pasand et al., 2021; Petrović & Zlatković, 2009; Pourakbari & Chalak, 2015; Pruegger & Rogers, 1994; Rahimi & Soltani, 2011; Sarwari & Whab, 2017; Tirnaz & Haddad Narafshan, 2020) who reported that learners progressed their sensitivity levels by

demonstrating robust enhancement in the subscales of IS through virtual collaboration. Moreover, the data drawn out from the qualitative sources indicated that the frequent intercultural contact not only yielded to a statistical increase in the learners' IS dimensions (i.e. confidence, respect, engagement, enjoyment, and attentiveness) but enabled them to build online intercultural friendships with their culturally distinct partners. The concept of intercultural friendship enabled them to shift their initial monocentric perspectives and develop Acceptance and Adaptation levels of ethnorelativism by acknowledging and respecting cultural differences and cultivating the ability to switch between their own cultural perspective and their partners' cultural mindsets. This perspective shift from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism is reflected in the findings of studies carried out by Helm (2009), Galante (2014), Kuusisto et al. (2016), Tirnaz and Haddad Narafshan (2018), Alvarez Valdivia and Gonzales Montoto (2018), Dugartsyrenova and Sardegna (2019), and Tecedor and Vasseur (2020) as well. Even though young, teenage, and adult learner studies present similar statistical and perspectival IS development through virtual exchanges as reported above, young learners were more inclined to show holistic sensitivity as opposed to teenage and adult learners. Specifically, the young learners in the present study held an acceptive, respectful, and empathetic attitude towards all differences including the non-uniform policy at the Portuguese school and non-celebration of Christmas in Turkey once they built a sense of friendship with their foreign partners contrary to the adult learner studies regulated by Sasani (2018) and Tabatadze and Gorgadze (2018) which claimed that adult learners generally portray selective IS towards diverse sources of differences (e.g. monocentrism to religious differences whereas ethnorelativism to social differences). Notwithstanding the discrepancy between young and adult IS studies, starting the telecollaborative exchanges in early education provides significant advantages to develop more sophisticated IS in the later stages of formal training (Gilmore, 2019). In this respect, the present study supports the views of Buchori and Dobinson (2015) who calls for more intensified and sensitive intercultural training in young learner contexts and highlights the importance of telecollaboration projects in the earlier phases of FL education.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction

The current chapter begins with the presentation of a brief summary of the design and the findings of the study. Followingly, it elucidates the pedagogical implications, limitations, and further suggestions for future research.

6.2 Summary of the Research

The present study derived its motivation from the paucity of classroom-based practices to promote the ICC, intercultural understanding, and sensitivity of young learners in the Turkish context although the significance of these notions is recognized and well-established in ELT literature across the world. Since the integration of ICC into English classes has not been attributed sufficient scholarly attention in the Turkish context (Güven, 2015), and the research volumes focusing on the enhancement of ICC of young learners remain relatively scarce in the global extent (Mirzaei & Forouzandeh, 2013), it aimed to address the practical gap in the literature and offer a classroom-based telecollaborative implementation to enhance young learners' ICC through the intercultural exchanges of digital stories. The rationale behind the selection of DST as the intercultural telecollaboration medium of this study was discussed as its facilitative function to familiarize and contextualize the uncharted contents and messages in children's minds.

The study was conducted with 30 young learners in total, 15 of whom were selected from a Turkish secondary school and 15 of whom were singled out from a Portuguese secondary

school. All of the learners were 5th-grade students whose ages ranged between 9 and 10. In this study, an eTwinning project titled “Europe – a Melting Pot” was created by the Turkish and Portuguese project teachers to prepare a platform for the telecollaborative encounter of the research subjects. Then, they were registered to the Twinspace of this project. A 7-week telecollaborative plan was designed by the researcher in line with the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies proposed by Guth and Helm in 2010, and the plan included three task types as *personal information exchange task* (Week 1), *comparison and analysis tasks* (Week 2, 3, & 4), and *collaboration and product creation tasks* (Week 5, 6, & 7) and followed four strata as *situated practice*, *overt instruction*, *critical framing* and *transformed practice* in each task type. In accordance with this plan, the students began each week with the situated practice stage. In other words, they introduced themselves to their foreign partners through digital narratives in the first week, presented their local culture (e.g. cuisine and traditions) to their culturally distinct peers through digital audio-storybooks in the second, third, and fourth weeks, and wrote and narrated collaborative stories with their foreign counterparts in the fifth, sixth, and seventh weeks. Then, the situated practice was followed by the overt instruction phase in which the participants met with their project teachers on the ZOOM platform and discussed their own and partners’ digital productions and negotiated on the cultural similarities and differences between the project cultures. When the overt instruction virtual discussions were completed, the students were asked to reflect on their learnings and experiences in the critical framing stage. The transformed practice stage was implemented only for the collaborative tasks since it necessitates cooperation and collective product creation.

Mixed methods research was determined as the research design of this study. In this regard, the data were collected from the quantitative source of the IS-15 Scale (Wang & Zhou, 2016) and the qualitative sources of semi-structured interviews, learner diaries, and research journals. Prior to the data collection phase, the quantitative source, IS-15 Scale was translated into Turkish and adapted for young learners by the cooperative efforts of five instructors with master or doctoral degrees. Then, the initial ICC and IS levels of the research subjects were elicited via the pre-implementation of the IS-15 scale and pre-interview sessions. Followingly, the 7-week telecollaborative plan was regulated by the project teachers. Each week, the teachers recorded their overt instruction observations into their research journals while the young learners reflected on their intercultural learnings and experiences in their learner diaries. Finally, the promotion in the learners’ ICC and IS

states were detected via the post-implementation of the IS-15 scale and post-interview sessions. The quantitative data were statistically computed in the SPSS platform first while the qualitative data were coded in accordance with Byram's (1997) MMICC and Bennett's (1986) DMIS frames. The quantitative and qualitative data were triangulated to identify the rate of the young learners' ICC and IS development and understand the reasons behind their personal progress.

The analyses revealed significant findings for the research questions of the present study. To begin with RQ1, it aimed to represent the early ICC levels of the Turkish and Portuguese young learners and their development over the 7-week telecollaborative DST practice. Since Byram's (1997) MMICC was selected as the theoretical basis of this question, the collected data were coded both for their self-cultural awareness (RQ1.1) and intercultural understanding (RQ1.2 & RQ1.3) of the participants. Moreover, the intercultural understanding dimension was interpreted under five sub-categories as knowledge, attitudes, skills of discovery/ interacting, skills of interpreting/ relating, and critical cultural awareness in line with this framework. The findings reported that intracultural learning remained at a superficial level in this study since the young learners studied familiar topics in their national cultures such as dressing style, cuisine, and celebrations to present to their foreign partners. However, they demonstrated some instances of self-cultural awareness by recognizing the behavioural and cultural differences within their own society. They also pointed out that the students manifested remarkable improvement in their intercultural awareness by boosting their knowledge, attitudes, skills, and critical cultural awareness. The participants enhanced their intercultural knowledge by acquiring new information about their partners' lifestyles, hobbies, clothing preferences, school life, eating regimes, traditions and favourite celebrations. However, the knowledge sphere remained limited to the knowledge of products and practices in the target culture. No evidence of development was identified in their knowledge of processes, belief mechanisms, and social groups in the target culture. They also fostered their attitudes towards otherness and difference through the exchanges. The guidance of their teachers enabled them to overcome their initial communication and digital apprehension, and the regular virtual DST interplays allowed them to recognize the robust correspondence between the respective cultural systems and encouraged a sense of closeness between them, which contributed to their interaction enjoyment and engagement further. Furthermore, they promoted their skills of discovery/ interacting by exchanging digital

narratives with their foreign counterparts. The virtual exchanges were observed to make positive contributions to the learners' listening, reading, and writing main skills as well as pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar sub-skills, which influenced their communication skills profoundly. Besides this, the learners were noticed to ask more sophisticated questions about the products and practices in the target culture on the discussion boards of eTwinning and to use some communication strategies such as thanking and joking in their digital productions, which hinted the considerable progress in their skills. Similarly, they boosted their skills of relating/ interpreting by developing the capacity to produce more accurate interpretations and establish more authentic connections between the target cultures. Specifically, the learners began to relate the practices and products in their own culture with the ones in the target culture, cogitate on the reasons behind the bizarre and interesting practices in the target culture, and develop empathy towards the differences. Finally, the noteworthy enhancement in the learners' knowledge, attitude, and skills contributed to their critical cultural awareness. This awareness was disclosed with the shift in their perspectives. Clearly, they achieved to alter their monocentric attitude and develop a more ethnorelativist perspective towards otherness. The shift in their perspectives was elucidated in RQ2 in detail.

RQ2; on the other hand, aimed at presenting the initial IS perspectives of the Turkish and Portuguese young learners and their development over the 7-week telecollaborative DST practice. Since Bennett's (1986) DMIS was determined as the theoretical basis of this question, the quantitative data were examined under five factors as interaction engagement, respect for cultural differences, interaction confidence, interaction enjoyment, and interaction attentiveness whereas the qualitative data were coded under the 6 stages of DMIS as denial, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, and integration. While triangulating the data in both sources, it was observed that the quantitative findings were in line with the qualitative findings. The statistics acquired from the pre-questionnaires displayed that the Turkish and Portuguese participants began the telecollaboration project with remarkably similar IS levels due to their telecollaborative inexperience and lack of intercultural knowledge. Likewise, the statistics acquired from the post-questionnaires demonstrated that both subject groups achieved to enhance their IS levels to significantly equivalent extents after the telecollaborative intervention. In other words, the Turkish and Portuguese participants' pre-and post-test statistics yielded relatively equivalent results, and the learners in both nations manifested meaningful growth in their interaction

engagement, respect for cultural differences, interaction confidence, interaction enjoyment, and interaction attentiveness after the virtual exchanges. The promotion in these sub-scales rendered the participants to show higher commitment to and responsibility for the project tasks (engagement), accept and respect the cultural divergences (respect for differences), receive greater enthusiasm from the interactions (enjoyment), rely more on their knowledge and skills (confidence), and attach importance to their partners' opinions and latent meanings (attentiveness), which yielded amelioration in their sensitivity orientation. According to the data drawn from the qualitative sources, the participants exhibited high ethnocentric orientation prior to project activities by remaining unable to voice the differences between the project cultures (Denial) and viewing their own culture as inferior or superior over the target culture (Defense). However, with the promotion in the aforementioned factors, the participants succeeded in establishing more intimate contact with their culturally distinct partners and developing online friendships with them. The concept of online intercultural friendship assisted them to break down their initial monocentric perspectives concerning the supremacy of one culture over the other and to develop Acceptance and Adaptation levels of ethnorelativism by acknowledging and respecting the cultural differences and cultivating the ability to switch between their own cultural perspective and their partners' cultural mindsets.

6.3 Pedagogical Implications

The present study aims to contribute to the field of ICC and IS by providing a classroom-based telecollaborative practice for young language learners and offers some pedagogical implications for educators in the context of online intercultural interplays. These implications are provided below.

As a theoretical difference, the present academic endeavour is not constructed on a single model. Conversely, Byram's (1997, 2000) MMICC and Bennett's (1986) DMIS perspectives are utilized together to elicit more comprehensive research evidence and analyse the qualitative data thoroughly in young learner context. Even though Byram's (1997, 2000) MMICC is one of the most extensive and widely-employed frameworks in the field of FL education due to its triangulation of knowledge, attitude, and knowledge to yield an enhancement in their critical cultural awareness, it holds significant limitations when functioning with young language learners who have low foreign language

proficiency and abstract reasoning skills (Garrett-Rucks, 2014). First, it has ambiguity in the threshold levels of its spheres (i.e. knowledge attitudes, and skills), which restricts its utilization with learners with limited foreign language knowledge. Second, it does not follow a developmental framework which hinders the observation of learners' personal ICC growth over time. Drawn on these limitations, Bennett's DMIS (1986) proposes solutions with its more clear descriptions of threshold levels and developmental orientation, which is potent to be used with younger language students who have low FL awareness. Therefore, the juxtaposition of the aforementioned frameworks may provide an effective guideline for educators and researchers working with young learners to monitor the development in their ICC over the telecollaborative process and correlate this development with the progress in their knowledge, attitude, and skills to gain a more thorough understanding about their progress.

With the use of Byram's (1997) ICC framework, the current study highlights that the telecollaborative DST interplays enhance both young learners attitudes including their openness to engage in intercultural dialogues and learn about foreign cultures and their knowledge embodying the understanding of their own culture as well as the awareness of other cultural systems. In other words, the learners promote their intracultural and intercultural understanding while committing more to the telecollaborative assignments and enjoying the online multicultural encounters. The enhancement in the knowledge and attitude spheres contributes to the development of their skills dimensions. Specifically, the young learners become more proficient in acquiring cultural information from their foreign peers (i.e. skills of discovery/ interacting) and interpreting the cultural differences in line with their own cultural understandings (i.e. skills of interpreting/ relating). Finally, the enhancement in their knowledge, attitude, and skills results in an improvement in their critical cultural awareness in the form of perspective shift. Reflecting on the findings above, it may be proposed that telecollaborative practices have positive impacts in young learner contexts. In this regard, telecollaboration should be incorporated into classroom learning in the earlier stages of education so as to prevent them from developing stereotypes about foreign cultures and enable them to attain higher critical cultural awareness in the later stages of their schooling. Since language teachers know their students' emotional and communicative needs, they should be the ones creating the telecollaborative opportunities in accordance with their learners' language proficiency, individual preferences and academic and psychological requirements. In line with the

findings of the present study, the eTwinning platform provides a wide spectrum for them to establish their own international projects and include teachers and young learners with similar needs and objectives across the globe.

The present academic endeavour demonstrates that the measurement of young learners' IS functions effectively to comprehend the development in their ICC thoroughly. According to Byram's ICC framework, the critical cultural awareness dimension, which is the core component of MMICC, includes the objectives of determination of implicit and explicit values in cultural evidence, conduction of evaluative analyses of the evidence, and mediation in multicultural interplays on the basis of specific evaluation principles (Byram, 1997), which are difficult to be observed in young learner levels. However, this dimension is also regarded as the ability to shift one's cultural perspective and adjust his actions to tackle cultural divergences (Alvarez Valdivia & Gonzales Montoto, 2018), which is more observable in young learner contexts. In this regard, the current study recommends educators utilize Bennett's DMIS (1986) to monitor the shift in young learners' ethnocentric orientation towards ethnorelativism in order to understand the promotion in their critical cultural awareness exhaustively. In a more clear sense, it suggests instructors measure the IS of their young learners so as to grasp the development in their ICC meticulously.

This study suggests that young learners portray more holistic IS development in terms of perspective shift as opposed to adult learners. Adult learners tend to demonstrate selective sensitivity towards intercultural differences. To exemplify this case with an instance, they are prone to preserve their ethnocentric perspectives to sources including sexual orientation or religious beliefs whereas they are able to develop higher ethnorelativist perspectives to sources such as socioeconomic status or ethnic identity easily. In fact, they resist altering their monocentrism and negative attitudes towards certain critical subjects. However, the findings of this study point out that young learners manifest more linear and holistic IS development to otherness. Once they develop acceptance and tolerance to differences, they begin to exhibit ethnorelativist mindsets even to the subjects they are initially prejudiced against. This occurrence might be related to the fact that young learners still continue their cognitive development. Since their executive mental functions are in development, they might be more flexible to alter their negative attitudes and stereotypes to foreign practices. Drawn from the aforementioned propositions, telecollaborative exchanges may be

beneficial for young learners to develop ethnorelativist perspectives and build up critical cultural awareness. It is believed that if learners are exposed to intercultural interactions in the earlier years of schooling, they may achieve all critical cultural awareness objectives in Byram's (1997) MMICC or reach the highest ethnorelativist mindset (i.e. Integration) in Bennett's (1986) DMIS in the following years without preserving varied sensitivity towards certain critical subjects. In this respect, telecollaboration projects should be incorporated into curricular activities in the former stages of formal education, and young learners should be introduced to the intercultural sphere of FL education.

The study findings provide some significant insights respecting the influence of cultural self-awareness on young learners' critical cultural awareness. In line with the results of this study, young learners are generally unaware of not only the intercultural differences between nations but the process and product-oriented differences within their own nation as well. In other words, they tend to conceptualize that every child in their own country has similar daily activities, eating habits, or customs since they live in the same country. However, discussing their own culture to introduce it to their foreign partners allows them to perceive that there exist cultural differences even among the members of their local groups even though they live in the same country and study at the same school. Recognition of cultural differences even within their own national cultural system assists them to develop a more acceptive attitude towards the cultural differences across nations. Specifically, developing cultural self-awareness supports the development of critical cultural awareness inasmuch as young learners begin to ponder that if such cultural differences are visible within the same country, it is normal to see cultural differences across borders due to geographical reasons. Drawn on the findings above, it is suggested that intracultural awareness holds a supportive role over intercultural awareness. Therefore, learners should be exposed to not only the target culture but also their own culture as well. They should be given opportunities to learn about and reflect on their own culture so as to gain more in-depth acknowledgement about the cultural practices in other nations. As Moore and Woodrow (1999) propose, ICC is initiated with the awareness of variety in in-group cultural motifs. In this respect, classroom and telecollaborative activities should emphasize both learners' own culture and other cultural systems in order to help learners to understand different cultural mechanisms in relation to theirs. If learners become cognizant of both cultural systems, they may learn how to evaluate incidents in accordance with their own cultural systems, and it may help them to avoid developing monocentric perspectives

concerning the superiority or inferiority of their own culture to another. Moreover, appreciating differences at the intracultural level may enable them to appreciate differences at the intercultural level and to break down their ethnocentric orientations.

The present study also points out that task design and sequence hold critical importance to enhance young learners' ICC and render a perspective shift towards ethnorelativism. In this study, the information exchange task type is utilized in the first week in order to establish personal contact between the interlocutors. Then, comparison and analysis tasks are administered in the following three weeks so as to engage them in critical comparisons to identify similarities and differences between the target cultures. Lastly, collaboration and product creation tasks are employed for another three weeks to enable the participants to function in multicultural groups to produce a joint product. As seen, the tasks are sequenced in accordance with their cognitive and social demands. The results of the current study have uncovered that this task design has functioned effectively to promote the learners' ICC. In the personal information exchange, the participants have had the opportunity to get to know one another and form more intimate relationships with their culturally distinct partners. In the comparison and analysis tasks, they have prepared digital stories to introduce their local culture, which has influenced their cultural self-awareness positively and reviewed their partners' digital narratives, which has enabled them to detect correspondences and divergences between the project cultures. The aforementioned task types have operated successfully to enhance the learners' knowledge, attitude, and skills dimensions. However, constant comparison of the target cultures has resulted in establishing us vs. them binary construction. In fact, recognizing similarities and differences between the respective cultures has not drawn them closer; on the contrary, it has separated them further. It has been the collaboration and product creation task type which has contributed to the criticality sphere of ICC and led to the perspective shift. When the young learners have worked together, they have developed a sense of online intercultural friendship and acted more enthusiastically to think empathetically to understand their foreign friends. As discussed, the aforementioned task sequence offers a gradual increment in social and cognitive complexity and prepares learners for higher ICC engagement. In addition, collaborative and product creation task type performs potently to reinforce the criticality dimension. Nevertheless, Harris (2002) and Helm and Guth (2010) claim that this task form appears as the least practiced one in telecollaboration projects due to its application challenges. In this respect, the present study recommends teachers design

their telecollaboration plans in accordance with the proposed task design above to help their learners to function in multiple levels of engagement. Reflecting on the study findings, teachers should put specific emphasis on the collaborative dimension of telecollaborative exchanges and assign their learners to both local and global groups. Working with learners from their own cultural background in comparison and analysis tasks may enable them to negotiate on the products and practices in their own country and influence their cultural self-awareness favourably. On the other hand, cooperating with their culturally distinct partners in collaboration and product creation tasks may render them to foster intercultural friendships with them and allow them to promote their critical cultural awareness by building on an ethnorelativist orientation. Therefore, cooperative tasks should be highlighted in telecollaborative projects. It is suggested for teachers to select the collaborative tasks conveniently. In other words, the selected tasks should conform with the objectives of the project and be achievable for both groups. Teachers should organize this task type in line with both groups' digital literacy and foreign language proficiency. If one group knows how to use a certain digital tool and has the linguistic knowledge about the selected subject and the other group does not know how to utilize the technological medium and does not have sufficient linguistic knowledge to complete the task, it may strengthen the Defense stage of ethnorelativism. In other words, learners may start believing in their educational superiority to other cultures, hampering the development of online friendship notion and perspective shift.

The present study has also some implications with regards to the inclusion of some sensitive topics into telecollaborative discussions. In line with the study findings concerning the uniform incident between the Turkish and Portuguese students, staying within the comfort zone and selecting safe topics (e.g. music, customs, or cuisine) to communicate on may minimize the differences between the respective cultures and enable learners to foster a friendly attitude towards the foreign culture. However, their ethnorelativist orientations may be challenged once these learners encounter sensitive subjects, and they may retrieve back to their initial monocentric perspectives. However, if students are provided with opportunities to discuss sensitive issues under supervision and encouraged to find solutions for these issues together with their foreign partners, they may begin to pay more attention to their foreign peers' latent meanings and develop a more accepting and tolerating attitude towards differences. In this respect, teachers should not avoid disagreements or conflicts in telecollaborative encounters. Conversely, they should

encourage their learners to negotiate on conflicting issues and to generate solutions to these disagreements together with their foreign partners. Instead of being left blind-sighted to critical topics, learners should be stimulated to step out of their comfort zone and mediate between the target cultural systems to find a common ground collaboratively with their partners. Hence, project teachers should also collaborate together to prompt their learners to overcome their negative judgments through cooperative efforts. By resorting to the expertise and opinions of one another, they should provide their learners with constructive opportunities to come together and solve their disagreements.

Considering the results drawn from the qualitative and quantitative sources, the present study emphasizes the role of teachers in young learner telecollaborative projects. Teaching young learners necessitates that teachers adopt several roles and perform a wide range of tasks to cater for the academic and communicative needs of their learners (Saracho, 1990). Thus, the current academic production holds some implications for teachers for each phase of the telecollaborative assignments. Firstly, teachers should acknowledge the importance of promoting their students' ICC. They should seek intercultural exchange opportunities for their learners to enhance their competence. They should not solely concentrate on the linguistic patterns or target culture and follow the native speaker model. Conversely, they should label the role of the target language as an agent to maintain the intercultural dialogue between interlocutors from diverse socio cultural upbringings. Second, they should conduct a needs analysis before preparing a telecollaboration project. Learners of the same age and grade do not necessarily have the same academic and social needs. Therefore, teachers should identify their learners' strengths and weaknesses and determine their needs accordingly. Then, they should search for partner schools with similar needs since unifying learners under similar goals are one of the factors affecting the efficacy of the intercultural interplays. Third, teachers should adopt the role of guide and facilitator in the whole process. Since the target group is young learners with limited telecollaboration experience, they should regulate brief workshop sessions to introduce the project tasks and support their learners' digital skills. They should also be open to their learners' opinions and suggestions while shaping the projects' plan. During the telecollaborative exchanges, they should be present to assist and support their learners. However, they should refrain from manipulating the communicative process between the interlocutors. They should be present in the face of communication mishaps as well so that learners could be encouraged to produce their own solutions to these challenges. Fourth, they should organize online or

face to face sessions for their learners to detect the cultural similarities and differences between the project cultures and compare them with one another. They should play down the cultural misunderstandings and stereotypical knowledge in these sessions as well in order to hinder the construction of inaccurate knowledge. Similarly, they should ask their learners to reflect on their experiences on a regular basis. However, when young learners are asked to introspect about their own experiences, they may not know what to include or may show the tendency to write only a few sentences including their likes and dislikes. In order to render them to critically reflect on their own learning, they may be given a flexible frame in which they need to produce their reflections accordingly. Besides, they may be asked to reflect on their experiences in the form of drawings. Moreover, teachers should support the use of communication strategies to heighten the quality of the interplays. They should teach their learners some basic strategies such as thanking, complimenting, and asking for clarification. Lastly, teachers are recommended not to limit the telecollaborative encounters only to a single medium. In a more clear sense, students have engaged in asynchronous communication in the form of DST in the current study. However, they have been encouraged to exploit other interactive tools of eTwinning such as the Forum section and discussion boards. In other words, they have not only functioned in a planned exchange but also spontaneous dialogic communications, increasing the effectiveness of intercultural interactions. Therefore, teachers should provide other easy platforms for their learners to enhance the number of intercultural encounters and to allow them to initiate more spontaneous conversations to promote a sense of friendship.

In conclusion, the present study demonstrates how telecollaboration may become effective for young learners if it is regulated effectively. Hence, it offers some implications for teachers and researchers who desire to work on virtual exchanges in young learner contexts. It also suggests some implications for educational institutions since they may draw on the recommendations above and propose virtual interplays as extracurricular activities.

6.4 Limitations and Further Suggestions for Future Research

Even though the present study offers some fruitful insights into young language learners' ICC, it suffers from several limitations. The first limitation arises from the small sample size of the study. This study was carried out with 30 young learners studying in 5th-grade

classrooms of two secondary schools located in Turkey and Portugal. Due to its small-scale methodological approach, the study findings cannot be generalized to larger populations or other contexts. In this respect, similar research may be conducted with larger samples or with the inclusion of young learners from other cultures. Another limitation of the current study is the fact that it does not explore the influence of factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, and intercultural experience on young learners' ICC development. Therefore, the scope of this research may be broadened to investigate the role of the aforementioned factors on young learners' ICC enhancement in further studies. The last limitation; on the other hand, stems from the duration of this study. Since developing ICC is a lifelong process, longitudinal studies may provide better insights to comprehend the contributions of telecollaborative exchanges on young learners' ICC.

This study may open novel research avenues as well. For instance, since Turkey and Portugal are both Mediterranean countries, the young participants identified significant commonalities between the respective cultures, facilitating their development of ethnorelativist perspectives. Therefore, this study may be replicated between partner schools from distant cultural backgrounds such as Asian and African countries to examine the process of young learners' ICC improvement and perspective shifts in distant cultural contexts. In addition, since the participants were all from Turkish and Portuguese backgrounds, the young learners could not amplify their knowledge of social groups in the current study. Hence, this academic endeavour may be duplicated with more multicultural groups. Sample groups may be selected to include young learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In this way, the intercultural dimension of virtual encounters could be enhanced, and learners could develop more sophisticated cultural awareness. Finally, since teachers have important roles in young learner research, this study could be extended to cover teachers' ICC development as well. While managing and assisting the telecollaborative encounters, teachers also communicate with the foreign teachers and have the opportunity to enhance their ICC in line with their learners. Therefore, asking project teachers to reflect on their own experiences may demonstrate how both learners and teachers benefit from telecollaborative interplays.

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APPENDICES



Appendix A. Gazi University Research Ethics Committee Approval

Evrak Tarih ve Sayısı: 06.05.2021-E.86249



**T.C.
GAZİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ
Etik Komisyonu**

Sayı : E-77082166-302.08.01-86249

06.05.2021

Konu : Bilimsel ve Eğitim Amaçlı

EĞİTİM BİLİMLERİ ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜNE

İlgi : 29.04.2021 tarihli ve 80287700-302.08.01- 83482 sayılı yazı.

İlgi yazınız ile göndermiş olduğunuz, Enstitünüz Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Bilim Dalı Yüksek Lisans Öğrencisi Özge Pelin NAZLI'nın, Doç.Dr.Asuman AŞIK'ın danışmanlığında yürüttüğü "*Telecollaborative Digital Storytelling: A Task for Enhancing Young EFL Learners' Intercultural Communicative Competence*" adlı tez çalışması ile ilgili konu Komisyonumuzun 04.05.2021 tarih ve 08 sayılı toplantısında görüşülmüş olup,

İlgilinin çalışmasının, yapılması planlanan yerlerden izin alınması koşuluyla yapılmasında etik açıdan bir sakınca bulunmadığına oybirliği ile karar verilmiş ve karara ilişkin imza listesi ekte gönderilmiştir.

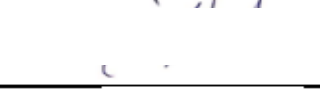
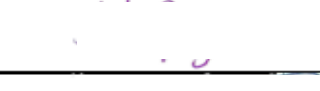
Bilgilerinizi ve gereğini rica ederim.

Araştırma Kod No: 2021 - 535

Prof. Dr. İsmail KARAKAYA
Komisyon Başkanı

Ek:1 Liste

**GAZİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ
ETİK KOMİSYONU KATILIM LİSTESİ**

TOPLANTI TARİHİ : 04.05.2021		TOPLANTI SAYISI : 08	
ADI – SOYADI		İMZA	
Prof. Dr. İsmail KARAKAYA BAŞKAN			
Prof.Dr.Kemal ÖZTEMEL BAŞKAN YRD.			
Prof.Dr.C.Haluk BODUR			
Prof.Dr.Seçil ÖZKAN			
Prof.Dr.Cevriye TEMEL GENCER			
Prof.Dr.İsmet YÜKSEL			
Prof.Dr.Aymelek GÖNENÇ			
Prof.Dr.Gülşay BAYRAMOĞLU			
Prof.Dr.Makbule GEZMEN KARADAĞ			
Prof.Dr.Zehra GÖÇMEN BAYKARA			
Doç.Dr.İlyas OKUR			
Doç.Dr.Nihan KAFA			
Doç.Dr.Melek Gülşah ŞAHİN			

Appendix B. Parental Permission Document

Dear Parent or Legal Guardian,

Your child is invited to participate in the “Europe – a Melting Pot” eTwinning project which is authorized by Ministry of National Education in Turkey and Portugal. This project will be regulated by our partner schools under the guidance and supervision of our English language and information technology teachers. In this project, the students will prepare digital stories to introduce their own culture on monthly basis and upload them on their project’s Twinspace with the assistance of their instructors. The students will also receive digital story productions from their foreign partners to enhance their intercultural understanding and competence.

If you would like your child to participate in this project, please complete and sign the form.

If you have any questions, please contact us via e-mail.

Ozge Pelin Nazli

My child has my permission to participate in this project’s activities as described above. I understand that this project will be regulated at our schools under the guidance and supervision of the language and I.T. teachers and sets an educational value to enhance my child’s language capability.

Parent’s or Guardian’s Name and Surname

Signature:

Appendix C. Intercultural Sensitivity Scale

Dear Participants,

Below is a series of statements concerning intercultural communication. There are no right or wrong answers. Please work quickly and record your first impression by indicating the degree to which you agree or disagree with the statement.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Özge Pelin NAZLI

Contact:

Please put a mark on 5 for “strongly agree”, 4 for “agree”, 3 for “partially agree”, 2 for “disagree”, and 1 “for strongly disagree” for each statement.

	1	2	3	4	5
1. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.					
2. often give positive responses to my culturally different counterpart during our interacting.					
3. I avoid those situations where I will have to deal with culturally-distinct persons.					
4. I don't like to be with people from different cultures.					
5. would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.					
6. I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.					
7. I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.					

8. I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures.					
9. I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.					
10. often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures.					
11. I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures.					
12. I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures.					
13. I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.					
14. am sensitive to my culturally-distinct counterpart's subtle meanings during our interaction.					
15. I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures					

Thank you for your participation. Your responses will be utilized only for the present thesis.

Appendix D. Kùltùrlerarası Duyarlılık Òlçeęi (Wang & Zhou, 2016) – Tùrkçe Versiyonu

Sayın Katılımcılar,

Aşaęıda uluslararası iletiřim hakkında 15 madde bulunmaktadır. Bu maddeler için doęru ya da yanlış bir yanıt bulunmamaktadır. Lütfen, hızlı yanıt verin ve ifadelere ne òlçüde katılıp katılmadığınızı belirterek ilk izlenimlerinizi kaydedin.

İřbirliğiniz için teřekkür ederim.

Özge Pelin NAZLI

İletişim: !

Lütfen her ifade için “kesinlikle katılıyorum” için, 5’i, “katılıyorum” için 4’ü, “kısmen katılıyorum” için 3’ü, “katılmıyorum” için 2’yi ve “kesinlikle katılmıyorum” için 1’i işaretleyiniz.

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Farklı kùltùrlerden insanlarla iletiřim kurmaktan keyif alırım.					
2. İletişimimiz boyunca, farklı kùltürden olan akranıma sık sık olumlu cevaplar veririm.					
3. Farklı kùltùrlerden insanlarla konuşmam gereken durumlardan kaçınırım.					
4. Farklı kùltùrlerden insanlarla bir arada olmaktan hoşlanmam					
5. Farklı kùltùrlerden insanların fikirlerini kabul etmem.					
6. Dięer kùltùrlerden insanların dar görüşlü olduğunu düşünüyorum					

7. Farklı kültürden insanlarla iletişim kurma konusunda kendimden oldukça eminim.					
8. Farklı kültürlerden insanlarla iletişim kurarken kendime güvenirim					
9. Farklı kültürlerden insanlarla iletişim kurarken istediğim kadar sosyal olabilirim.					
10. Farklı kültürden insanlarla iletişim kurarken sıklıkla kendimi işe yaramaz hissedirim.					
11. Farklı kültürden insanlarla iletişim kurarken kolayca üzülürüm					
12. Farklı kültürden insanlarla birlikteyken sık sık cesaretim kırılır					
13. Farklı kültürlerden insanlarla etkileşim kurarken çok dikkatliyimdir					
14. İletişimimiz sırasında, farklı kültürden olan akranımın üstü kapalı ifadelerine karşı duyarlıyım.					
15. Farklı kültürlerden insanlarla etkileşim kurarken mümkün olduğu kadar fazla bilgi edinmeye çalışırım					

Katılımınız için teşekkürler. Yanıtlarınız sadece mevcut tez çalışması için kullanılacaktır.

Appendix E. Kùltùrlèrarasý Duyarlılık Òlçeęi (Wang & Zhou, 2016) – Tùrkçe ve Çocuklar için Adapte Edilmiş Versiyonu

Sayın Katılımcılar,

Aşğıda uluslararası iletişim hakkında 15 madde bulunmaktadır. Bu maddeler için doğru ya da yanlış bir yanıt bulunmamaktadır. Lütfen, öncelikle öğrencilerinize demografik sorulara yanıt vermesi hususunda yardımcı olun. Ardından, 15 maddelik bölümde her bir cümle için *kesinlikle evet* için ilk gülücüğü, *evet* için ikinci gülücüğü, *kısmen evet* için üçüncü gülücüğü, *hayır* için dördüncü gülücüğü ve *kesinlikle hayır* için beşinci gülücüğü işaretlemelerini rica edin. Öğrencilerinizin anlamakta zorluk çektięi cümleler olursa, lütfen bu cümleleri sesli okuyun ve gerekli açıklamaları yapın.

İşbirliğiniz için teşekkür ederim.

Özge Pelin NAZLI

İletişim:

Lütfen, aşağıdaki boşluklara sınıfınızı ve yaşıınızı yazınız. Cinsiyet kısmında ise uygun olan kutucuęa çarpı (X) işareti koyunuz.

Sınıfın:

Yaşın:

Cinsiyetin: Kız ☐ Erkek: ☐

Lütfen her cümle için “kesinlikle evet” için 😊, “ evet” için 😊, “kısmen evet” için 😐
“hayır” için ☹️ ve “kesinlikle hayır” için ☹️ işaretleyiniz.

	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊
1. Farklı kültürlerden insanlarla iletişim kurmaktan keyif alırım.					
2. İletişimimiz boyunca, farklı kültürden olan yaşıtıma sık sık olumlu cevaplar veririm.					
3. Farklı kültürlerden insanlarla konuşmam gereken durumlardan uzak dururum.					
4. Farklı kültürlerden insanlarla bir arada olmaktan hoşlanmam					
5. Farklı kültürlerden insanların düşüncelerini kabul etmem.					
6. Diğer kültürlerden insanların kendi düşüncelerinden başkasını kabul etmediğini düşünüyorum.					
7. Farklı kültürden insanlarla iletişim kurma konusunda kendimden oldukça eminim.					
8. Farklı kültürlerden insanlarla iletişim kurarken kendime güvenirim					
9. Farklı kültürlerden insanlarla rahatça iletişim kurabilirim.					
10. Farklı kültürden insanlarla iletişim kurarken sıklıkla kendimi işe yaramaz hissedirim.					
11. Farklı kültürden insanlarla iletişim kurarken kolayca üzülürüm					
12. Farklı kültürden insanlarla birlikteyken sık sık cesaretim kırılır					
13. Farklı kültürlerden insanlarla iletişim kurarken çok dikkatliyimdir					

14. İletişimimiz sırasında, farklı kültürden olan yaşıtlımın açıkça söylemediği düşüncelere karşı dikkatliyimdir.					
15. Farklı kültürlerden insanlarla iletişim kurarken mümkün olduğu kadar fazla bilgi edinmeye çalışırım					

Öğrencilerinizin ve sizlerin katılımı için teşekkür ederim. Yanıtları sadece mevcut tez çalışması için kullanılacaktır.



Appendix F. Interview Consent Form

Dear Participant,

As an MA student at Gazi University's English Language Teaching Department, I am currently studying on the development of Turkish and Portuguese EFL young learners' intercultural communicative competence through digital storytelling tasks across nations. Since you are a participant of this study, I would like to carry out an interview with you regarding your experiences in the process.

This interview is designed for approximately 30 minutes in length. Your further comments and questions will be appreciated in the process. Moreover, if you do not want to respond to some of the questions, please inform the researcher to progress onto the following question. If you have further questions respecting the interview session, please contact with the researcher via e-mail for further clarification.

All responses will be kept confidential and utilized only for academic reasons. If you agree for voluntary participation in the interview session, please sign the agreement section below.

Interviewer

Parental Agreement

Özge Pelin Nazlı

I consent my child to participate in the interview session

Contact via: !

!

Appendix G. Görüşme İzin Formu (Türkçe Versiyonu)

Sayın Katılımcı,

Gazi Üniversitesi İngilizce Öğretmenliği Bölümü'nde yüksek lisans öğrencisi olarak, şu anda Türk ve Portekiz ortaokul 5. sınıf öğrencilerinin uluslararası dijital hikaye anlatma görevleri aracılığıyla kültürlerarası iletişim becerilerinin geliştirilmesi üzerine çalışıyorum. Bu çalışmanın bir katılımcısı olduğunuz için, süreçteki deneyimlerinize ilgili sizinle bir görüşme yapmak istiyorum.

Bu görüşme yaklaşık 30 dakika sürecek şekilde hazırlanmıştır. Bu süreçteki tüm yorum ve sorularınıza değer verilecektir. Yanıt vermek istemediğiniz sorular olursa lütfen bir sonraki soruya geçmesi için araştırmacıyı bilgilendiriniz. Görüşme oturumuyla ilgili başka sorularınız varsa, daha fazla açıklama için lütfen araştırmacıyla e-posta yoluyla iletişime geçiniz.

Tüm yanıtlarınızın gizliliği esastır. Bu nedenle yanıtlarınız yalnızca mevcut tez çalışması için kullanılacaktır. Görüşme oturumuna gönüllü olarak katılmayı kabul ediyorsanız, lütfen aşağıdaki anlaşma bölümünü imzalayınız.

Veli Onayı

Çocuğumun bu görüşmeye katılmasını kabul ediyorum.

Araştırmacı

Özge Pelin Nazlı

İletişim adresi:

Appendix H. Pre-Interview Protocol

Project: The Influence of Telecollaborative Digital Storytelling Exchange on Young Learners' Intercultural Communicative Competence

Time of the Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee code:

The present project aims at enhancing young learners' intercultural awareness and sensitivity in order to facilitate their transcultural communication via exchanging digital stories on weekly basis. This project encompasses 40 young learners studying at 2 different secondary schools across borders. This interview intends to identify what the project participants have acquired in the intervention process. For this reason, the names of the participants and the data will remain confidential and be used only for academic purposes. The interview will last approximately 15 minutes. And, the responses will be recorded. Please, sign the consent form prior to interview session.

INTRODUCTION

1. We will start exchanging digital stories with our Portuguese partners. Do you feel excited?

MAIN PART

1. Do you know anything about Portuguese culture? If yes, can you state them?
2. Do you think Portuguese and Turkish cultures are different from one another?
3. Do you think there may be similarities between Turkish and Portuguese cultures? If yes, what may be similar between these two cultures?

4. Would you like to visit or live in Portugal? Why?
5. Would you like to get to know Portuguese culture better? If yes, what would you like to learn? If no, why?
6. Do you think communicating with your Portuguese partners will be challenging due to technological problems or your language skills?
7. How can you resolve them if you encounter with a technological or language related problem?

CONCLUSION

1. Do you have any comment, question, or concern about our telecollaborative digital storytelling exchange process?

Appendix I. Post- Interview Protocol

Project: The Influence of Telecollaborative Digital Storytelling Exchange on Young Learners' Intercultural Communicative Competence

Time of the Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee code:

The present project aims at enhancing young learners' intercultural awareness and sensitivity in order to facilitate their transcultural communication via exchanging digital stories on weekly basis. This project encompasses 30 young learners studying at 5 different secondary schools across borders. This interview intends to identify what the project participants have acquired in the intervention process. For this reason, the names of the participants and the data will remain confidential and be used only for academic purposes. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes. And, the responses will be recorded. Please, sign the consent form prior to interview session.

Revised Categories from Byram's (1997, 2000) MMICC
A. Savoir Etre (Attitudes) Measure: 1. What did you know about Portuguese culture before you began exchanging digital stories? 2. How do you define your digital storytelling exchange process? Was it entertaining, interesting, boring, or frightening? 3. Do you want to continue exchanging digital stories with your partners? If your answer is positive, what do you want to learn more? B. Savoirs (Knowledge) Measure:

4. Did you have any prior knowledge related to the customs, living styles, and attitudes of people in Portugal before digital story exchange process?
5. What did you learn about the customs, living styles, and attitudes of people in Portugal after exchanging digital stories?
6. What knowledge surprised you the most?
7. Did you feel difficulty in expressing yourself and introducing your own culture during communicating via digital stories?
8. Did you experience any misunderstanding in the process? If yes, how did you resolve it?

C. Savoir Comprendre (Skills of Interpreting / Relating)

Measure:

9. What are the similarities and differences between your own culture and Portuguese culture?
10. What was your initial opinion about Portuguese culture? Did your initial opinions change after you learnt more about this culture through digital storytelling practice?

D. Savoir Apprendre/ Faire (Skills of Discovery/Interacting)

Measure:

11. Did you experience any difficulty while exchanging digital stories? If yes, what was the reason? (e.g. language barrier, lack of cultural knowledge?)
12. Did you overcome the difficulty over time?
13. How did you feel while exchanging digital stories with your partner and writing comments to their digital story productions? Were your English language proficiency enough to express yourself?

E. Savoir S'engager (Critical Cultural Awareness)

Measure:

14. Can you evaluate the habits, traditions, and people in your own country?

15. Can you evaluate the habits, traditions, and people in Portugal?

Revised Categories from Bennett's (1983, 2017) DMIS

A. Ethnocentric Stage

Measure: *Denial, Defense, and Minimization*

1. Do you think there exist cultural similarities and differences between Turkish and Portuguese cultures?
2. Would you like to visit or live in Portugal? Why?
3. We have learnt lot of information about Portuguese culture. What do you think about the cultural similarities and differences between your own culture and Portuguese culture?

B. Ethnorelative Stage

Measure: *Acceptance, Adaptation, and Integration*

1. Did you like learning about the target culture? Did you find Portuguese customs and habits valuable?
2. Did you experience any misunderstanding or problem in DST exchange process? If yes, what did you change in your digital stories to eliminate the problems?
3. Have you integrated their living style, cuisine, music, traditions into your own life?

Thank you for your participation and cooperation. Your responses will be used only for the present thesis.

Appendix J. Learner Diary Task and Assessment

Please, answer the following questions in your diary.

- ❖ What was the topic? What did you learn in these digital stories?
- ❖ What surprised you?
- ❖ What do you want to learn more? Is there any question you want to ask to your partner about this topic?
- ❖ What were the similarities and differences between Turkish and Portuguese culture in this topic?
- ❖ Did you experience any problem while creating digital stories and communicating with your partners? If yes, how did you resolve it?

Appendix K. Virtual Exchange Lesson Plans for Teachers

ONLINE INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE PROJECT PLAN FOR TEACHERS

All students who have accepted to participate in the present telecollaboration project is expected to perform the prescribed tasks below unless there are exceptional circumstances. Your students' participation and task performance will not be graded. However, they will be important to enhance their knowledge, attitude, and skills and promote their intercultural posture to communicate with members of other foreign nations effectively.

Your own and students' opinions and contributions will be welcomed and attached to significance in the process. Therefore, you will be asked to keep the written reports of your insights and observations and share them with your research partners. In addition, your students will be requested to participate in two interview sessions and record their experiences and personal opinions in written and pictorial format. Nevertheless, your and your students' cooperation in the data sharing process is entirely voluntary, and you and your students will have the right of withdrawal without meeting with any negative consequences. Permissions will be acquired from the Strategy Departments of both countries' Ministry of Education, educational institutions, and students' parents prior to project activities for ethical reasons. However, you and your learners will have the right to reject the publication of your data on the completion of telecollaborative exchanges.

Please, check out the attached information document and the presented parental permission forms below to learn about the project details. If you have any questions or further opinions, please communicate with us via e-mail.

1. Project Information

1.1 Aims and Objectives

You will be able to

- enhance your knowledge and expertise to establish your own virtual exchange projects and conduct the project activities successfully.
- learn how to incorporate the medium of telecollaboration into your teaching as an extracurricular activity.
- communicate with teachers overseas and have the opportunity to learn from their knowledge and experiences.

- promote your problem-solving and conflict resolution skills by generating solutions and risk-management plans for the encountered or anticipated problems.

Your students will be able to

- develop the necessary attitude, knowledge, and skills to communicate with their culturally distinct partners.
- enhance their foreign language proficiency via interacting with their foreign partners regularly.
- promote their related literacies including multimodal literacy, personal literacy, participatory literacy, intercultural literacy, digital literacy, ethical literacy, and re-mix literacy.
- learn how to function effectively both on an individual level and in a group by improving communication skills and developing an emphatic attitude.
- engage in a critical problem-solving process and boost their conflict resolution skills while endeavouring to solve the encountered communication hindrances.

1.2 Participants

The project participants will be selected from safe digital platforms such as the website of the European Commission or eTwinning, and the project activities will be regulated on the eTwinning platform or other websites with proven safeness for security reasons. The number of participants will range between 15 and 30 for each project school. All students will be registered to the chosen platform so that they could communicate with one another synchronously and asynchronously. Before the project activities, the students will be divided into small local groups and matched with foreign groups in accordance with their age and language proficiency. The project activities will be operated under a virtual exchange project unless it is transformed into Erasmus+ mobility.

1.3 Project Activities and Schedules

This project plan includes 7 digital storytelling tasks each of which will be conducted on a weekly basis. The tasks will include one personal information exchange task, three comparison and analysis tasks, and three collaboration and product creation tasks. The weekly activities will include task creation, review and discussion, and critical reflection sessions. These tasks will be designed in line with the curricular and syllabic requirements

of your and your partner's countries and revolve around the common themes, vocabulary, and grammatical structures. All tasks will require asynchronous interaction due to the mismatch in the contact hours between countries in the present project. However, you may include additional synchronous sessions for your learners if possible. Moreover, the project activities are determined to begin on the 13th of September and end on the 31st of October in this project. However, you must arrange the schedule according to your own and your partners' academic calendar so as not to leave the project activities unfinished.

1.4 Data Collection Instruments

The recommended data collection instruments and their suggested use are represented as below. These data collection instruments are attached to the Appendices section.

- Interviews (Pre-interview session is suggested to be conducted before the project activities to identify the students' initial attitudes, knowledge, and skills and to present a better framework for them. Post-interview session; on the other hand, is recommended to be administered on the completion of the project activities to see the students' attitudinal, knowledge-related, and skill-based improvement)
- IS-15 Scale (It is advised to be implemented before and after the exchanges to monitor the development in students' intercultural competence over time)
- Learner Diary (Students should be asked to record their experiences, feelings, and learnings each week. They should be given the freedom to express themselves both in written and pictorial fashion.)
- Teacher Observation (Teachers should keep the written records of their observations each week.)

1.5 Ethical Considerations

You and your partner must receive legal permission from the Strategy Department of the Ministry of National Education in your country. After receiving the legal consent from the ministry, you must inform the headmasters of your educational institutions and submit the project plans and other necessary documents. Then, you must get parental consent from the students. If you plan on using the aforementioned scale, you must also send an e-mail to the owner and ask for permission to use it in your study. When all the documents are prepared, you can begin the project activities.

2. Overview

Weeks	Task Name	Task Type	Implementation Related Activities	Phases &	Technology Used	Data Collection
1	Introducing Yourself	Information Exchange	Situated practice: Creating monocultural digital stories Overt Instruction: Guided discussions Critical Reflection: Learner diaries		My Storybook Story Jumper Canva	Pre-interview Teacher Observation Learner Diary IS-15 Scale
2	National Cuisine	Comparison & Analysis	Situated practice: Creating monocultural digital stories Overt Instruction: Guided discussions Critical Reflection: Learner diaries		Book Creator Flipbook	Teacher Observation Learner Diary
3	Everyday Fashion	Comparison & Analysis	Situated practice: Creating monocultural digital stories Overt Instruction: Guided discussions Critical Reflection: Learner diaries		Book Creator Flipbook	Teacher Observation Learner Diary
4	Holiday Customs and Traditional Dances	Comparison & Analysis	Situated practice: Creating monocultural digital stories Overt Instruction: Guided discussions Critical Reflection: Learner diaries		Book Creator MakeBeliefsComix	Teacher Observation Learner Diary
5	Story Chains	Collaboration & Product Creation	Transformed Practice: Creating multicultural digital stories Overt Instruction: Guided discussions Critical Reflection: Learner diaries		Story Bird	Teacher Observation Learner Diary
6	Story Chains	Collaboration & Product Creation	Transformed Practice: Creating multicultural digital stories Overt Instruction: Guided discussions Critical Reflection: Learner diaries		Story Bird	Teacher Observation Learner Diary
7	Story Chains	Collaboration & Product Creation	Transformed Practice: Creating multicultural digital stories Overt Instruction: Guided discussions Critical Reflection: Learner diaries		Story Bird	Post-interview Teacher Observation Learner Diary IS-15 Scale

ONLINE INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE TASK 1

Getting To Know Each Other

Task type: Personal information exchange

Category: Icebreaker

Subject: Learning about one another's name, age, weekly activities, hobbies, school schedules, favourite subjects, and favourite traditional and online games.

Duration: 1 week

Tools: My Storybook, Story Jumper (optionally Canva), and ZOOM platform

Form of interaction: Asynchronous

Form of collaboration: Individual productions collected in the same storybook.

Description:

In this task, your students will introduce themselves by composing their name, age, weekday routines, weekend activities, favourite classes, and favourite digital and conventional games. Students will work individually. However, their productions will be compiled in a single storybook to upload them to the platform easily.

Please, ask your students to triangulate textual, visual, and musical elements. Help your students when necessary.

A. Preparation

1. Practice on the aforementioned digital tools (My Storybook, Story Jumper, and Canva) with your students before beginning the project activities.
2. Introduce the modes on the eTwinning platform to the students in order to facilitate the exchange process and eliminate the possible problems.

B. Procedures

B.1 Situated Practice

1. Ask your students to create digital stories on MyStorybook and Story Jumper websites (or optionally Canva). Assign them to include
 - Their name, age, and country
 - Weekday routines and weekend activities
 - School life and most and least favourite classes
 - Favourite digital and conventional games.

2. Ask students to record their voices and attach pictures and photographs to digital stories so as to enrich them. Give students 4 days to complete their narratives and upload them to the eTwinning platform.

3. Open a discussion board on the Twinspace of the eTwinning project, and assign students to watch their partners' digital stories and comment on their peers' digital productions.

B.2 Overt Instruction

1. Organize a videoconference for your students and initiate a small group or whole-class discussion.

2. Get your students to watch their own and partners' digital stories together. Then stimulate a discussion on

- The similarities and differences between both cultures
- Their likes and dislikes and reasons behind them
- What has surprised them and what they desire to learn more
- The questions they want to ask and the topics they need more clarification on
- Their recommendations on how to improve the next digital storytelling task
- The encountered problems and possible solutions

3. Act as a facilitator in the process. Guide the session effectively and prompt your students to research more on sensitive topics in order to overcome the development of false impressions and stereotypical knowledge.

4. Take brief observational notes in the process. Be careful not to expose yourself to your students in order to elicit genuine answers.

B.3 Critical Reflection

1. Assign your students to respond to some reflection questions on their learner diaries. The reflection questions used in the present study is attached to the Appendices. You can benefit from these questions or write your own questions in line with your aims.

2. Ask your students to share their personal accounts with you on the WhatsApp platform. However, respect them if they do not prefer sharing them.

3. Write a detailed observation report as soon as the ZOOM meeting is concluded. Exchange your report with the partner teacher.

4. Organize another ZOOM meeting with your partner to strengthen the next project activity.

ONLINE INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE TASK 2, 3, & 4

Introducing the Local Culture

Task type: Comparison and Analysis

Category: Intracultural

Subject: Introducing most famous national cuisine and street foods (Task 2), everyday fashion in your country (Task 3), and your holiday customs and traditional dances (Task 4)

Duration: 1 week for each task

Tools: Book Creator, MakesBeliefsComix (optionally Flipbook), and ZOOM platform

Form of interaction: Asynchronous

Form of collaboration: Small local group collaboration (4-5 students)

Description:

In the first comparison and analysis task, your students will introduce what they wear at school and outside every day. They will also present what they wear at some special events including weddings and holidays. In the second comparison and analysis task, your students will create a recipe book and introduce their famous dishes. They will also provide some tips for their foreign peers so that they could cook these national foods at home. The last comparison and analysis task; on the other hand, will necessitate your students to talk about the celebrations and folk dances in their country. Your students will work in small local groups for these tasks. However, their productions must be compiled in a single storybook for each task to ease the uploading process.

Please, ask your students to triangulate textual, visual, and musical elements. Help your students when necessary.

A. Preparation

1. Practice on the aforementioned digital tools (Book Creator, MakesBeliefsComix, and Flipbook) with your students before beginning the project activities.

- Since this task requires higher cognitive and digital ability, you can create a demo digital storytelling creation lesson in the I.T classroom at your school, if necessary.
- Since this is a group activity for young learners, you can prepare the necessary conditions in the I.T classroom of your school so that the students can work collaboratively and safely.

B. Procedures

B.1 Situated Practice

1. Ask your students to create digital stories on Book Creator or Flipbook websites. Recommend them to use MakeBeliefsComix if they want to create comic books.

For the 1st task, assign them to

- Introduce what they wear in each season in their country.
- Talk about what they like and dislike wearing.
- Display their school uniform.
- Present the formal dressing style at some special events and celebrations.
- Demonstrate their traditional clothes.

For the 2nd task, assign them to

- Choose one main course, one soup or salad, and one dessert famous in their own country.
- Write the recipe of these dishes on the given template by including the ingredients, steps, and cooking time.

For the 3rd task, assign them to

- Select two interesting national holidays or celebrations in their country.
- Describe when they are celebrated and what their customs and traditions are.
- Present if there are dishes and clothes specific for these holidays.
- Talk about the meaning behind these holidays.
- Discuss what they love about these holidays.

2. Ask students to record their voices and attach pictures and photographs to the digital stories so as to enrich them. Give students 4 days to complete their narratives and upload them to the eTwinning platform.

3. Open a discussion board on the Twinspace of the eTwinning project, and assign students to watch their partners' digital stories and comment on their peers' digital productions.

B.2 Overt Instruction

1. Organize a videoconference for your students and initiate a small group or whole-class discussion.

2. Get your students to watch their own and partners' digital stories together. Then stimulate a discussion on

- The similarities and differences between both cultures
- Their likes and dislikes and reasons behind them
- What has surprised them and what they desire to learn more
- The questions they want to ask and the topics they need more clarification on
- Their recommendations on how to improve the next digital storytelling task
- The encountered problems and possible solutions

3. Act as a facilitator in the process. Guide the session effectively and prompt your students to research more on sensitive topics in order to overcome the development of false impressions and stereotypical knowledge.

4. Take brief observational notes in the process. Be careful not to expose yourself to your students in order to elicit genuine answers.

B.3 Critical Reflection

1. Assign your students to respond to some reflection questions on their learner diaries. The reflection questions used in the present study is attached to the Appendices. You can benefit from these questions or write your own questions in line with your aims.

2. Ask your students to share their personal accounts with you on the WhatsApp platform. However, respect them if they do not prefer sharing them.

3. Write a detailed observation report as soon as the ZOOM meeting is concluded. Exchange your report with the partner teacher.

4. Organize another ZOOM meeting with your partner to strengthen the next project activity.

ONLINE INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE TASK 5, 6, & 7

Chain Stories

Task type: Collaboration and Product Creation

Category: Intercultural storytelling

Subject: Collaborating internationally to co-write a digital narrative

Duration: 1 week for each task

Tools: StoryBird and ZOOM platform

Form of interaction: Asynchronous

Form of collaboration: Small cross-cultural group collaboration (4-5 students)

Description:

In this task, you and the partner teacher will match your groups with one another in accordance with the groups' age average and language proficiency levels. Then, you will compose common introductory statements in line with the curricular requirements in both countries and provide empty templates for the groups to create their digital stories. Since this is an asynchronous task, the local group will be asked to begin writing a short story in line with the plot and cut the story in the half in the first collaborative task (Task 5) so that the global group can complete the rest of the story. Similarly, the global group will be asked to begin writing a short story in line with the plot and cut the story in the half in the second collaborative task (Task 6) so that the local group can complete the rest of the story. You can determine which group will be the beginner and which group will be the completer by taking into students' preferences into consideration or benefitting from the drawing method in the last task (Task 7).

Please, ask your students to triangulate textual, visual, and musical elements in the creation process. In addition, help your students when necessary.

A. Preparation

1. Practice on StoryBird with your students before beginning the project activities.

- Since the website of StoryBird is more complex than the previous websites, you can create a demo digital storytelling creation lesson in the I.T classroom at your school, if necessary.
 - Since this is a group activity for young learners, you can prepare the necessary conditions in the I.T classroom of your school so that the students can work collaboratively and safely.
2. Hold an online meeting with your partner on the ZOOM platform. In this ZOOM meeting,
- Match your local groups with the global groups of your partner by stressing their age and gender ratios and language proficiency levels.
 - Identify a common theme together in line with the curricular requirements in both countries.
 - Select empty templates for each cross-national group together. Mutual agreement is necessary for this phase.
 - Write introductory statements for the matched groups collaboratively so that they can build on these prompts together.

B. Procedures

B.1 Transformed Practice

For the 1st Collaborative Task,

- Ask your local groups to begin working on their digital narratives on StoryBird's website. Request them to start writing their stories according to the prompt provided by the project teachers and stop in the climax section.
- Give your students 2 days to write the first part of the story. Inform the other project teacher when your students complete their parts.
- Ask the global groups to continue working on these digital narratives on StoryBird's website. Request them to complete these stories in line with the prompt presented by the project teachers and the storyline developed by their foreign partners.
- Give these students 2 days to finalize the stories. Ask the project teacher to inform you when his students complete their parts.

- When the stories are co-written, open a discussion board on the Twinspace of the eTwinning project, and assign all of the local and global groups to watch their collaborative digital stories and comment on their peers' digital productions.

For the 2nd Task

- Ask the global groups to begin working on their digital narratives on the StoryBird's website. Request them to start writing their stories according to the prompt provided by the project teachers and stop in the climax section.
- Give these students 2 days to write the first part of the story. Ask the other project teacher to inform you when his students complete their parts.
- Then, ask your local groups to continue working on these digital narratives on StoryBird's website. Request them to complete these stories in line with the prompt presented by the project teachers and the storyline developed by their foreign partners.
- Give your students 2 days to finalize the stories. Inform the other project teacher when your students complete all stories
- When the stories are co-written, open a discussion board on the Twinspace of the eTwinning project, and assign all of the local and global groups to watch their collaborative digital stories and comment on their peers' digital productions.

For the 3rd Task

- Ask both the local and global groups which role they want to take on in the final task. Attach importance to their preferences.
- If both groups desire the role of beginners or completers, resort to the drawing method.
- When the roles are identified, follow the aforementioned procedures to produce multicultural digital narratives.
- Open a discussion board on the Twinspace of the eTwinning project on the completion of digital stories, and assign all of the local and global groups to watch their collaborative digital stories and comment on their peers' digital productions.

B.2 Overt Instruction

1. Organize a videoconference for your students and initiate a small group or whole-class discussion.
2. Get your students to watch their own and partners' digital stories together. Then stimulate a discussion on their feelings, experiences, learnings as well as the amount of correction they needed and the problems they faced.
3. Act as a facilitator in the process. Guide the session effectively in order to overcome the development of false impressions and stereotypical knowledge.
4. Take brief observational notes in the process. Be careful not to expose yourself to your students in order to elicit genuine answers.

B.3 Critical Reflection

1. Assign your students to respond to some reflection questions on their learner diaries. The reflection questions used in the present study is attached to the Appendices. You can benefit from these questions or write your own questions in line with your aims.
2. Ask your students to share their personal accounts with you on the WhatsApp platform. However, respect them if they do not prefer sharing them.
3. Write a detailed observation report as soon as the ZOOM meeting is concluded. Exchange your report with the partner teacher.
4. Organize another ZOOM meeting with your partner to strengthen the next project activity.



GAZİLİ OLMAK AYRICALIKTIR.