

The Development of the Global Conversation Club to Enhance Students' Intercultural Communicative Competence

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Abstract

During the COVID-19 pandemic, international travel was strictly restricted, and international activities were impossible to conduct. In education, an exchange program is what the institutions can offer to support students' international activities and experiences for the development of their intercultural communicative competence, which is considered vital in the world today. With computer and internet technology, those international activities can be made possible via online platforms. In this regard, the Global Conversation Club has been designed and developed as a virtual meeting where students from different cultural backgrounds can share ideas and information regarding cultural differences. Therefore, this research aims to 1) evaluate the effectiveness of a Global Conversation Club and 2) analyze and present the outcomes of the development and implementation of a Global Conversation Club. This research is qualitative, and the focused-group interview is conducted via Zoom platform to acquire data. The population includes all student participants who join the Global Conversation Club. The results show that the student participants had positive experiences and believed that attending the Global Conversation Club helped them achieve their goals. Consequently, it can be interpreted that Global Conversation Club is effective in offering linguistic, cultural, and intercultural communicative experiences and improvement for the student participants. The researchers highly and respectfully recommend higher education institutions and educators consider Global Conversation Club as a tool to improve students' intercultural communicative competence. However, it should be kept in mind that the Global Conversation Club should be carefully redesigned so it best fits the goals that each institution, educator, and student may share differently.

Keywords: Global Conversation Club; Intercultural Communicative Competence; Online Education

Introduction

Internationally, English communicative competence has become important as it has been considered one of the most required skills to enroll in schools and colleges, apply for a job, run a business, or travel around the world. In the 21st century, English communicative competence might not be adequate for students to communicate most effectively at an international level. At this moment, educators and researchers may need to place importance on intercultural communicative competence as well.

Commonly, people feel comfortable communicating with others who share similar language, culture, and attitudes. On the other hand, people avoid communicating with others who share different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Jhaiyanuntana & Nomnian, 2020). Without the presence of effective communication among groups of people who share different identities, there might be a lack of understanding, biases, and misguided perceptions. Shahid (2022) claimed that these problems could be solved by learning about new cultures and raising awareness. Thus, it is recommended that intercultural sensitivity be prepared for success as intercultural communication is a foundation to advance business and work environments (Anum et al., 2021).

Furthermore, it is hard to argue that today's world activities are not internationally involved. Past world crises and the COVID-19 outbreak have made global citizens realize that international collaborations are tremendously vital. To demonstrate, in July 2020, the United States and European Union promoted COVID-19 vaccine research and development. Therefore, intercultural communication competence might be considered one of the necessary skills to successfully achieve international or global goals. As a result, this research is aimed at examining if a Global Conversation Club can help students develop intercultural communicative competence.

Objectives

1. To evaluate the effectiveness of a Global Conversation Club, which is a virtual meeting for the students to exchange ideas and information regarding cultural differences.
2. To analyze and present the outcomes of the development and implementation of a Global Conversation Club.

Literature Reviews

Intercultural Communication

Yuriy A. Romanov and Tatyana A. Snegurova (Romanov & Snegurova, 2017) defined intercultural communication as communication between members of different cultural societies. It is an ability that can be formed in the classroom, where language practice and cultural diversity are offered. It is also considered a transferable process of meaning between individuals who share different cultural backgrounds. The significant reason for learning about cultures and intercultural communication is that the world's citizens are producers and consumers of conversations that travel across cultural boundaries.

To look closely at intercultural communication, the connected keys are culture and communication. Culture can be defined as the way of life of a particular group of individuals. It usually includes symbols, values, behaviors, inventions, and other shared manners (Matsumoto, 1996). Communication is the action of developing and conveying symbolic behavior and interpreting those symbolic meanings (Gärdenfors, 2004). Consequently, culture is the major factor that affects communication between individuals.

In the same way, to live in a global society, people should pursue the ability to communicate with others whose cultures are diverse. Intercultural communicative competence is not only related to the communication process; but it is also concerned with the ability to demonstrate proper behavior in various cultural contexts. Therefore, intercultural communication has become a very attractive field of study for many educators and researchers. It might be possible to say that educational institutions are responsible for fostering positive intercultural attitudes among students (He, 2020).

Online Education in New Normal

It is probably a good idea to start with how the term 'new normal' has been invented. As of this writing, in the years 2020 and 2021, the world has found itself in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the CDC (2020), COVID-19 is an illness caused by a virus that can spread from person to person. The symptoms can range from mild, or no symptoms at all, to severe illness such as pneumonia. For the safety of everyone, many nations around the world have implemented COVID-19 preventive measures and protocols. Moreover, well-known health organizations such as the WHO and CDC have also issued a lot of guidelines on how to stay away from COVID-19. Therefore, it is very common to see that everyone wears a medical-grade mask

when being outside, sanitize their hands regularly, and keep their distance from others. The world's market even once lacked sanitation supplies such as alcohol gel, alcohol spray, and medical-grade masks. It has also been very hard on medical personnel because the number of confirmed cases is a lot more than the medical service can handle. Moreover, the COVID-19 outbreak has had a significant impact on the world's economy and has caused an increased number of corrupt businesses and unemployed people. Not only that, it has caused educational institutions around the world to conduct teaching and learning activities online. This is the stage where the world's citizens are entering the era of a new normal.

The new normal is probably one where a microscopic virus destroys whole societies. Though we would all choose to be without it, this new normal is perhaps allowing us to rethink this disruption as a point to create some new practices in many fields, especially in research and education. As a result, online learning is a major approach to education in the new normal (Søraa, 2020). Setiawati et al. (2020) also explained in their paper entitled 'Learners' Interest in the New Normal' that the rapid development of information and communication technologies seems to be in high demand for a lot of people and as well as for educational purposes.

Instructional Design: Using the ADDIE Model

Instructional design is a systematic approach to the analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation of learning materials and activities. The instructional design emphasizes learner-centered approach so that effective learning can take place. This shows that learning outcomes govern every component of instruction. The learning outcomes are determined based on the careful analysis of the learners' needs (McGriff, 2000).

The ADDIE model starts at the analysis phase. The analysis phase focuses on the process of defining what is to be learned. To start this phase, the designer should define the problem, identify the source of the problem, and demonstrate the solutions. Next is the design phase. The design phase is where the process of specifying how to be learned is decided. It usually involves utilizing the outputs gained from the analysis phase for strategy planning. Strategic planning is necessary for developing the instructions. In this phase, the designer should structure how to achieve the teaching goals. The third phase is the development phase. It looks at the process of producing the materials; therefore, the designer will generate the lesson plans as well as the lesson materials. Media can also be considered for use in the instruction. The fourth phase is the implementation phase. The implementation phase highlights the process of installing the project in a real-world context. Lastly, the evaluation phase is the process of characterizing the adequacy of

the instruction. It refers to the actual delivery of the instruction. It is important to note that this phase should improve the students' understanding of materials, support them in mastering the learning objectives, and ensure that they will be able to transfer the knowledge they have learned in the classroom to a real-life setting.

The Development of the Global Conversation Club

The Global Conversation Club is co-designed and developed by Waraporn Theerasak and Rebecca Yoon. Waraporn Theerasak is a lecturer in the Global Business Communication Program at Burapha University International College, Thailand. Rebecca Yoon is the Director of English Language Studies at Appalachian State University, USA. Burapha University International College and Appalachian State University have been international partners for approximately 10 years. Both institutions focus on broadening students' international experiences.

The Global Conversation Club is basically a series of online meetings where college students from different countries or from different cultural backgrounds can participate and exchange ideas and information. The exchanged ideas and information are usually based on the meeting topics. The meeting topics vary and depend on the mutual agreement between developers, but they are mostly related to lifestyles, cultures, and current world situations. For example, college life is one of the meeting topics that might be good for exchanging ideas and information between students from different countries and cultural backgrounds.

The Global Conversation Club is specifically designed for participants who are college students and whose cultural backgrounds differ. The main objectives of developing the Global Conversation Club are: 1) to enhance students' intercultural communicative competence; 2) to boost students' confidence in communicating across cultures; and 3) to help students gain a greater understanding of different cultures. Moreover, the Global Conversation Club is organized to provide opportunities for students to create and maintain international relationships and to learn and become global citizens.

The Global Conversation Club is organized on a semester basis. The developers should agree on dates and times at their convenience, and there are usually two to four meetings per semester. The Global Conversation Club is also organized online to support the ideas of Global Engagement and the New Normal. Zoom, a video-communication computer software and mobile application, is the key channel for exchanging dialogues during meetings of the Global Conversation Club. The exchange of dialogues is done by two parties, who are students from Burapha University International College and students from Appalachian State University. Each

party should nominate five students who volunteer to join the Global Conversation Club. The time range of each meeting is one hour. One hour is an ideal range of time because of the following reasons: Burapha University International College students and Appalachian State University students share different time zones, which are about twelve to thirteen hours apart based on the seasons in America. Students have their usual classes run during normal teaching and learning hours, which typically start at 9:00 and end at 16:00. The students either have their early morning, late afternoon, or nighttime free. The meeting time should not be firstly, too long, and secondly, too early or too late for both parties.

The students who join the Global Conversation Club will receive certificates of appreciation. The arrangement of certificates is that each party will issue hard-copy certificates for its own students and issue e-certificates for students who are conversation partners. That means Burapha University International College students will receive hard-copy certificates issued by Burapha University International College and will receive e-certificates issued by Appalachian State University, and vice versa.

The responsibilities of developers are that of the Global Conversation Club coordinator and facilitator. The developers will exchange emails to communicate about the arrangement and preparation of the Global Conversation Club. They will also act as facilitators during each meeting of the Global Conversation Club. The developers also agree to nominate one student leader from each party to open and close the conversation in each meeting. This way, students would be encouraged to become leaders and critical thinkers.

Conceptual Framework

Intercultural communicative competence consists of two closely related areas: communicative competence and intercultural competence. Communicative competence includes linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and discourse competence. Intercultural competence covers three major components which are knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Intercultural competence can also be supplemented by five values: intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills for interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. In addition, the foundation of intercultural competence is in the attitudes of an individual interacting with others of different cultures. Therefore, lacking the foundation, the other four values might not be able to be fully developed (Byram, 2009; Walinski, 2012).

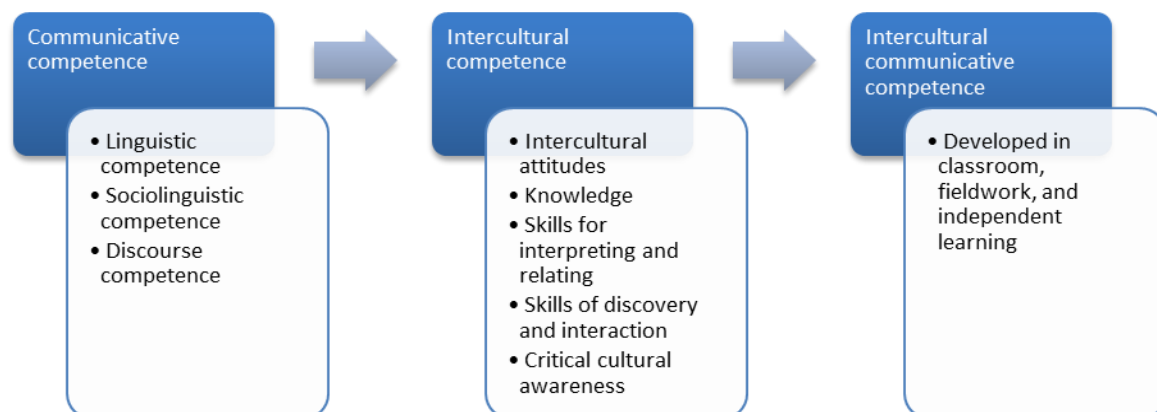


Figure 1 Research conceptual framework

Methodology

This research is qualitative, and the data that researchers focus on are the outcomes of the development and implementation of the Global Conversation in terms of intercultural communicative competence enhancement. The development of a Global Conversation Club and focused-group interviews are based on need analysis. The focused-group interview was a research instrument, and it was conducted via the Zoom platform. The population included all ten student participants in the Global Conversation Club. Lastly, the data obtained from the student participants from the focused-group interview was analyzed and presented based on the objectives of the research.

The focused-group interview was divided into three main sections as follows:

Section 1 includes the following questions.

1. Could you please briefly describe what role you think culture has in the Global Conversation Club?
2. What did you learn about yourself or your culture's ways of making meaning and relating with others from this experience?
3. What did you learn about another culture's ways of making meaning and relating with others from this experience?

4. Did you experience any misunderstanding or confusion while communicating with students from another culture, and what did you do to overcome it?

5. How did you feel when you hear a story that is different from your norm or culture?

6. Do you think that what you learned makes you feel more confident when communicating with people from different cultures?

7. Do you think you could use what have learned from this experience in your study and professional life?

Section 2 includes the following questions:

1. Did you find it difficult to participate in conversations in a virtual environment? Why or why not?

2. Do you think that virtual conversations can fully replace face-to-face conversations?

3. What technology do you find useful when learning or communicating online?

4. How important is online learning during the pandemic?

5. Do you think online learning helps you to improve your time management skills?

6. What are the challenges that you find in online learning?

7. Based on this experience, what recommendations would you give to future students who are participating in a virtual global exchange?

Section 3 includes the following questions:

1. Do you think the Global Conversation Club is one of the best ways for you to develop your communication skills and your understanding of different cultures?

2. Did you understand the learning outcomes of the Global Conversation Club?

3. Do you believe the learning outcomes of the Global Conversation Club were achieved?

4. Were the Global Conversation Club discussions well organized, defined, and paced in order to fulfill the learning objectives?

5. What can be improved about the management of the Global Conversation Club?

6. Do you think you will encourage your friends or classmates to join in the Global Conversation Club in the future?

Result

There were ten student participants who joined the Global Conversation Club, co-organized by Burapha University International College and Appalachian State University. All student participants agreed to join the focused-group interview. The nationalities of the participants are Thai, Indonesian, Indian, and American. Below are tables that show more details about student participants' information and a summary of the responses.

Table 1 Gender

| Gender | Number | Percentage |
|--------|--------|------------|
| Female | 9 | 90% |
| Male | 1 | 10% |

Table 2 Year of study

| Year | Number | Percentage |
|----------|--------|------------|
| Year 1 | 3 | 30% |
| Year 2 | 2 | 20% |
| Year 3 | 0 | 0% |
| Year 4 | 2 | 20% |
| Year 5 | 0 | 0% |
| Graduate | 3 | 30% |

Table 3 Program of study

| Program | Number | Percentage |
|---------------------------------------------|--------|------------|
| English | 1 | 10% |
| Global Business Communication | 4 | 40% |
| Global Studies | 1 | 10% |
| Hospitality, Tourism, and MICE Management | 2 | 20% |
| Smart Logistics and Supply Chain Management | 1 | 10% |
| International Human Resources | 1 | 10% |

Table 4

Section 1 Questions related to intercultural communication

| No. | Questions | Summary of responses |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | What did you learn about yourself or your culture's ways of making meaning and relating with others from this experience? | <p>1) Regardless of participants' nationality or cultural background, they felt the same way about the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on learning and connecting with other people.</p> <p>2) The participants started to realize that there were many things about their own cultures that they should learn, and they found that it was fun to do so.</p> <p>3) The participants liked and supported the idea of cultural exchange. They believed that cultural exchange could be done via online platforms such as Zoom. It did not matter that cultural exchange must always be physical.</p> <p>4) The participants could make new friends and become more confident in communicating with others who are from different cultural backgrounds.</p> <p>5) The participants learned to understand and respect other people and cultures. They learned to be more open-minded.</p> |
| 2 | What did you learn about another culture's ways of making meaning and relating with others from this experience? | <p>1) It might be possible to say that being in the same age range calls for the same wondering questions and curiosity, or even similar goals.</p> <p>2) The impact of COVID-19 allowed participants to find different ways to connect with others. Plus, it allowed the students to learn in other non-traditional manners, which developed more studying options.</p> <p>3) The participants learned various aspects of cultures, such as ways of life, thoughts, and values. Besides, they learned about equality and justice, which they believe are very important.</p> <p>4) English is the main language of communication across the world. The students mentioned this as an example of how Asian people have been influenced by Western language.</p> <p>5) The participants believed that it was totally fine to express their feelings and be themselves when communicating across cultures.</p> |
| 3 | Did you experience any misunderstanding or confusion while communicating with students from another culture, and what did you do to overcome it? | <p>1) American participants thought the conversation flowed nicely. The only thing was that they thought they should simplify the questions they asked so it could be easier for everyone to understand. They were also happy to clarify the questions when others did not understand or had any confusion.</p> <p>2) Some language barriers were mentioned, including lacking language abilities, difficulty in hearing different accents, lacking cultural knowledge (one thought Satay was Thai food, but actually it was Indonesian food), and having different communication styles. The most frequently mentioned barrier is difficulty hearing different accents.</p> <p>3) To overcome the language barriers, the students thought it was a good idea to ask other students to repeat their questions or answers. They also tried to take note of what they did not understand and looked it up on the internet.</p> <p>4) Some participants also thought that they should try to be more expressive and get more involved in the conversation. Being this way might help other students understand more about an individual and his or her culture.</p> |

| No. | Questions | Summary of responses |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4 | How did you feel when you hear a story that is different from your norm or culture? | <p>1) Most participants didn't find it shocking to hear stories that were different from their norms and cultures. They thought that it was exciting and interesting to hear those stories.</p> <p>2) The participants found it interesting whenever they hear or learn about how others approached a common issue or subject with a diverging perspective and solutions.</p> <p>3) The students also thought that they did not make any prejudgments. They want to listen. Then, compare in order to find connections to either themselves or their studies.</p> <p>4) The students felt that some stories were very amusing such as ghost stories.</p> |
| 5 | Do you think that what you learned makes you feel more confident when communicating with people from different cultures? | <p>1) All participants said that they feel more confident communicating with others who are from different cultures.</p> <p>2) Before joining the Global Conversation Club, the participants felt a bit anxious because they were unsure if what they wanted to say or ask would be acceptable. Especially, English non-native participants were worried that others would not understand them and that they would have difficulty hearing different accents. However, at the end of the Club, they learned to be aware of what they should say or ask regarding cultural differences. They also learned to be more familiar with different accents.</p> |
| 6 | Do you think you could use what have learned from this experience in your study and professional life? | <p>2) They also gained non-verbal communication skills and they thought that non-verbal communication skills will be very helpful when they are faced with other language barriers when they visit other countries.</p> <p>3) One participant said that she interned with Education at ASU after joining the Global Conversation Club. What she has learned has been very helpful for her to manage lesson planning and conversation flow.</p> <p>4) The participants mentioned that they could use what they have learned for both their personal and professional lives. They can utilize what they learned to complete the group projects and communicate with co-workers who are from different cultures.</p> <p>5) They also mentioned that they have learned that communication is one of the most important soft skills. They started to value the importance of communication skills as they learned that communication helps in clearing misunderstandings, opening up to other people, and boosting their confidence.</p> |

Table 5

Section 2 Questions related to online education in the new normal

| No. | Questions | Summary of responses |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Did you find it difficult to participate in conversations in a virtual environment? Why or why not? | <p>1) Most participants felt that it was difficult, but that was due to the internet connection.</p> <p>2) One participant mentioned that she didn't think it was difficult for her because she was more confident in having a conversation with others via virtual platforms.</p> <p>3) Despite their feeling of difficulty, they thought online or virtual platforms were still amazing communication resources.</p> <p>4) One thing that most participants mentioned was that virtual interactions could lead to misunderstandings.</p> |
| 2 | Do you think that virtual conversations can fully replace face-to-face conversations? | <p>1) Most participants said that virtual conversations have their own advantages, such as saving cost and time. However, they cannot fully replace face-to-face conversations. They still prefer to meet and talk to people in person because they can fully express their feelings, make eye contact, use body language, and so on. The face-to-face conversation also makes them feel more connected.</p> <p>2) One participant mentioned that virtual conversations can fully replace face-to-face conversations.</p> |
| 3 | What technology do you find useful when learning or communicating online? | <p>1) The participants described laptops, tablets, and smartphones as the most useful and convenient.</p> <p>2) The participants mentioned that Zoom and Google products including Google Meet, Google Classroom, and Google Docs, are most helpful and convenient. Moreover, they thought that these platforms were very safe to use and had many functionalities.</p> |
| 4 | How important is online learning during the pandemic? | <p>1) Most participants said that online learning was very important during the pandemic. Though they didn't think it would completely replace onsite study, it has been a great way to learn.</p> <p>2) One participant mentioned that students needed guidance even when they did self-study. They still needed teachers to give them guidelines.</p> <p>3) Though online learning has been a great way of learning during the pandemic, there have been some drawbacks, such as internet connection problems, learning styles, and teaching styles.</p> |
| 5 | Do you think online learning helps you to improve your time management skills? | <p>1) Half of the participants described how online learning helped enforce time management. They certainly gained time management skills. They have learned to schedule class time and break time. They also believed the better they managed their time, the easier they could achieve their goals.</p> <p>2) The other half of the participants said that they didn't really improve their time management skills. They tended to lose track of time and they got distracted a lot as they wanted to use their phones during class time.</p> <p>3) Other comments were that the participants had to stay home with their parents and help around the house. So, it was hard to manage the time for studying and doing homework. They also thought studying from home and being in their bedroom didn't make them feel very productive to take online classes.</p> |

| No. | Questions | Summary of responses |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 6 | What are the challenges that you find in online learning? | 1) The participants and most of their peers have expressed a lack of motivation when having to do online school. 2) Not being able to learn in a setting where the participants could immediately exchange opinions and thoughts has made learning dull and unexciting. 3) Being distracted and having disturbances when learning from home. 4) Having device and internet problems. 5) Facing awkward silences that sometimes last a bit too long. 6) Being unfamiliar with online learning and communication platforms. |
| 7 | Based on this experience, what recommendations would you give to future students who are participating in a virtual global exchange? | 1) Be mindful of what you are saying. 2) Try to get involved. At the very least, the participants can make new friends and will most likely benefit from communication skills improvement. 3) Try to study each other's cultures. 4) It is a bonus to join as the participants can practice using English. 5) Be open-minded. 6) Participate actively so the participants can improve their English-speaking skills. 7) Be well prepared and list questions that the participants want to discuss. 8) Not only will the participants be more confident in communicating across cultures, but also improve their problem-solving skills. 9) Try to understand and learn from people who are from different cultures. It will be a great experience and useful for the future. 10) The participants will learn a lot about culture. |

Table 6

Section 3 Questions related to instructional design

| No. | Questions | Summary of responses |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Do you think Global Conversation Club is one of the best ways for you to develop your communication skills and your understanding of different cultures? | 1) All participants agreed that the Global Conversation Club is one of the best ways to develop their communication skills and their understanding of different cultures. 2) Most participants mentioned that the Global Conversation Club was probably the only way they could develop their communication skills and their understanding of different cultures during the pandemic. Moreover, they could improve their listening skills as they heard different English accents. 3) One participant described that working in international education and studying abroad is the Best Buy and the Global Conversation Club is a good and additional stepping stone to it. 4) One participant said that the Global Conversation Club was impactful. Besides developing communication skills and being more confident, she thought it helped her to improve her critical thinking skills. |

| No. | Questions | Summary of responses |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2 | Did you understand the learning outcomes of the Global Conversation Club? | <p>1) All participants confidently said that they did understand the learning outcomes of the Global Conversation Club, except two participants who said, 'I believe so' and 'Maybe yes'.</p> <p>2) Most participants described that the learning outcomes of the Global Conversation Club were to exchange cultures with each other through conversations and to Improve English communication skills. They also mentioned that it was not only the linguistic and cultural differences that they gained, but they have gained new friendships and they still keep the contact channels open.</p> |
| 3 | Do you believe the learning outcomes of the Global Conversation Club were achieved? | <p>1) All participants totally agreed that the learning outcomes of the Global Conversation Club were achieved.</p> <p>2) Most of the participants described that they have gained many things from Joining the Global Conversation Club, including learning and understanding different cultures, making new friends, becoming more confident to use English and communicate across cultures, and expanding their vocabulary knowledge.</p> <p>3) One participant commented that the Global Conversation Club allowed her to actually use the language.</p> |
| 4 | Were the Global Conversation Club discussions well organized, defined, and paced in order to fulfill the learning objectives? | <p>1) All participants completely agreed that the Global Conversation Club was perfectly organized and paced very well.</p> <p>2) The participants said that the advisors and facilitators steered them in the right direction to exchange anecdotes, and facts, and even had a proper presentation prepared for the topic of each week.</p> <p>3) The participants also mentioned that the advisors/facilitators helped by coming up with ideas or content when there were awkward silences.</p> |
| 5 | What can be improved about the management of the Global Conversation Club? | <p>1) It would be great if the Global Conversation Club could be organized as a proper face-to-face meeting.</p> <p>2) The Global Conversation Club should be organized more often so the participants can learn and practice more.</p> <p>3) There should be multiple nationalities, so the cultures learned are diverse.</p> <p>4) Realistically, there should be more channels for the participants to be able to communicate with each other more freely and get a chance to organize each week's meeting topics and structures.</p> <p>5) There should be a field trip to the country of the partners.</p> |
| 6 | Do you think you will encourage your friends or classmates to join in the Global Conversation Club in the future? | <p>1) All participants said that they would definitely encourage their peers to join the Global Conversation Club.</p> <p>2) The reasons were that they thought the Global Conversation Club was a great program and it was one of the most effective ways to improve interpersonal and communication skills.</p> <p>3) One participant described that she was glad that she made a decision to join the program. She was worried at the beginning, but everything turned out better than she expected.</p> |

Discussion

The Global Conversation Club is a series of online meetings that mainly include discussion activities. Those discussion activities are meant to get the participants involved in linguistics and intercultural dimensions. The discussion is shaped by the topic chosen, such as ‘College Life’ and ‘What Does Success Mean to You?’. Those discussion activities require participants to activate both linguistic and intercultural competencies. The major outcome of Global Conversation Club is probably that it is a friendly online learning platform where authentic conversations take place.

In relation to intercultural communication, Global Conversation Club truly promotes an awareness of the importance of understanding and respecting an individual’s own culture and others’ cultures. This is a crucial element for being successful in a globally competitive world. The Global Conversation Club also supports the development of linguistic competency. It allows an individual to actually practice using the language, especially listening and speaking skills. An individual could learn to be an active listener and to be an engaged speaker. In order to be actively involved, an individual must stimulate their knowledge of vocabulary and sentence structures.

The Global Conversation Club is not only important to the participants, but it is also important to the facilitators. The facilitators should set up a well-planned structure for the Global Conversation Club so it can be run effectively with the fewest mistakes. It is also crucial to note that an information session should be arranged prior to the discussion session for the participants. Not all participants have the same knowledge, experience, and competencies. Thus, an information session that lays out the background of the topic chosen, and related information should be considered, as it helps the participants’ conversations flow and be productive.

New Knowledge

The participants have found their own learning strategies. To illustrate, they mentioned that they faced some linguistic and/or cultural barriers, such as having some difficulties hearing diverse accents and not being certain if what they wanted to speak about would be considered culturally appropriate. Therefore, they figured out the problems by not hesitating to ask their interlocutors to speak again slowly or clearly, and they did some studies about the topics prior to joining the conversations. These example strategies may sound quite simple. However, to come up with these strategies, the participants must have gone through the process of critical thinking, including problem-solving, linguistic and cultural

awareness, and technological literacy, which are all vital for the 21st century and global citizens. Lastly, it can also be concluded, based on the participants' interview results, that the participants have gained the following: time management skills, being goal-oriented, and friendships. The new knowledge aforementioned can also be summarized in Figure 2 shown below.

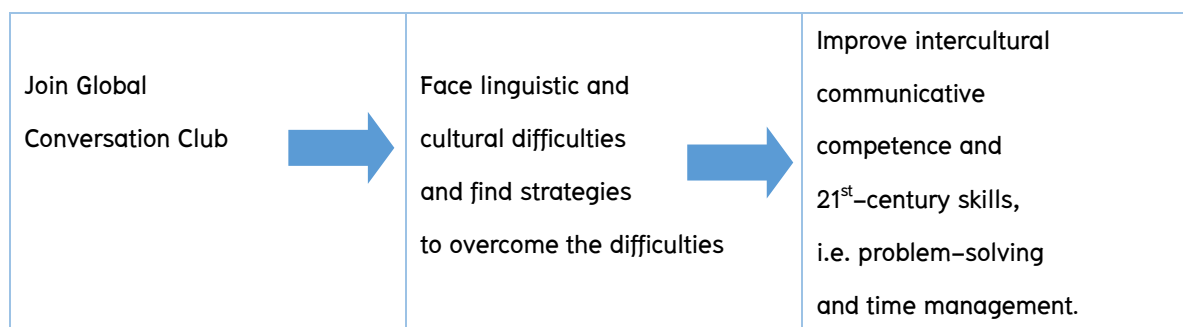


Figure 2 Summary of new knowledge

Conclusion

Intercultural Communication

The participants described their experience joining the Global Conversation Club as a bonus and an impactful experience. They learned not to make any prejudgments and to find connections to either themselves or their studies. They tended to show that they had positive and enjoyable involvement, but there were some challenges that they faced. For example, they had difficulty in hearing different accents, lacked cultural knowledge, and had different communication styles.

Online Education in New Normal

The participants described that cultural exchange does not always have to be physical, as they could utilize online platforms for this purpose. Though online platforms are great communication resources, the participants could still face some challenges, including poor internet connection, miscommunication, feeling dull and unexciting, and being distracted and disturbed. Besides, they still believed that face-to-face meetings would make them feel more connected.

Instructional Design

All participants were totally on the same page, that the Global Conversation Club was nicely organized and very well-paced. They mentioned that the advisors/facilitators guided them properly by showing a presentation for the topic of each week so the participants could productively exchange conversations. The advisors and facilitators also joined in a conversation

with ideas or content when awkward silences occurred. The participants, moreover, suggested that there should be more of the Global Conversation Club and they definitely recommend others to join. This clearly demonstrates that a carefully designed structure of the Global Conversation Club and advisors and facilitators play important roles in assisting or facilitating the participants' engagement and conversation flow. Furthermore, they ensure a meaningful experience for the participants.

Suggestion

The suggestion will be discussed based on the research objectives as follows.

1. To evaluate the effectiveness of a Global Conversation Club

According to the participants' interview results, they had a positive experience and believed the Global Conversation Club helped them achieve their learning objectives. As a result, the Global Conversation Club is effective in delivering linguistic, cultural, and intercultural communicative experiences and improvements for the participants. The researchers highly recommend If any educators or higher education institutions would like to adapt and adopt the model of the Global Conversation Club. It is a low investment (in time and cost), but the outcomes can be high and achievable.

2. To analyze and present the outcomes of the development and implementation of a Global Conversation Club

Based on the outcomes presented above, the researchers still highly recommend that the Global Conversation Club should be implemented to boost students' intercultural communicative competence and broaden their awareness of different cultures. Nevertheless, the Global Conversation Club should be designed in a way that fits each higher education institution's goals, as each institution shares different factors. The educators should also make certain that the Global Conversation Club consists of members or participants who are from different cultural backgrounds, so that the experience is more meaningful and diverse. Lastly, the educators should also inform the participants prior to the conversation sessions that an internet connection and good preparation of cultural and content knowledge are necessary.

For future research, a larger and more diversified group of participants is recommended as a focus group. Other related factors and problems can also be further studied, including the following: 1) what factors influence the participants to be motivated to improve their intercultural

communicative competence, and 2) the relationships between intercultural communicative competence and future or professional achievement.

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