



FACULTY OF PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION

**INTEGRATING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE
DEVELOPMENT INTO UNIVERSITY
CURRICULUM THROUGH INTERCULTURAL
VIRTUAL COLLABORATION: A TASK
SEQUENCE PROPOSAL AND IMPLEMENTATION**

A DOCTORAL THESIS IN EDUCATION

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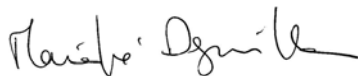
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TASK-SEQUENCE PROPOSAL AND
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Abstract

Intercultural competence has become an essential tool to navigate every-day life in increasingly diverse communities and workplaces. Although in the past decades universities have relied mainly on physical mobility for the development of such competence, more recently, Higher Education institutions have also been including the development of intercultural competence in their curricula by adopting new approaches and pedagogical strategies. In this process, technology has been key and Intercultural Virtual Collaboration (IVC) has been increasingly employed by teachers to connect students from different locations to achieve different kinds of learning outcomes, being intercultural competence one of the most frequent of them. Still, despite its demonstrated potential to enhance learning, IVC has not yet become an integrative part of university curriculum as the complexity involved in the implementation of telecollaborative projects still hinders the establishment of the practice. For this reason, there is a demand for developing and sharing models and practical resources for the development of intercultural competence through intercultural virtual collaboration.

Given this context, this doctoral thesis proposed to (1) design a comprehensive teaching-learning strategy/task-sequence for the development of intercultural competence in Higher Education through intercultural virtual collaboration based on the review of the literature on the subject. It also aimed at (2) analyzing the effect of the proposed task-sequence in students' development of intercultural competence according to students' perceptions and at (3) exploring how much students enjoy participating in each task of the sequence as well as at finding out what they most and least like about it.

In order to address such objectives, in a first phase of this study, a comprehensive task-sequence was designed based on the typology of tasks proposed by O'Dowd & Ware (2009) and informed by other important works from the literature. The sequence also adopts an adapted version of the Erasmus Mundus Intercultural Competence Model (EMIC, 2015b) for the definition, development and assessment of Intercultural Competence. In a second research phase, the task-sequence designed as part of this doctoral work was implemented in two different IVC projects. First, a pilot implementation was carried out in a master program involving universities from two different countries (Spain and France). Then, a final implementation took place in a project involving undergraduate Business students from Spain and undergraduate Business students from Holland. Quantitative and qualitative data was collected from such implementation through pre-posttests, after-task questionnaires and a final satisfaction survey.

The results obtained from the final implementation showed that students perceived that the sequence proposed had a positive effect on their level of intercultural competence, especially developing indicators related to intercultural relationship building, intercultural teamwork, intercultural knowledge and intercultural awareness. In addition to the perception towards the development of intercultural competence, results also evidenced that most students enjoyed participating in the tasks proposed by the sequence developed and that nearly all students would recommend the task-sequence to be implemented again with new students.

Key words: intercultural competence, virtual exchange, telecollaboration, Business Education, Higher Education

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Introduction

1. Context and justification

Nationalism, ethnicity and multiculturalism lie at the heart of many of the societal changes, which are currently transforming countries across the world. In the last 20 years, migration has altered the world in such a way that many of the old certainties which were provided by the established framework of nation-states have been undermined...In short, cultural diversity and multicultural societies have become an established fact of life in many countries across the world. (Barrett, Flood, & Eade, 2011, p. 1)

Here is the fact: the shape and nature of contemporary societies are going through intense changes. Although intercultural contact can positively impact the development of intercultural competence (Meleady, Seger, & Vermue, 2020), research and experience have been showing us that the development of such competence does not occur automatically in the interaction between cultures. There is still a lot of work to be done in order to deconstruct inequalities based on historical privileges granted to some cultures and races over others and to raise the awareness of societies in regards to the existing prejudice and misconceptions that remain prevalent in the hearts and minds of many. As Audrey Azoulay, UNESCO's Director-General, states "in a world in which we regularly witness tensions, acts of hatred, rejection of others and discrimination, the pursuit of peace and the will to live together harmoniously is more crucial than ever" (communication, May 16, 2019).

Besides its social and moral importance, intercultural competence has also been considered essential for the globalized workplaces. Companies have been increasingly needing employees who are able to navigate teams and projects composed by members from diverse nationalities, cultures and time zones. In the professional context, intercultural competence has been both required at the individual level, as a set of skills, knowledge and attitudes that one must hold in order to thrive in a multicultural workplace, as well as at the organizational level at which it is seen as the glue that holds together businesses that are currently spread across different countries (Morley & Cerdin, 2010).

At work, at home and in the community, people will need a broad comprehension of how others live in different cultures and traditions, and how others think, as scientists, mathematicians, social scientists and artists. Not least, the ability to read and understand diversity, and to recognize the core liberal values of our societies, such as tolerance and empathy, may also be one of the most powerful responses to extremism and radicalization. (OECD, 2020, p. 224)

As intercultural competence has been demanded on many fronts, universities have been investing more and more on internationalization as a means to develop students' global mindset. Over the last 30 years, the physical mobility of students has been the main approach adopted by Higher Education institutions to internationalization, so much so that, according to Hans de Wit (2020), student exchange has become “an industry, a source of revenue and a means for enhanced reputation” (p. 20). Only in 2018, for example, 853.000 people studied, trained or volunteered abroad through Erasmus+ program (European Union's flagship program for student mobility) (European Commission, 2019).

Despite the impressive absolute numbers, recent statistics show that the rate of European university students who had the chance of studying abroad in 2017 was no higher than 8 percent. On top of it, research has shown that physical mobility alone cannot ensure that students develop intercultural competence (Garcés & O'Dowd, 2020) and that global student mobility is unequal, as it has traditionally benefited a small number of countries and students from higher social classes (Altbach & Reisberg, 2019).

In such context, Intercultural Virtual Collaboration (henceforth IVC) has gained attention as an alternative or complementary strategy to connect students from different locations through technology.

IVC can be found in literature under a vast array of labels (O'Dowd, 2018): Telecollaboration (Guth, Helm, & O'Dowd, 2012), Online Intercultural Exchange (O'Dowd & Lewis, 2016), Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) (Guth & Rubin, 2015), Networked Learning (McConnell, Hodgson, & Dirckinck-Holmfeld, 2011), Global Virtual Teams (GVT) (Taras et al., 2013) and probably others. According to O'Dowd and Dooly (2020), “all definitions intend to highlight both the medium (virtual, online, digital, distance, global, networked) and the underlying purpose (exchange, intercultural, collaboration, learning)” (p. 362). Although at many points in this thesis the terms abovementioned were used interchangeably, the reader will notice that the way we address the concept evolved along the publications that compose this compendium. While we departed from the term telecollaboration in the first publications, in the latter ones we tended to adopt the term ‘Intercultural Virtual Collaboration’ (IVC). With such decision, we intended to be specific enough to define the end (intercultural development), the medium (virtual) and the pedagogical strategy (collaboration). We also wanted to go beyond language-learning, a field to which ‘telecollaboration’ has been very much linked. In addition, when picking a term, we tried to avoid words like ‘international’ or ‘global’ given that, in some scenarios, the practice can be held between groups located within

the same national borders. We also searched for a more accurate and self-explanatory denomination and therefore often opted not to adopt the label 'virtual exchange' (although we believe that it can be a great term to foster the referred practice at the institutional and policy levels given its similarity/connection to 'student exchange', a term that has been widely used by Higher Education institutions in what refers to physical mobility).

Having emerged in the turn of the millennium (Helm & Guth, 2010), IVC has been demonstrating to achieve different pedagogical goals (like intercultural competence development, language-learning and digital literacies) and, in the last few months, in face of the extraordinary circumstances imposed by the COVID-19 epidemic, it has even been seen as a tool "to offer students an international and intercultural experience today when mobility is not actually possible, and to prepare students for quality mobility experiences in the future" (Helm, 2020, p. 5).

Still, disregarding its pedagogical potential, IVC is currently quite far from becoming an established practice in Higher Education given the complexity involved in its implementation:

What sets it apart from other online approaches is precisely what makes starting and scaling new programs complex. Whether they are classroom-based or peer-to-peer conversations, meaningful experiences require intentional facilitation and authentic tasks. They also have components to help students prepare, work together, and then debrief after a project. And if the goal is to foster the same kinds of serendipitous experiences that come from in-person international learning, all these tasks - preparation, facilitation, collaboration, and reflection - must be more intentional. (NAFSA, n.d.)

For this reason, there is a need for sharing evidence of applied models and tools that can be replicated by telecollaboration practitioners. Previous works have highlighted that there is room for "pre-packaged" telecollaboration projects which could relieve educators from the "burden that the organization of telecollaboration projects impose" (Helm, 2015, p. 213) and that instructional design for interculturality should articulate theory and practice (Zapata-Ros, 2014). Reporting evidence of practical innovative solutions could also ultimately influence policy-makers so that IVC can be finally integrated into university curriculum (Garcés & O'Dowd, 2020).

With this in mind, this doctoral thesis intended to propose a comprehensive teaching-learning strategy for the development of intercultural competence in Higher Education through IVC. Its ultimate objective is to provide university teachers with a research-

based, customizable, previously tested and replicable material to facilitate the planning and implementation of IVC projects in their courses. In order to do so, it pursued the general and specific objectives that are described in the sequence.

2. Research objectives

This thesis proposes to pursue the following research objectives:

Research objective 1: To design and propose a comprehensive teaching-learning strategy/task-sequence for the development of intercultural competence in Higher Education through intercultural virtual collaboration based on the review of the literature on the subject.

Research objective 2: To analyze the effect of the proposed teaching-learning strategy/task-sequence in students' development of intercultural competence according to students' perceptions. The sub-objectives related to objective 2 are:

- a. To identify the intercultural competence indicators which are mostly developed *across the task-sequence* proposed;
- b. To identify the intercultural competence indicators which are mostly developed *by each task of the sequence* proposed.

Research objective 3: To explore how much students enjoy participating in each task proposed by the teaching-learning strategy/task-sequence as well as to learn what students most and least like about it. The sub-objectives related to objective 3 are:

- a. To explore how much students enjoy participating in each task proposed by the teaching-learning strategy/task-sequence;
- b. To find out what students most and least like about the task-sequence proposed.

As mentioned before, by approaching the research objectives abovementioned, this doctoral thesis has the ultimate goal of proposing a research-based, customizable and previously tested pedagogical strategy to facilitate the work of teachers when integrating IVC into university curriculum for the development of students' intercultural competence.

3. Theoretical background

3.1. Intercultural Competence

For almost a century, scholars have been trying to define intercultural competence and understand how it can be developed. Given the complexity of the term, no consensus and a multitude of perspectives related to this notion exist in the literature. As UNESCO (2013) explains:

In defining terms, it is necessary neither to limit nor fix a normative approach. Instead, the goal becomes opening minds and understandings to the multiple meanings of intercultural competences, incorporating a plurality of backgrounds, perceptions, and intentions. Attempts at defining this one concept have implications for the definitions of related concepts as well, including: cultural diversity, peace, relationship, self, other, globalization, adaptation, empathy, etc. (p. 10.)

By having this into account, for the definition, development and assessment of intercultural competence, our research selected the Erasmus Mundus Intercultural Competence model (EMIC, 2015b) as reference. The choice for such model relied on the fact that it is a recently developed, interdisciplinary and open resource that blends in its theoretical approach (EMIC, 2015a) key ideas from other well-known models found in literature such as the Cultural Intelligence model (Ang et al., 2007), the Deardorff study (Deardorff, 2006), Fantini's Intercultural Communicative Competence construct (Fantini, 2005), Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennett, 1993), the Developmental Model of Intercultural Maturity (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005), the Deep Culture Model of Intercultural Learning (Shaules, 2007), Street's Cross-cultural Approaches to literacy (Street, 1993) and Byram's five saviors model (Byram, 1997)¹. In addition, it was specifically designed to develop intercultural competence in Higher Education students involved in mobility courses (something close to our context of virtual exchange) and proved to be operational in practice before being applied to the task-sequence developed in this work (EMIC, 2015c; Lukic, Solari, Martins, & Yarosh, 2017).

¹ More about EMIC's theoretical approach can be found in EMIC (2015a) and in Publication 1 of this compendium.

In alignment with previous research (Ang et al., 2007; Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006; Fantini, 2005; Lustig & Koester, 2013), the EMIC model adopts a multidimensional approach to intercultural competence and defends that it is composed of a set of core elements and specific interrelated competence configurations. The core elements consist of four building blocks (intercultural knowledge, intercultural awareness, attitudes, and skills), two supporting capacities (emotional intelligence and critical reflection) and one meta-capacity (developing intercultural competence). The interrelated competence configurations consist of three sub-competences that are specifically needed in practice (intercultural teamwork, intercultural conflict management, and relationship building). We explain each of these elements in the following lines.

3.1.1. Building blocks

The four building blocks of EMIC Model are knowledge, awareness, attitudes and skills (EMIC, 2015b).

In what regards to knowledge, the model refers to the understanding of what culture is, of how cultures can differ and of the notion of otherness. It also approaches the vocabulary required in intercultural situations, the main concepts related to intercultural competence and the relationship between culture-specific knowledge and stereotypes.

In relation to intercultural awareness, the model mentions the awareness of the difference between cultures, the awareness of oneself as a cultural being and the awareness of specific cases when culture is influencing conditions.

As for attitudes, EMIC approaches the attitudes that are needed for a higher level of intercultural competence (such as flexibility, open-mindedness, non-judgmental attitude, tolerance, cooperative mindset, etc.), the application of such attitudes in intercultural situations and the openness to adjust behavior according to the conditions of each intercultural situation.

The building block of skills comprehends the different forms through which intercultural competence can be applied in practice, including skills for effective communication, the ability to mediate intercultural interactions, the ability to verbalize cultural expectations and norms, the ability to deal with people who are perceived to have a lower level of intercultural competence, the ability to shift between cultural environments, the ability to identify the impact of cultural differences in misunderstandings and the ability to check how one's behavior is perceived by others in an intercultural situation.

3.1.2. Supporting capacities

The two supporting capacities identified by the EMIC model are emotional intelligence and critical reflection (EMIC, 2015b). According to the model, such capacities not only support the operationalization of the building blocks but also are intrinsically related and interdependent on them.

The model defends that the development of intercultural competence requires knowledge about emotional intelligence and its use together with the awareness of and the ability to manage one's own emotions in intercultural situations. It also gives room for empathy in what it calls for understanding and dealing with the emotion of others in intercultural interactions.

In its turn, critical reflection should underpin the development of intercultural competence by providing the capacity to deal with stereotypes, to develop the ability to analyze intercultural situations through cultural lens, to hold a critical perspective towards cultural-specific knowledge and to increase the awareness of one's and others' behaviors in an intercultural context.

3.1.3. Meta capacity

Besides the four building blocks, EMIC (EMIC, 2015b) defends that 'Developing Intercultural Competence' is a 'competence in its own rights' (p. 18) and, as so, it has aspects of meta-knowledge (understanding what intercultural competence is and how it can be developed), meta-awareness (awareness of one's own level of intercultural competence), meta-attitudes (developing an attitude of appreciation, pro-activity and lifelong learning towards intercultural competence development) and meta-skills (ability to plan for one's own intercultural competence development, setting objectives and strategies). Here, the model emphasizes the developmental aspect of intercultural competence, withdrawing such notion especially from Bennett's theory (Bennett, 1993), which defends that one goes through different levels of intercultural sensitivity.

3.1.4. Interrelated competence configurations

Despite recognizing that intercultural competence can be applied in the three broad spheres (academic, professional and private), the EMIC model identifies three sub-competences or configurations that were specifically important to mobility students in practice (EMIC, 2015b). Those are: intercultural teamwork (the ability to work in culturally

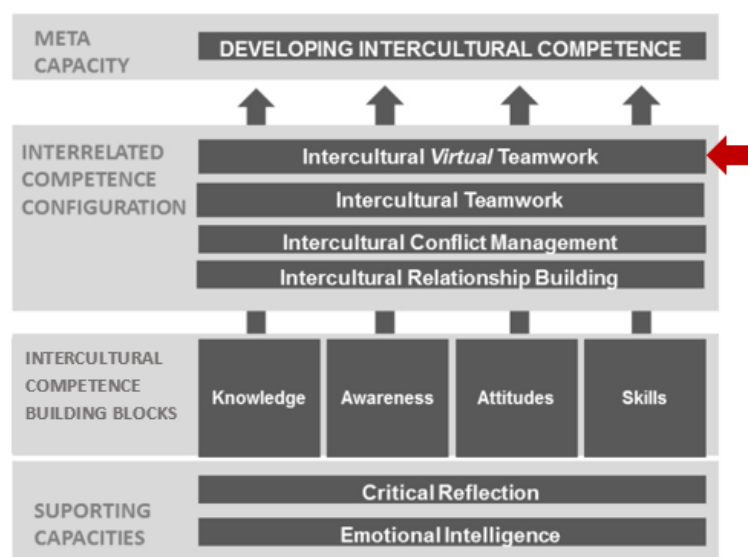
diverse groups), intercultural conflict management (the ability to resolve and prevent conflicts derived from intercultural clashes), and intercultural relationship building (the awareness of the challenges involved in intercultural relationships, the ability to form and develop intercultural relationships, a positive attitude towards intercultural relationship building and, the ability to create strategies to encourage intercultural relationships in one's environment).

3.1.5. Intercultural virtual teamwork (a further development)

Since EMIC was developed to perform in 'offline' educational environments, in order to better capture students' intercultural competence development in virtual collaborative setups – which are the object of this thesis – this doctoral study adapted the original model by adding a new intercultural competence configuration and four related indicators to it. Such configuration ('intercultural virtual teamwork'), approaches the understanding of the main characteristics of virtual communication and the role that it plays in diverse environments, the awareness of the impact that virtual communication has on intercultural virtual teamwork, the positive attitude that is required to adjust to and overcome barriers posed by technology to intercultural communication and the ability to put such strategies in practice. This development is expected to represent a contribution from this present research to EMIC model in what it broadens its scope of application. Figure 1 shows a graphic representation of the adapted version of EMIC model including the configuration of intercultural virtual teamwork.

Figure 1

Integration of 'Intercultural Virtual Teamwork' into EMIC Intercultural Competence Model. Retrieved from Ferreira-Lopes, Bezanilla, & Elexpuru (2018). Reproduced with permission



According to research, developing intercultural competence is an on-going, lifelong and lengthy process (Fantini, 2005) which demands an exercise of breaking it down into smaller measurable goals in order to make it practical (OECD, 2016). In this direction, the EMIC model is accompanied by a list of 44 indicators distributed along the 10 elements (building blocks, supporting capacities, interrelated configurations) of intercultural competence identified, therefore facilitating the operationalization of the competence in practice. The full list of EMIC indicators, together with the four indicators related to the configuration added by this research work (intercultural virtual teamwork) can be found in Publication 1 of this compendium.

3.2. Task-sequence design

Finding its roots in language teaching, the task-based approach to education has been evolving for the last 30 years. Drawing its theoretical foundations from classical educational philosophies such as the socio-constructivist (Vygotsky, 1962) and the 'learning by doing' (Dewey, 1938), the task-based approach primes experience, interactions and authenticity (Ortega, 2009).

Skehan (1998) defines the four main characteristics of a task as being: (a) exchange of meaning is primary, (b) there should be a common goal to be achieved, (c) the outcome in sight is whether the learners were able or not to achieve such objective, and (d) the task performed should resemble real-world situations. Other definitions of task also put emphasis on the role of teachers in structuring and sequencing interactions (Lee, 2000), as well as on regulating them (Prabhu, 1987).

According to Lai and Li (2011a), "the introduction of technology into this equation enlarges the number of venues and re-sources for task performance" (p. 501). In the computer-mediated context, they define tasks as "holistic activities in which learners make use of their language and (cross-)cultural and communicative resources to achieve some nonlinguistic outcome through stretching their linguistic, (cross-)cultural, internet-based communication, and digital literacy skills" (p. 501). By using technology to connect students from different locations, intercultural virtual collaboration breaks the limitations imposed by physical separateness and allows for real-life interaction between different cultures, carrying with it the potential to enhance the authenticity of tasks that aim to develop intercultural and linguistic competences. As Woo, Herrington and Reeves (2007) explain,

Before the widespread diffusion of computers and Internet technologies, it was much more difficult—and in some situations even impossible—for instructors or instructional designers to use authentic activities in real-life settings because of the limitations of the subject matter, time and finances, and practical constraints and risks of physically moving students to fields of practice. With the development of web technology, such limitations have eased. (p. 37)

However, in complex environments such as those involved in intercultural virtual collaboration, different variables (pedagogy, technology, language and culture) interplay and, with this, task-design assume a pivotal role (Kurek & Müller-Hartmann, 2017). In this sense, Kurek (2015) defends that “the greater the complexity of a learning environment, the more learning opportunities it may generate, if only learners’ activity is framed with adequate tasks” (p. 17).

In terms of task structure, the typology of tasks identified by the seminal work of O’Dowd and Ware (2009) has been widely used by intercultural virtual collaboration researchers and practitioners. Such authors synthesized the variety of tasks used in telecollaboration into three main categories: the first category is composed of (1) information exchange tasks. These tasks usually require little negotiation and consist of partners introducing themselves to each other by providing information about their biographies, interests and cultures. The second type of tasks is (2) comparison and analysis of cultures and demands a little more from students by asking them to make critical analysis of cultural products (e.g. newspapers, magazines, books, etc.) and finding similarities and differences between them. The last category is (3) collaborative tasks, which require students to go further in collaboration by requesting them to produce a joint product or conclusion together. After analyzing a number of studies that fall under each of the categories mentioned, O’Dowd and Ware (2009) concluded that combining different types of tasks in a sequence can expose students to different aspects of intercultural communication and allow educators to set diverse learning objectives in an online exchange.

By having such typology as reference, this doctoral work proposes the following task-sequence for the development of intercultural competence through intercultural virtual collaboration:

- Task 1 - An **icebreaker**, or an information exchange task, in which students get to first meet the group members located in the other location by exchanging personal information through 2-minute videos in which they introduce themselves

and give details about their families, hobbies, cultures and expectations about the intercultural virtual collaboration.

- Task 2 - A **comparison and analysis of the National Dimensions** (Hofstede, 1980) of the cultures represented in the virtual working groups. In this task, students are expected to meet their peers from other locations online in order to discuss the results obtained from Hofstede Insights' Country Comparison Tool (Hofstede Insights, 2020). They are also asked to prepare a brief report with a critical reflection of such discussion.
- Task 3 - The **elaboration of a group contract**, which aims at having students negotiating cultural expectations while defining the dynamics and rules which are going to organize the group work during the development of a final assignment (next task in the sequence).
- Task 4 - The **development of a final collaborative assignment** related to the core subject of the courses into which the sequence will be integrated (in Business studies, for example, we suggest that students develop a case study comparing how international companies adapt their business to local cultures). In this task, students undergo a more complex process of collaboration and negotiation in order to achieve a common goal.

Considering that in “geographically distant groups participants may have very few shared identities” (Kurek, 2015, p. 24), and that, therefore, it is important to foster social presence in telecollaborative teams (Chun & Turula, 2015; Liaw & English, 2017; Müller-Hartmann, 2000), the sequence proposed herein is built in a way that the notion of community/group is gradually constructed between members, with tasks growing from preliminary exchange of personal information to more intense and demanding forms of collaboration. In addition, with reference to findings from the literature that indicate that fostering critical reflection is key for the success of online collaboration (Guth & Rubin, 2015; Müller-Hartmann, 2006), after each task is concluded, the sequence proposes that students answer a set of questions that invite them to reflect about the intercultural collaborative process they go through during their participation in each task.

In relation to technology, literature indicates that the low level of teachers' e-literacy is one of the biggest barriers to the implementation of IVC (O'Dowd, 2013). Hence, the sequence developed in this work suggests the use of well-known and user-friendly tools (like Google applications and shared documents as well as popular video conferencing applications like Skype). The adoption of a learning management system to create a sense of a virtual space dedicated to the project and through which participating students can communicate with each other and with the teachers is also recommended, together

with the warning about issues related to users' access and permissions (Guth & Thomas, 2010). Also in line with literature (Vinagre, 2014), it proposes combining different types of tools (video-conferencing, social media, email, shared documents) for the communication between group members and for the production of joint assignments. As for the assessment of intercultural competence, the sequence suggests combining the material derived from different types of tools (Vogt, 2006) such as self-evaluation Likert-type questionnaires, group reports, videos and reflection tasks. It also suggests that assessment should be applied at different points of the collaboration.

Another level of task-sequence design regards its integration into the curriculum. A review by Lewis and O'Dowd (2016) showed that intercultural virtual collaboration (or Online Intercultural Exchange, as the authors call it) can be integrated into university education at three different levels: classroom independent (as a supplementary activity, not incorporated into the course program), classroom integrated (in which the telecollaborative tasks are clearly connected to the syllabuses) and institution integrated (when online exchanges are recognized by institutions as part of their internationalization strategies). Our task-sequence was designed to be 'classroom integrated' and to fit into courses from different Higher Education disciplines. It is recommended that the different tasks of the sequence are distributed along the academic semester. In order to be adaptable to the core subjects of courses from different disciplines, it proposes that non-specific tasks (icebreaker, comparison and analysis and group contract) are implemented first and then followed by a subject-related task (final assignment) in the end of the collaboration.

Last but not least, in order to address important barriers to IVC that were described in the literature (like difference in timetables, difference in students' expectations, differences in teachers' perspectives and approaches, different levels of teachers' and students' e-literacy (Helm, Guth, & Farrah, 2012; Helm, 2015; O'Dowd, 2013), pre-implementation considerations are provided and approach aspects suggested mainly by Guth and Rubin (2015) and Sadler and Dooly (2016). Such include holding a pre-implementation meeting to share/compare course syllabi, to adapt task instructions to the specific context of the partnership, to decide on deadlines for the tasks, to talk about expectations, to create groups, to decide how to monitor students' progress, among other issues. The original proposal of and more details on the task-sequence developed can be found in Publication 1.

4. Methodology

We describe below the methodology used to address each of the research objectives set for this thesis.

4.1. Addressing research objective 1

Research objective 1: To design and propose a comprehensive teaching-learning strategy/task-sequence for the development of intercultural competence in Higher Education through intercultural virtual collaboration based on the review of the literature on the subject.

A literature review was carried out in order to address research objective 1. According to Grant and Booth (2009), the literature review method serves to learn about previous works in a certain field of knowledge, to identify possible research gaps and to build on earlier works. As so, our literature review aimed at (a) analyzing in previous research the different models existing for the development of intercultural competence in Higher Education and (b) learning about the different pedagogical strategies for developing intercultural competence in Higher Education through telecollaboration.

The review departed from searches carried out on research databases like Web of Science and Scopus and was initially based on main keywords, such as intercultural competence, telecollaboration and Higher Education/university. The search then evolved to related terms that emerged organically from the literature. In the case of intercultural competence, terms like global citizenship, global mindset, intercultural sensitivity and cultural intelligence were explored while for telecollaboration related terms included Virtual Exchange, Collaborative Online International Learning, Global Virtual Teams, etc.

The great majority of publications reviewed were scientific articles published in well-known journals. However, other types of resources were also used as references such as project reports, working papers from transnational organizations like UNESCO, OECD and the European Commission, institutional webpages, articles published on open media and even some recordings of presentations from experts in the relevant fields.

As a result of such literature review, the EMIC model was selected as the main theoretical reference for the development of intercultural competence and the task-based approach

- more specifically the typology of tasks proposed by O'Dowd and Ware (2009) - was adopted for the instructional design of the task-sequence proposed. More details can be found on pages 16-23 of this Introduction section and in Publication 1 of this compendium.

4.2. Addressing research objectives 2 and 3

Research objective 2: To analyze the effect of the proposed teaching-learning strategy/task-sequence in students' development of intercultural competence according to students' perceptions. The sub-objectives related to objective 2 are:

- a. To identify the intercultural competence indicators which are mostly developed *across the task-sequence* proposed;
- b. To identify the intercultural competence indicators which are mostly developed *by each task of the sequence* proposed.

Research objective 3: To explore how much students enjoy participating in each task proposed by the teaching-learning strategy/task-sequence as well as to learn what students most and least like about it. The sub-objectives related to objective 3 are:

- a. To explore how much students enjoy participating in each task proposed by the teaching-learning strategy/task-sequence;
- b. To find out what students most and least like about the task-sequence proposed.

In order to collect the data to respond to research objectives 2 and 3, the task-sequence designed as a result of research objective 1 was implemented in an IVC project involving undergraduate Business students from University of Deusto (San Sebastián, Spain) and undergraduate Business students from HAN University of Applied Sciences (HAN) (Nijmegen, Holland).

Before that, a pilot implementation of the referred task-sequence took place in an international master program (European and International Business Management - EIBM), involving students from two different locations (Bilbao, Spain and Nantes, France) with the objective of refining the design of the task-sequence developed and of checking its viability in general terms.

In this chapter, we describe both implementations and inform about the methods used in each of them to collect data as well as to analyze it.

4.2.1. Pilot implementation

4.2.1.1. Context and participants

According to Williams-Mcbean (2019), pilot studies are “small-scale studies that precede larger studies and help researchers to make improvements to the larger study” (p. 1055). In this doctoral work, a pilot implementation of the task-sequence proposed in Publication 1 was carried out with the objective of refining the design of the task-sequence proposed and of checking the viability of the implementation of such sequence in general terms.

The pilot implementation took place between December 2016 and March 2017 in the European and International Business Management (EIBM) master program, which is offered by a consortium of three universities: University of Deusto (Spain), Audencia Business School (France) and Bradford University (UK). The programme has a strong mobility component and every September, two concurrent groups start the course from two different locations: one group of students starts in Bilbao, Spain, while the other group starts the course in Nantes, France. Then, in January, students who are in Bilbao move to Nantes and the group that is in Nantes moves to Bilbao. Afterwards, in April, both groups move to Bradford, England, and stay there until June, when they present their Master’s Final Project.

A total of 29 students participated in the pilot implementation. 13 students belonged to the group that started classes in Bilbao, Spain and 16 students were part of the group that started studies in Nantes, France. Both groups counted with a great cultural diversity with nine different cultures being represented (Spain, England, Italy, Mexico, France, China, Tunisia, Germany and Colombia).

4.2.1.2. Pre-implementation setup

For finding a course in which to implement the pilot, the researcher got in touch with the Director of the Teaching Innovation Department of University of Deusto. This person then connected the researcher with the coordinator of EIBM as she judged that this program would be a good fit for the task-sequence proposed given its international and intercultural orientation.

In the end of November 2016, the researcher presented the task-sequence proposal to the program coordinator, who agreed to proceed with the implementation in the batch of

students who had started the course in the beginning of October. Together, the researcher and the program coordinator decided that the task-sequence should be integrated into the development of the Masters' Final Project.

In the three years before the implementation of the pilot, EIBM master students had been asked to develop their Master's Final Project in virtual groups composed of members from both starting locations. In this manner, every November, working groups were formed and assigned with different master final thesis topics to be developed. From then on, virtual groups were expected to collaborate autonomously along the following months in order to deliver their projects by the end of the course (June). No structured pedagogical method was provided back then neither to enhance collaboration between group members or for the development of students' intercultural competence.

Building on this pre-existing 'unstructured' virtual collaboration, the task-sequence developed by this doctoral research was 'added' to the development of the Master Final Thesis. As so, it proposed that students participated in an icebreaker (task 1 of the sequence), a Comparison & Analysis of cultural products (task 2 of the sequence), an elaboration of a group contract (task 3 of the sequence) before finally engaging with the development of the Master Final Thesis as the 'Final Collaborative Assignment' (task 4 of the sequence).

4.2.1.3. Instruments

Four instruments were used for the collection of data:

a) Satisfaction survey: at the end of the virtual collaboration, students received an e-mail with a link to complete a Satisfaction survey in Google Forms. The form was divided in two parts: the first part asked students' opinions about the course as a whole (content, clarity of instructions, task sequencing, distribution of activities through calendar, deadlines given for each activity, workload, technology tools used, what they liked most and least in the programme and finally if they recommended the course to be applied to the next batch of students in the course). In the second part of the questionnaire, students were asked to evaluate the extent to which they were satisfied with each task through a rating scale that ranged from 1 to 5.

b) Focus group and interviews: after completing the tasks of the intercultural virtual collaboration and before they departed to England, two French students agreed to participate in a small focus group in Bilbao, Spain. Another student from Germany was interviewed by Skype. Both the focus group and the interview were carried out in a semi-

structured format and had the same script, which tried to grasp students' perceptions regarding the following points: interaction with group members during the telecollaboration, understanding of the objective of the IVC, perception of learning development, clarity of instructions, technology tools used, duration of the program, workload, task sequencing, motivation, utility of the program and their perceptions about each task. Both the focus group and the interview were recorded with students' permission.

c) Students' productions: as the researcher received students' productions (reflection questionnaires and reports), she analyzed the material in general terms to check if there was any significant divergence between what had been asked in the instructions and what was delivered by students.

4.2.1.4. Procedure

The implementation of the task-sequence in EIBM master course consisted of the following steps:

a) November 2016 - Like every year, students received from the course coordinator the general instructions for the development of the Master Final Thesis and for the related group formation. Students formed groups autonomously. The criteria for forming groups was (1) groups should have 5 members, (2) members from both starting locations should be represented, (3) at least two different mother tongues should be represented, and (4) varied previous study backgrounds should be present.

b) December 19th 2016 - Students from both groups received an e-mail with an introduction about the telecollaborative program. In the e-mail, students were informed about the objectives and the duration of the program, and were also asked to complete a consent form to allow their evaluation material to be used for research purposes.

c) January 11th 2017 - Students from both groups received an e-mail with the instructions for the Icebreaker activity, which invited them to upload a self-introduction video to a Google Drive folder created for the group. The instructor provided some topics that should be mentioned in the presentations (name, nationality, likes and dislikes, family size and why they chose the master they are taking). When the deadline for uploading the videos was due, students received another e-mail with a link to complete the related reflection task in Google forms. The reflection task consisted of one open

question asking students to reflect on the similarities and differences between group members after watching the videos.

d) January 19th 2017 - After the deadline for the Icebreaker activity was due, students from both groups received an e-mail with the instructions for the Comparison and Analysis task, in which they were asked to check their countries' scores in the six dimensions of national culture presented by Geert Hofstede (a link to Hofstede's web comparison tool was provided) and later meet online with their group members in order to compare and discuss about similarities and differences in their national cultures. Each group was asked to hand a one-page report with the main points discussed. The report was considered as material for the reflection task.

e) January 30th 2017 - Students received an e-mail asking them to elaborate a group contract in which they should define the following points to regulate the collaborative work to be carried out during the development of the final project: rhythm of work, frequency of communication, roles, milestones, expectations, communication tools, etc. Instructor provided them with a template. As a reflection task, students received a link to a Google form in which they had to write a brief reflection about how the group contract was developed.

f) February 13th 2017 - Students received an e-mail recapping the activities that had been done up to that moment and explaining that, from that point on, they were supposed to work autonomously on the development of the master thesis (Production phase) by having the guidelines of the course and the supervision of their course tutors as reference. They were also told that they could look for the telecollaboration instructor in case they found any conflict in the group regarding cultural issues.

g) Before both groups moved to England (and that the telecollaboration was over), students received an e-mail with a link to complete a Satisfaction Survey in Google Forms.

h) A focus group and an interview were held with students from Group 2 in Bilbao, before they left the city.

The whole telecollaborative programme was carried out by one instructor (who is also the researcher for the work herein). In addition, students had teachers from different disciplines as tutors to be consulted for issues directly related to their core studies. Since the telecollaborative programme was coordinated by the Spanish university, and, according to course rules, the programme activities should adopt the local language, all

telecollaboration instructions were given to students in Spanish².

4.2.1.5. Data analysis

We describe below how the data used in this study was analyzed.

a) Satisfaction survey: a descriptive statistical analysis of the results of the Likert-type questions contained in the Final Satisfaction Survey was carried out in order to analyze the degree of students' satisfaction with the different aspects of the telecollaborative program. For the open-ended questions of such questionnaire, a content analysis in Atlas.ti was performed and the answers were coded and then organized in categories for the reporting of the results.

b) Focus group and interviews: a content analysis in Atlas.ti. was carried out to analyze students' responses given during both the focus group and the interview. They were coded according to the themes proposed in the script. New emerging codes were also added to the code list.

c) Students' productions: as the researcher reviewed students' productions, she took notes of critical issues that could be found in terms of general format and relevant divergences between what had been asked from and what was delivered by students.

4.2.1.6. Lessons learned from the pilot implementation

In the Table 1 below, we summarize the main issues that emerged from the analysis of the data derived from the pilot implementation.

Table 1

Critical issues stemming from the pilot implementation of the task sequence and improvements made

Aspect of the task sequence analyzed	Critical issue	Improvements made
Individual tasks	Icebreaker – students' cultural aspects could be more explored as well as the potential of the activity for relationship building	-Ask students to talk about interesting facts about their cultures -Ask students to tell their expectations in relation to the relationship with the other group members
	Comparison & Analysis - Not clear if it has to be an individual	-Make delivery instructions clearer

² For enrolling in the EIBM master program, non-Spanish speaking candidates must prove to hold at least a B2 level of Spanish language skills.

	or group report for some students	
	Group contract – students didn't discuss much about cultural aspects of group work	-Provide students with more specific guidelines for discussing the cultural aspects of the group work and getting them to verbalize their cultural characteristics and expectations to others
Assessment instruments	Reflection tasks – some answers were too short and not very reflective about intercultural aspects	-Make more directive questions in the reflection tasks to get them to think of and to express their opinions about the intercultural interaction during the elaboration of the contract
Integration into the coursework	Distribution of activities (timing)	-Start implementation of the task sequence at the beginning of the course or at least before or during group formation
	Lack of initial preparation / pre-briefing	- If possible, hold a face-to-face information session before intervention starts and/or improve introduction e-mail by including all the information regarding the course, what tasks are going to be applied, deadlines for all the tasks, objectives of the program and of each task, technology to be used -Pick an online platform to hold all the tasks, material and information together in order to create a sense of unity and linear sequence of tasks
Workload	Difficulty in coordinating the workload related to the online work and the workload derived from other signatures in the master	-Work together with course administrators in order to avoid sending tasks in peak periods of work and exams from other signatures

These lessons learned from the pilot implementation were taken into consideration for the final implementation that is described below.

4.2.2. Final implementation

4.2.2.1. Context and participants

The final implementation of the task-sequence developed in the first phase of this study was carried out in an intercultural virtual collaboration project involving undergraduate Business courses from two universities:

- a) University of Deusto (UD) (Bilbao, Spain) – 'Cross-cultural Communication' course in the second year of the double degree of Business Administration + International Management Skills offered by the Deusto Business School (DBS);

- b) HAN University of Applied Sciences (HAN) (Nijmegen, Holland) – ‘Intercultural Awareness’ course in the second year of Business Administration

The implementation took place from September to December 2017, with the participation of 85 students (66 students from University of Deusto and 19 students from HAN University). The group from Deusto had 14 exchange students from 7 different nationalities (China, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Norway and Sweden) taking the course together with 52 Spanish students. The group from HAN was formed only by Dutch students.

4.2.2.2. Pre-implementation setup

In order to identify a course for the implementation of the task-sequence proposed, the researcher first mapped potential courses in her home university (University of Deusto) by looking at different undergraduate and graduate study programs across faculties that had an international orientation and/or generic competences related to intercultural communication.

The researcher then identified the undergraduate double degree of Business Administration + International Business in DBS as a good option given its strong international orientation. She contacted the program coordinator in the end of 2016 and presented to her the idea of implementing the proposed task-sequence into one of the courses that composed such program.

Among the list of subjects of the chosen program, the coordinator indicated that the Cross-Cultural Communication course would be the best fit for the IVC project for what its main objective was to prepare students to communicate effectively with people from different cultures. As for what concerned finding a partner university to work with, she suggested that Deusto’s International Studies Office contacted HAN Business School in the Netherlands since such institution had recently manifested the will to collaborate with DBS.

The representatives of the International Office at HAN Business School showed the interest of partnering with DBS in the telecollaborative project as they read a document which described the task-sequence proposed. A first online meeting was then scheduled so that the researcher could explain the details of the sequence to the potential partners. After the meeting, HAN administrators invited the teacher of their Intercultural Awareness

course to join the collaboration. At the same time, the researcher of the present study was invited by Deusto Business School to replace the former teacher of the Cross-Cultural Communication course who had just been assigned to a new position in the institution.

Twenty days later, a second call was held with participating teachers and administrators and, from that point on, the teachers from both localities started to exchange emails with information about their courses. They also held a call in July to discuss the intercultural competence model adopted by the sequence proposal.

Finally, just before the beginning of the academic semester (August 2017), the teacher from Holland visited University of Deusto. During the visit, the two teachers discussed the points listed in the agenda found in Table 2. Such agenda was proposed by the teacher in Spain, who listed the themes to be discussed with reference to the pre-implementation considerations that had emerged from the literature review and that can be found in Publication 1.

Table 2

Agenda of teachers' meeting in San Sebastián in August 2017

Agenda of teachers' meeting
<p>1. Information exchange about the courses from each university Objectives and content of each course Number of students Schedule of the semester Learners' previous level of Intercultural Competence Learners' English Language proficiency Evaluation - how are students evaluated in each of the courses (what scale??) / define the kind of recognition that students will receive for participating in the telecollaboration Exchange list of students</p>
<p>2. Review of the proposed task-sequence and adaptation to the specific context Check if instructions / content proposed for each task are adequate for both courses Define how tasks are going to be distributed during the semester week by week Define pre-exchange briefing (how students are going to be notified about the project) Form groups composed of members from both universities</p>
<p>3. Define communication strategy between teachers (teacher-teacher relationship) Define frequency of meetings (periodic feedback / define dates for skype calls) Define means of communication between teachers (email, videoconference, whatsapp, etc.) Discuss points that might cause failed communication between students Discuss expectations from both teachers and students towards the course</p>
<p>4. Teacher from HAN to sign a consent form to allow that the material produced during the collaboration on the side of her university was used in this research</p>

In regards to the general structure, after exchanging information about their groups and institutions, the teachers decided to follow the task-sequence as it had been developed by the teacher/researcher in Spain and as it appears in Publication 1.

They then translated the suggestions given by the research proposal into concrete instructions to be sent to students (see the referred instructions in Publication 4, pp. 133-134) and defined deadlines for each task. The only change to the original sequence was made in the Comparison and Analysis of Cultures task. Due to differences between the schedules of the two universities, teachers considered that the students would not have enough time to get organized to meet in real time (videoconferencing) to work on this task. Therefore, they adapted the task in a way that they could exchange their critical reflections with their group colleagues in an asynchronous manner.

During the face-to-face meetings, the teachers also decided to use Google Classroom to connect students from both locations and to post the instructions for the tasks.

As for grading, the teacher from University of Deusto decided that the participation in the telecollaboration would account for 50% of her students' grade whereas in Han the format of the course did not allow for awarding grades to students (only credits). Still, both universities agreed to issue a joint certificate of participation for students who completed all the tasks.

Working groups were formed by the teachers just before the beginning of the classes. The groups were composed of 5 or 6 students each and, given that the class from UD was bigger than the Dutch class, in each working group there was an average of 4 students from Spain to 2 students from the Netherlands. Exchange students enrolled in the Cross-cultural communication course in Deusto were distributed among the different groups in order to maintain a balance in the represented nationalities.

For the pre-exchange briefing, the teachers elaborated an e-mail to be sent to each group at the beginning of the semester. Such email informed students about the intercultural virtual collaboration that was going to take place, its objectives, the tasks that they were going to participate in, the members that constituted the group, and also provided the link that had been create to the group in Google Classroom.

4.2.2.3. Instruments

Three kinds of web-based questionnaires were used to collect students' perceptions in relation to their participation in the task sequence implemented: (1) pre-posttests, (2) after-task questionnaires and (3) a satisfaction survey. Each of them are described below.

a) Pre-posttests: In order to measure the development of students in each intercultural competence throughout the task-sequence implemented, pre-test/posttest web-based questionnaires (Google Forms) were applied at the beginning and at the end of the project. The pre-test questionnaire was composed of two sections. The first section aimed at extracting demographic information from students such as name, university they belonged to, nationality and previous international experience. The second part of the questionnaire requested students to self-evaluate their level of mastery in each of the 48 indicators from the Intercultural Competence model adopted through likert-type questions with a scale that ranged from 1-5 (being 1 the lowest and 5 the highest level). The original sequence of indicators from EMIC was maintained in the questionnaires and, for a better reading flow, questions were grouped by intercultural competence dimensions. In terms of structure, pre-test and posttest questionnaires were almost identical. The only differences between the two instruments concerned the absence of profile questions in the latter. Regarding time for completion, students took from 15 to 30 minutes to answer all the questions of the referred questionnaires.

b) After-task questionnaires: by the end of each task of the sequence implemented, web-based questionnaires (Google Forms) were sent to students. Such questionnaires were composed of three parts.

First, the forms presented the open-ended reflection questions suggested by the task sequence developed in the first phase of the study. Such questions intended to guide students to think critically about the intercultural interactions taken in each task. They also aimed at qualitatively grasping what students learned as well as the processual aspects of the telecollaboration (the list of the reflection questions suggested for each task can be seen in pages 13-19 of Publication 1).

A second part of the questionnaires asked students to indicate to which extent (“very little”, “more or less” or “very much”) they believed that the task in question contributed to the development of the different intercultural competence indicators selected. This part of the instrument intended to evaluate the contribution of each task of the sequence to the development of the targeted intercultural competence indicators. The indicators evaluated in each task were those indicated in the task-sequence developed in the first part of this study and can be consulted in Publication 1 (pp. 60-66).

Finally, the third part of the after-task questionnaires contained a question asking “How much did you like this task?”. Students were then supposed to choose between “very little”, “more or less” or “very much” and justify their answer in an open-ended field.

c) Satisfaction survey: at the end of the implementation, students were asked to fill in a satisfaction survey in Google Forms. Such survey was anonymous and students had to inform only the university that they were enrolled in.

In a first section of the survey, students indicated (through likert-type questions) how satisfied they were with the following aspects of the telecollaboration: (1) general content, (2) clarity of instruction, (3) each task proposed, (4) the sequence of activities, (5) the distribution of activities during the semester, (6) the deadline to complete each activity, (7) the workload, and (8) the technology used.

Further into the questionnaire, students were asked to report if they had any problems with the technology tools used and also to mark the three tasks of the task-sequence that they liked most. In the sequence, through a YES/NO question, they were asked if they would recommend this project to be implemented again for the next batch of students who were to take the same course in their university in the following academic year while an open question asked them to justify their option in case they responded NO.

Finally, in the last part of the survey, open questions asked students (1) what they liked most and least about the programme, (2) what they believed that they learned by participating in this experience, and (3) if they recommended any changes in the programme for next implementations.

4.2.2.4. Procedure

a) The first step in the implementation of the task-sequence proposed was sending the pre-exchange briefing by e-mail to all members of each of the 14 working groups that had been previously formed by the participating teachers. As explained before, the e-mail informed groups about the telecollaboration, its objectives, the tasks to be held as part of the learning programme, the list of group members and the link to the online class created to each group in Google Classroom (which was the Learning Management System chosen for the telecollaboration).

b) By logging into Google Classroom, students found a message from the teachers on the main board welcoming them to the platform, informing them about the date when they were to receive the instruction for the pre-tests and providing them with the complete

timeline of the tasks to be held during the programme. In such message, teachers also uploaded a welcoming video that they had recorded together in Spain.

c) The first instruction was then sent on the deadline defined in the timeline that had been provided. It requested students to complete the pre-test questionnaire and a consent form that asked students to authorize the use of their evaluation material in the research.

d) From that point on, students started to receive the instructions for each of the tasks from the sequence on the respective established dates. At least a week time was given in between tasks and the tasks that demanded more collaboration (Group Contract and Final Assignment) were given more time for completion. More time was also provided whenever holidays (local and shared), mid-semester breaks and exam periods (existing only to Netherland academic schedule) were in between deadlines of tasks. The teacher from University of Deusto was in charge of posting the task instructions on Google Classroom platform and students received related automatic notifications by e-mail.

e) Reflection questionnaires were sent to students after the deadline for the completion of each task. An average of 4-5 days was given for the completion of such questionnaires before the next task was launched.

f) In Deusto, the virtual tasks were completed in parallel to the face-to-face sessions. Deusto's teacher often dedicated some class time to check on students' progress and to address doubts in relation to the virtual collaboration. In Holland, the telecollaboration was the center of the course and students met once a week to work on the telecollaborative assignments and to receive instructions/support from the teacher.

g) As explained before, at the end of the implementation, students who completed all the tasks of the sequence received the certificate of participation issued jointly by both universities.

h) Once students had completed all tasks and after-task questionnaires from the IVC project, they were invited to complete the posttest and the Satisfaction survey. Students were informed that the survey was anonymous and not mandatory.

4.2.2.5. Data analysis

We describe below how the data used in this study was analyzed.

a) Pre-posttests: first, for testing the reliability of questionnaires, a Cronbach's alpha test was performed and both pre-test and posttests presented a high level of internal consistency (0,961 and 0,973 respectively - the ideal scores in such measure, which ranges from 0-1, should be above 0.8). Secondly, a Shapiro-Wilk test was used to test the normality of the differences between the paired values and, since p-value was 0.637042, it was assumed that the data is normally distributed (p-value > 0.05). Finally, a paired t-test was used to compare the means of the two related samples in order to find out if there was an increase of statistical significance in the average of scores from pre to posttests.

b) After-task questionnaires: a descriptive statistical analysis was used to interpret the responses to the Likert-type questions while the responses to the open-ended questions were analyzed in Atlas.ti software. The content analysis aimed at identifying any manifestation of the different intercultural competence indicators in the responses and every time an indicator was manifested the related extract was coded with the abbreviation of such indicator.

a) Satisfaction survey: a descriptive statistical analysis of the results of the Likert-type questions contained in the Final Satisfaction Survey was carried out in order to analyze the degree of students' satisfaction with the different aspects of the telecollaborative program. For the open-ended questions of such questionnaire, a content analysis in Atlas.ti was performed and the answers were coded and then organized in categories for the reporting of the results. The results of the open-ended questions appear in Publication 3.

4.3. Methodology overview

An overview of the methodology applied in order to address the research objectives that were set for this doctoral thesis can be seen in table 3 below.

Table 3

Overview of the methods applied for addressing the research objectives set for this doctoral thesis

Research objective	Sub-objectives	Research strategy	Instrument	Moment of application	Research strategy	Type of questions	Data analysis	Publications
Research objective 1: to design and propose a comprehensive teaching-learning strategy/task-sequence for the development of intercultural competence in Higher Education through intercultural virtual collaboration based on the review of the literature on the subject.	---	Literature review	---	---	---	---	---	Publication 1
Research objective 2: To analyze the effect of the proposed teaching-learning strategy/task-sequence in students' development of intercultural competence according to students' perceptions.	a. To identify the intercultural competence indicators which are mostly developed <i>across the task-sequence</i> proposed	Pilot implementation + Final implementation	Pre-posttests	Before the start of the implementation and at the end of it	Quantitative	Likert type questions through which students self-evaluated their own level in relation to the different intercultural competence indicators at the beginning and at the end of the implementation	Paired t-test in SPSS	Publications 2, 3 and 4
			After-task questionnaires	After the completion of each task from the sequence proposed	Quantitative	Likert type questions through which students indicated how much each task contributed to the development of the targeted intercultural competence indicators	Descriptive statistical analysis	
			Satisfaction survey	At the end of the project	Qualitative	Open-ended reflection questions	Content analysis (Atlas.ti)	
	b. To identify the intercultural competence indicators which are mostly	Pilot implementation + Final implementation	After-task questionnaires	After the completion of each task from the sequence proposed	Quantitative	Likert type questions through which students indicated how much each task contributed to the development of the targeted intercultural competence indicators	Descriptive statistical analysis	Publication 4

	developed by <i>each task of the sequence proposed</i>		After-task questionnaires	After the completion of each task from the sequence proposed	Qualitative	Open-ended reflection questions	Content analysis (Atlas.ti)	
Research objective 3: To explore how much students enjoy participating in each task proposed by the teaching-learning strategy/task-sequence as well as to learn what students most and least like about it.	a. To explore how much students enjoy participating in each task proposed by the teaching- learning strategy/task- sequence	Pilot implementation + Final implementation	After-task questionnaires	After the completion of each task from the sequence proposed	Quantitative	Likert-type question 'how much did you like this task?'	Descriptive statistical analysis	Publication 4
			After-task questionnaires	After the completion of each task from the sequence proposed	Qualitative	After indicating in through a Likert-type question how much they liked the task, students were asked to justify 'why'	Content analysis (Atlas.ti)	
	b. To find out what students most and least like about the sequence proposed	Pilot implementation + Final implementation	Satisfaction survey	At the end of the project	Qualitative	Open-ended questions 'what did you most like about this project and 'what did you least like about this project?'	Content analysis (Atlas.ti)	Publication 2 and 3

5. Structure of the thesis

This thesis is composed of a compendium of publications.

The first part of the manuscript contained the introduction to the work. Such introduction started by describing the context in which this study finds its motivation. It then presented the general and specific objectives targeted by the research. After that, we briefly explained how intercultural competence is defined in this manuscript and informed about the theoretical works that served as reference for the design of the teaching-learning strategy proposed by this doctoral thesis to develop intercultural competence through intercultural virtual collaboration. We then described the methodology used to address each of the three objectives that were set for this research and, in this present section, we provide an overview of the structure of the thesis (Table 4).

In the next part of this thesis ('Task sequence design') we include the first publication that composes this compendium and which presents the detailed proposal for the task-sequence developed as part of this research for the development of intercultural competence in Higher Education through IVC.

In a following part ('Task sequence implementation'), we include the three publications that derived from the two implementations of task-sequence in two different IVC projects (pilot and final implementations). Publication 2 is a book chapter ("Telecollaboration spaces for the development of intercultural competence") authored by the five people who were involved in the pilot and final implementations of the task-sequence at University of Deusto (the doctoral student who presents this thesis, her two supervisors and the coordinators of the two courses in which the sequence was applied). Besides a literature review, the chapter presents a reflection on the advantages and challenges faced when implementing telecollaboration in an already existing syllabus, the experience of having an expert guiding the implementation of a telecollaborative project, the perceptions of the course coordinators towards different aspects of telecollaboration as well as the benefits derived from such practice to their programs. In its turn, Publication 3 explores students' overall impressions towards their participation in the final implementation and discusses the on-going improvement process inherent to such practice. The article presents the results obtained from a content analysis of students' feedback collected through the final satisfaction survey and the observations of participating teachers on the challenges encountered during the implementation of the intercultural virtual collaborative project. The fourth publication from this compendium (Publication 4) describes the results derived from the data collected through after-task

reflection questionnaires in the final implementation. It investigated (1) what intercultural competence indicators were mostly developed by the sequence implemented, (2) how much each task from the sequence in question developed different intercultural competence indicators; and (3) how much students enjoyed participating in each task. The data presented in the article was collected through after-task reflection questionnaires. A quantitative analysis of Likert-type questions was carried out and open-ended responses were used to illustrate findings.

Finally, in the last part of the manuscript, we discuss how the key findings from the research respond to the different objectives established, draw the main conclusions obtained from this doctoral work and reflect on the main limitations of the research as well as on recommendations for future related research and practice.

Table 4

Thesis structure

Research objectives	Strategy adopted	Publications	Quality indicators
<p>Research objective 1: to design and propose a comprehensive teaching-learning strategy/task-sequence for the development of intercultural competence in Higher Education through intercultural virtual collaboration based on the review of the literature on the subject.</p>	Literature review	<p>Publication 1: Ferreira-Lopes, L., Bezanilla, M. J., & Elexpuru, I. (2018). Integrating Intercultural Competence development into the curriculum through Telecollaboration. A task sequence proposal for Higher Education. <i>Revista de Educación a Distancia (RED)</i>, 18(58), p. 1-36. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.6018/red/58/7</p>	<p>Scopus Q3 (ranked 864/1401) SJR 2018-2019 - 0,22 - H Index 3 3 citations</p> <p>Web of Science (Emerging Sources Citation Index)</p> <p>Google Scholar Metrics Position 17 among the top cited Spanish scientific journals (2017) 6 citations</p>
<p>Research objective 2: To analyze the effect of the proposed teaching-learning strategy/task-sequence in students' development of intercultural competence according to students' perceptions.</p>	<p>Pilot implementation in an international master program from November 2016 to May 2017</p> <p>+</p>	<p>Publication 2: Ferreira-Lopes, L., Elexpuru I., Bezanilla, M. J., Narvaiza, L., & Larreina, M. (2019). Espacios de telecolaboración para el desarrollo de la competencia intercultural. In A. Eizaguirre, M. J. Bezanilla, A. Arruti & N. Saénz (Coord.), <i>Espacios de aprendizaje en Educación Superior</i> (pp. 159-174). Barcelona: Octaedro.</p>	<p>SPI Scholarly Publishers Indicators in Humanities and Social Sciences Q1 Position 4 among 33 Spanish publishers in the Education field</p>
<p>Research objective 3: To explore how much students enjoy participating in each task proposed by the teaching-learning strategy/task-sequence as well as to find out what students most and least like about it.</p>	<p>Task-sequence implementation in a project involving undergraduate Business students from a university in Spain and a university in The Netherlands from September to December 2017</p>	<p>Publication 3: Ferreira-Lopes, L., & Van Rompay-Bartels, I. (2020). Preparing future business professionals for a globalized workplace through intercultural virtual collaboration. <i>Development and Learning in Organizations: An International Journal</i>, 34(2), p. 21-24. https://doi.org/10.1108/DLO-08-2019-0194</p> <p>Publication 4:(accepted) Ferreira-Lopes, L., Elexpuru, I. & Bezanilla, M. J. (in press). Developing business students' intercultural competence through intercultural virtual collaboration: a task sequence implementation. <i>Journal of International Education in Business</i>. DOI: 10.1108/JIEB-06-2020-0055</p>	<p>Scopus Q3 (ranked 165 from 248) SJR (2019): 0,16 - H Index 15</p> <p>Scopus Q2 in Business, Management and Accounting (ranked 826/1659) Q3 in Education (ranked 714/1401) SJR (2019): 0,3 - H Index 9</p> <p>Web of Science (Emerging Sources Citation Index)</p>

Task-sequence design

Publication 1

Ferreira-Lopes, L., Bezanilla, M. J., & Elexpuru, I. (2018). Integrating Intercultural Competence development into the curriculum through Telecollaboration. A task sequence proposal for Higher Education. *Revista de Educación a Distancia (RED)*, 18(58), p. 1-36. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6018/red/58/7>

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http://www.um.es/ead/red/58/ferreira_et_al.pdf

Integrating Intercultural Competence development into the curriculum through Telecollaboration. A task sequence proposal for Higher Education

Integrando la Competencia Intercultural en el curriculum mediante la Telecolaboración. Propuesta de una secuencia de tareas para la Educación Superior

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Abstract

Despite its demonstrated potential to enhance students' Intercultural Competence and other 21st century skills, telecollaboration still fails to be fully integrated into university courses. Literature shows that there is a need for developing sustainable instructional design models for this purpose. Hence, the main goal of this work is to propose a theory-informed task sequence to facilitate the integration of telecollaboration into university courses for the development of Intercultural Competence. Based on the typology of tasks from O'Dowd & Ware (2009) and enriched with contributions from other authors, the task sequence: (1) facilitates the development of Intercultural Competence according to EMIC model and adds a new block to its composition in order to approach the specificities of virtual teamwork, (2) contains detailed instructions for each task, (3) provides guidelines on implementation, on the selection of technology and on the integration of tasks to the syllabi and (4) offers an assessment plan, accompanied by a list of learning evidences that are expected to be manifested by students per task. This sequence can serve as a reference for further adaptations to diverse contexts. It is currently being piloted in two telecollaborative projects and the results are expected to contribute to future improvements.

Keywords

Telecollaboration, Intercultural Competence, Higher Education, Blended Learning, Assessment

Resumen

Pese al potencial de la telecolaboración para desarrollar la Competencia Intercultural y otras competencias en la Educación Superior del siglo XXI, todavía no ha logrado consolidarse en la formación universitaria. De

acuerdo con la literatura, es preciso desarrollar modelos instruccionales sostenibles para responder a esta necesidad. El principal objetivo de este trabajo es proponer una secuencia de tareas de telecolaboración para el desarrollo de la Competencia Intercultural en el curriculum universitario. A partir de la tipología de tareas propuesta por O'Dowd & Ware (2009), enriquecida con el trabajo de otros autores, dicha secuencia: (1) facilita el desarrollo de la Competencia Intercultural según el modelo EMIC, adaptado al contexto del trabajo virtual, (2) ofrece instrucciones detalladas para cada tarea, (3) contiene orientaciones para la configuración de la telecolaboración, la tecnología a utilizar y la integración de las tareas en el curso y (4) sugiere un plan de evaluación con un listado de evidencias de aprendizaje que deben ser manifestadas por los alumnos en cada tarea. La propuesta podrá servir como referencia para futuras adaptaciones a diferentes contextos. La secuencia de tareas se está actualmente pilotando en dos proyectos de telecolaboración y se espera que los resultados puedan contribuir a su mejora.

Palabras clave

Telecolaboración, Competencia Intercultural, Educación Superior, Blended Learning, Evaluación

Introduction

In times of continuous advances in communication, technology, and transportation, the idea of culture as a stable, unique and defined notion to be passed on to future generations is becoming increasingly blurred. The use of computer-mediated communication tools like social networking environments, mobile devices and video-conferencing “constitutes a new way of understanding social participation and collaboration” (Guerin, Cigognini, & Pettenati, 2010, p. 199) and, by connecting to virtual spaces, people have now the opportunity not only to learn from the interaction with several cultural backgrounds but also to promote cultural change (Raffaghelli & Richieri, 2012). In the midst of this process, “global competencies are increasingly becoming a workplace requirement, regardless of the industry or geographic location” (Taras et al., 2013).

To address this issue, in the recent decades, Higher Education institutions have been gradually re-conceptualizing their eco-systems (European University Association, 2016) by adopting two main strategies. On the one hand, they are getting “equipped with cutting-edge information technologies and employed by lifelong learning experts, research workers and lecturers” (Teresevičienė, Volungevičienė, & Daukšienė, 2011) while, on the other hand, they have been turning their attention to internationalisation as a means to remain competitive and to prepare students for a globalized world.

As one of the results of such efforts, we see the rise of virtual mobility as a tool that has been adopted by universities to combine both approaches in order to develop important 21st-century skills like Digital Literacy, Collaboration and Intercultural Competence. Among the different virtual mobility modalities available, this work focuses on the use of computer-mediated international collaboration for the development of Intercultural Competence, what has been called by practitioners just as *Telecollaboration* (Guth, Helm, & O'Dowd, 2012; O'Dowd & Ware, 2009), as *Online Intercultural Exchange*

(*OIE*) (O'Dowd, 2007; O'Dowd & Lewis, 2016) or as *Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL)* (Guth & Rubin, 2015) and which refers to "the engagement of groups of students in online intercultural interaction and collaboration with partner classes from other cultural contexts or geographical locations under the guidance of educators and/or expert facilitators" (O'Dowd & Lewis, 2016, p.3).

The majority of telecollaborative activities for the development of Intercultural Competence in universities are carried out in a blended-learning set-up, meaning that such practices are seen as a part of classroom activities in which interactions based on physical presence are used alternatively with technology-based resources (Guth et al., 2012). Telecollaborative projects have demonstrated to develop learner autonomy (Fuchs, Hauck, & Müller-Hartmann, 2012; Lee, 2011), language skills (Wu, Marek, & Chen, 2013; Yang, 2013) and different dimensions of Intercultural Competence (Lai & Li, 2011; Liaw, 2006; Müller-Hartmann, 2000; O'Dowd, 2007; Schenker, 2012; Vallés, 2017; Vinagre, 2014) and research shows a high level of positive attitude of teachers and students towards this learning approach (Helm, 2015).

Notwithstanding, despite its potential to enhance students' Intercultural Competence and to become a complementary strategy to physical mobility in the internationalisation of Higher Education, telecollaboration for intercultural development still fails to be fully integrated into university courses and "the idea of introducing telecollaboration as a tool in subject areas outside of foreign language education appears to be quite new" (O'Dowd, 2016, p. 288). As Helm (2015) concludes from a survey held with 142 universities covering 23 different European countries about the practices and challenges in telecollaboration:

there is scope for more "pre-packaged" telecollaboration projects with a more or less fixed curriculum, duration, assessment tools, and even facilitators for specific target groups and contexts...having a well-established syllabus and project is one way of relieving educators of some of the time burden that the organization of telecollaboration projects imposes, and would also facilitate the integration into curricula and recognition with credits. Research needs to be carried out on the development, piloting, and evaluation of sustainable models of telecollaboration which will allow more students and educators to engage in this practice. (p. 213)

Zapata-Ros (2014) also highlights the need for an instructional design for interculturality, one that articulates theories and models with practice and research. The author states that "we have advanced very little in this direction" (p. 12) and suggests that more has to be researched on how to organize teaching in order to meet the needs of what he calls 'new interculturality', referring to a cross-border education, which, differently from the classical interculturality, considers the continuous cultural exchange between individual-groups-spaces present in contemporary societies.

Having this said, this work attempts to provide Higher Education teachers with a task sequence to support the design of telecollaborative programmes for the development of students' Intercultural Competence. The material aims at being an aid for building international online collaborations and can be beneficial for Higher Education teachers and lecturers who believe that their students' learning can be enhanced by the contact with students from other cultures; to Higher Education Programme Administrators

(directors and coordinators) who wish to implement innovative learning approaches in their courses; and to Higher Education institutions who want to foster 'Internationalisation at Home' strategies across their Faculties and Departments.

The task sequence presented herein was developed based on a literature review which sought to find an Intercultural Competence model to be used as a theoretical reference and the best instructional design methods to be adopted for the development of such competence through telecollaborative programmes. As a result, the sequence (a) proposes the use of Erasmus Mundus Intercultural Competence (EMIC) model, followed by a list of specific learning outcomes and adapted to virtual teamwork, (b) offers detailed instructions for each task, (c) gives guidelines on pre-implementation set-up, the adoption of technology to be used and the integration of online tasks into the coursework and also (d) suggests a plan to assess students' Intercultural Competence development during the telecollaboration. The main findings of such review as well as the developed sequence are presented in the next sections.

Defining Intercultural Competence

For decades, different authors have tried to define Intercultural Competence and hence literature offers a multitude of Intercultural Competence models and frameworks (Arasaratnan-Smith, 2017; Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). From such universe, our study adopts the EMIC Intercultural Competence model (2015b) as the main reference for a conceptual definition of Intercultural Competence. Such model is based on the intercultural challenges faced by international students in Higher Education during mobility and is a result of a combination of theoretical research and the analysis of interviews held with a sample of Erasmus Mundus administrators, students, and alumni (Lukic, Solari, & Yarosh, n.d.).

The model (Figure 1) is composed of four building blocks (Knowledge, Awareness, Attitudes, and Skills), two supporting competences (Critical Reflection and Emotional Intelligence), one meta-capacity (Developing Intercultural Competence), three broad spheres of application (academic, professional and private) and three sub-competences (Intercultural Teamwork, Intercultural Conflict Management and Intercultural Relationship Building).

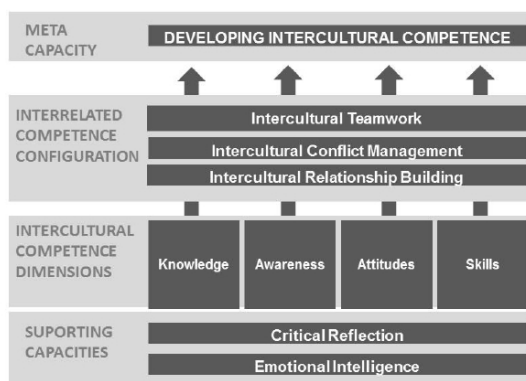


Figure 1. The EMIC Model. Adapted from EMIC (2015b, p. 13). Available at: www.emic-project.org/emic-toolkit. Adapted with permission

To begin with EMIC's supporting capacities, in the model, critical reflection is seen as the ability to overcome judgmental thinking and to deal with stereotypes. As for Emotional Intelligence, EMIC relates it to empathy, managing one's own emotions and being able to deal with uncertainty. Concerning the building blocks from the model, knowledge comprises culture-specific knowledge and conceptual knowledge of Intercultural Competence. Awareness is divided in three types: intercultural awareness (awareness of differences between cultures), cultural self-awareness and awareness of specific cases when culture is at play. Attitudes approach acceptance of differences, openness, non-judgmental attitude, tolerance, flexibility, cooperative mindset, valuing diversity and respect. Skills involve being able to communicate, intercultural mediation, verbalizing cultural expectations and norms, the ability to notice cultural differences, the ability to speak about cultural practices that might feel disturbing, the ability to detect misunderstandings, the ability to detect how one's behavior is perceived, acting on culture-specific knowledge and on intercultural awareness, the ability to adjust one's behavior to intercultural contexts, developing/adopting new behaviors, dealing with people with lower Intercultural Competence and the ability to shift between different cultural environments.

The three intercultural competence configurations proposed by EMIC (Intercultural Teamwork, Intercultural Conflict Management and Intercultural Relationship Building) comprise the "competences that were distinguished as particularly relevant for Intercultural Competence in practice" (EMIC, 2015b, p. 19) and represent the arena on which students are expected to apply the other elements constituting the model. Related to this, the model acknowledges that the competence can be applied in three broad spheres: in private/social lives, in studies/academia and in the workplace (EMIC, 2015b).

Moving on to the development of Intercultural Competence, EMIC's meta capacity "Developing Intercultural Competence" approaches specifically this aspect and is divided in meta-knowledge (which involves knowing what Intercultural Competence is

and how it can be developed) meta-awareness (which relates to one's awareness of one's own identity and personal learning needs), meta-skills (which require one's abilities to identify and build cultural knowledge, to monitor one's own Intercultural Competence development and to manage one's intercultural identity) and meta-attitudes (which are the attitudes needed to develop one's Intercultural Competence, such as orientation towards a lifelong Intercultural Competence development, proactive attitude towards developing Intercultural Competence, appreciating the full potential of the competence and embracing learning from different sources of cultural diversity) (EMIC, 2015b).

It is important to notice that EMIC's multidimensional approach to Intercultural Competence is consonant with the Intercultural Competence models which served as the theoretical basis for its construction (EMIC, 2015a). Fantini (2005), for instance, defends that Intercultural Competence is a manifold concept composed of a variety of individual traits and characteristics, three areas or domains, four dimensions - knowledge, attitudes, skills and awareness, proficiency in the host language and varying levels of attainment throughout a longitudinal and developmental process. In its turn, the Deardoff study (2006) brought up 22 essential Intercultural Competence elements, which addressed individual's personal attributes (like curiosity, general openness, and respect for other cultures), adaptive traits, cultural knowledge and cognitive skills. In the same direction, the Cultural Intelligence construct (CQ) (Ang et al., 2007) is composed of four different dimensions (CQ-Strategy, CQ-Knowledge, CQ-Motivation and CQ-Behaviour) and Byram (1997) proposes that Intercultural Competence is composed of five 'savoirs': knowledge (savoirs), skills (savoir comprendre and savoir apprendre/faire) and attitudes (savoir être).

Besides its composition, the developmental view of Intercultural Competence adopted by EMIC was also influenced by other research works (EMIC, 2015a). In the DMIS model, Bennett (1993) defends that people can be more or less sensitive to cultural differences in a process that moves from an ethnocentric position, in which one sees his own culture as central to reality, to an ethnorelativist position, in which one acknowledges that his cultural affiliations are only one of the possible ways to interpret reality. From Deardoff's (2006) work, EMIC drew the idea that there are degrees of Intercultural Competence and that its development occurs from the inside (internal outcomes, like flexibility, adaptability and empathy) to the outside (external outcomes, related to the appropriate and effective behavior in an intercultural situation). From King & Baxter Magolda (2005), EMIC adopts the concept that achieving "intercultural maturity" is a lifelong process, having this complemented by the idea that one should develop the ability to carry one's own growth (Williams, 2009). Furthermore, in the Deep Culture Model of intercultural learning (Shaules, 2007), EMIC model found an Intercultural Competence dimension that lacked in the other works reviewed and which is related to the idea that intercultural learners need to "better understand and embrace their own cultural learning process, so they can deal with further adaptive demands" (EMIC, 2015a, p. 3).

Finally, the fact that EMIC Intercultural Competence model integrates other well-known Intercultural Competence frameworks from the literature makes it especially suitable for the guide to be proposed in this paper. In fact, three Intercultural

Competence models included in EMIC's theoretical approach – Byram's five savors model, the Intercultural Maturity model and Bennett's DMIS model - are among the frameworks which are mostly used in telecollaboration (Lewis & O'Dowd, 2016). It is also important to say that EMIC Intercultural Competence model is part of a comprehensive toolkit proposed by EMIC research group to develop Intercultural Competence in Higher Education and which offers a set of Open Educational Resources (OER). The toolkit has been applied to four Erasmus Mundus courses - GIM (Global Innovation Management), MALL (Master of Arts in Life Long Learning), EUROMIME (European Master in Media Engineering for Education) and WOP-P (Work, Organizations and Personnel Psychology) - and the "projects tested showed a clear impact on the participating sample" (Lukic, Solari, Martins, & Yarosh, 2017, p. 6; EMIC, 2015c) in terms of Intercultural Competence development and perceptions. Despite having been designed for students participating in Erasmus Mundus master programmes, EMIC toolkit claims to be adaptable and "relevant for all students experiencing mobility internationally or home students studying in diverse settings, as well as in preparation for intercultural workplace experiences in their careers" (EMIC, 2015b, p. 5). Therefore, for our work, from all the toolkit material, we chose to use the Intercultural Competence model and the related list of learning outcomes and to adapt such material to the context at hand, considering the added challenges that telecollaboration imposes to intercultural communication, as it is going to be explained in the presentation of the sequence.

Instructional design in Telecollaboration

In the last decades, together with technology, literature in the field of telecollaboration has significantly evolved. In such process, we see the emergence of diverse studies trying to identify the best methods to develop Intercultural Competence through telecollaboration and to assess its outcomes.

For structuring the task sequence presented in this paper, we opted to gravitate especially around the work of O'Dowd & Ware (2009). By synthesizing the variety of tasks used by telecollaboration practitioners (based on a comprehensive review of over 40 studies found in the literature), the authors offered a good basis for decision-making in the design process of telecollaborative projects. In their review, they organized the tasks used in foreign language telecollaboration under three main categories: the first category is composed of 'information exchange tasks'. These tasks usually require little negotiation and basically consist of partners introducing themselves to each other by providing information about their biographies, interests, and cultures. The second type of tasks is 'comparison and analysis' and asks students to make a critical comparison of cultural products from both cultures (e.g. newspapers, magazines, books, etc.). The last category is 'collaborative tasks', which require students to go further in collaboration by requesting them to produce a joint product or conclusion together. In addition to identifying task types, the authors observed that task sequencing allowed educators to approach different learning objectives in a telecollaborative project and conducted students to gradually building relationship with collaborating peers.

The task typology and sequencing identified by O'Dowd & Ware have been used as reference for task design in different studies (for examples, see Hauck (2010) and Vinagre (2017)) and are in alignment with other important works about task design in telecollaboration. A review from Müller-Hartmann & Schocker-von Ditfurth (2010) about the use of technology in task-based learning showed that learners prefer to be exposed to a variety of tasks and that structured environments which provide dialogic interaction lead to more critical thinking. Adopting a variety of tasks, having tasks which building up on each other and arranging tasks according to their complexity are also requirements found in the criteria for designing telecollaborative tasks developed by Kurek & Müller-Hartmann (2017). Holding preliminary exchange of personal information has also demonstrated to have an essential role in enhancing students' positive attitude towards the collaboration (Schuetze, 2008) and in creating relationship building (Müller-Hartmann, 2000) and social presence (Liaw & English, 2017). The sequence proposed herein also considers the importance of intensive reflection in the process of developing Intercultural Competence (Guth & Rubin, 2015, Müller-Hartmann, 2006) and, after completing each task, students are asked to reflect about what they have just done through questionnaires sent by the teachers or group discussions and reports.

In terms of integration of telecollaborative activities to the curriculum, the sequence proposed adopts a format labeled by Lewis & O'Dowd (2016) as 'classroom integrated'. In this format, exchange tasks are clearly linked to the course syllabus, instead of just being considered a supplementary activity which is not officially incorporated into study programmes. A study by Nissen (2016) with six blended-learning courses including telecollaboration also showed that virtual exchange was the backbone (lead mode) of all the cases analysed and that the role of the face-to-face sessions in all the six courses was to prepare students for the Online Intercultural Exchange activities.

For pre-implementation setup, we have considered the work of Guth & Rubin (2015), who suggest that collaborating teachers, in a first moment, should share details of the academic culture in their institutions (such as the number of hours per week, grading scheme, expectations in relation to class attendance, participation in class, in-class and out-of-class amount of work) and advise teachers to align objectives and avoid overloading students in order to give them enough time to engage in communication with their peers. In a reflection about the evolution of their telecollaborative project over twelve years, Sadler & Dooly (2016) also highlight that, despite of the physical distance, it is essential that teachers work closely during collaboration and fully share "the planning of the calendar, activities, interaction, output, assessment, and implementation...thereby giving the students two referents in each class (a local and an international teacher)" (p. 412).

In relation to tools, though asynchronous communication prevails in telecollaboration (Helm, 2015), we rely on a review from Çiftçi (2016), which showed that most of the studies about Intercultural Learning through Computer-Based Digital Technologies used more than one digital tool to foster students' intercultural interaction, and on

Vinagre (2014), who suggests combining asynchronous and synchronous tools respectively. We also considered the work of Guth & Thomas (2010), who suggest that, when picking tools to work with, teachers should verify terms related to users' access and permissions and choose tools that have demonstrated to be stable through the years and that has a large user base.

For the evaluation and assessment of Intercultural Competence in Telecollaboration, in consonance with Vogt (2006) - who defends that a combination of instruments can reconstruct intercultural interactions in a more complete manner, allowing for a more precise assessment of attitudes by considering different variables - we suggest the use of different instruments for collecting quantitative and qualitative evaluation material. Based on O'Dowd (2010), who calls educators who implement Telecollaboration to identify clear descriptors of intercultural communicative skills and online literacies that can be developed through online exchanges, we have also developed a table with specific evidences expected to be delivered by students in relation to EMIC's learning outcomes in each task proposed.

Finally, with the decisions above mentioned, we intended to address some of the barriers to the integration of telecollaboration to Higher Education found in literature, namely, differences in institutional timetables, significant differences in teachers' aims and approach to exchange, different expectations on the part of students and/or educators and teacher and students' level of e-literacy and technical issues (Guth et al., 2012; Helm, 2015; O'Dowd, 2013a). For addressing the discourse tensions derived from intercultural online interactions (Kramsch & Thome, 2002; Ware & Kramsch, 2005), and considering that discussing goals facilitates further group negotiation (Fuchs, 2006), one of the tasks of the developed sequence to be presented ahead proposes the elaboration of a group contract, which calls students to openly talk about communication genres, work style and expectations.

The Proposed Task Sequence

In the following lines, we propose a task sequence to support teachers in the integration of telecollaborative projects into the curriculum of university courses for the development of students' Intercultural Competence.

The sequence was designed to be interdisciplinary and customizable to courses in different Higher Education disciplines and cycles (undergraduate and graduate degrees). It was conceived to develop Intercultural Competence as a generic competence inside universities that adopt a competence-based Learning model and its learning programme can fit into course unities that aim at developing critical reflection/analysis, teamwork, interpersonal communication, intercultural/cross-cultural communication, digital skills, and other related competences. The material intends to guide instructors in the design of telecollaboration in Higher Education from pre-implementation settings to conclusion and, in order to do so, it suggests the adoption of an adapted version of EMIC's Intercultural Competence model, proposes specific instructions for each task, discusses issues related to the integration of telecollaborative tasks to the syllabus and to the

selection of technology tools to be used and, in the end, puts forward a plan to assess the development of students' Intercultural Competence.

Pre-implementation considerations

At first place, considering some of the barriers to the integration of telecollaboration into university curriculum found in the literature (Guth et al., 2012; Helm, 2015; O'Dowd, 2013a) and the planning recommendations from Guth & Rubin (2015) and Sadler & Dooly (2016), we suggest collaborating teachers to hold a warm-up meeting (online or, whenever it is possible, face-to-face) to get to know each other and to prepare the ground for implementation. In this pre-implementation phase, teachers should align their expectations towards the collaboration and take important actions such as: (1) sharing /comparing courses syllabi (objectives and contents); (2) talking about expectations from students and from the online programme as a whole; (3) sharing academic calendars; (4) jointly adapting the task instructions proposed to the context of the specific collaboration; (5) deciding on the dates for each task; (6) deciding which of collaborating teachers will be in charge for sending task instructions to students on the dates defined or posting them on the online learning platform (if any is adopted); (7) deciding how collaborating teachers will monitor students participation in the tasks; (8) deciding the technology tools to be used for each task, (9) deciding how collaborating teachers will evaluate students' delivered material in each task (for example, selecting which of the suggested learning outcomes will be considered for each task and deciding which of the suggested evaluation instruments will be applied), (10) exchanging the list of students' names, and (11) creating groups composed of students from the different participating universities. For the sequence proposed, we suggest that, before the beginning of the project, teachers create groups with around five members in total and watch for a balance between students from different localities and cultures represented

Regarding scheduling, we advise that the programme proposed in the guide is implemented in courses that last at least one semester. Such length should allow an even distribution of tasks along the months and enough time for completing activities. When planning a schedule for the tasks, exam periods should be protected in order to ensure students' availability for completing the proposed activities. Another consideration to have in mind when preparing for the implementation of the learning programme relates to the choice of the language for the virtual exchange. Given that language development is not among the primary objectives of the sequence (though it is likely to happen as a side result of the collaboration) and that literature showed that the different levels of language fluency among students' in telecollaborative groups might lead to failed communication (O'Dowd & Ritter, 2006), we recommend that the project is carried out in a 'lengua franca' which can be spoken by all members of the working groups.

Intercultural Competence Model

As said before, this task sequence adopts the EMIC Intercultural Competence model (2015) for the definition of Intercultural Competence and its elements. Since literature highlights the importance of defining Intercultural Competence according to the context

to which it will be applied (Fantini, 2009), we propose adaptations to the model chosen so that the virtual dimension added by telecollaboration to intercultural teamwork can be addressed. As a result, we see the inclusion of a new Intercultural Competence Configuration to the original model (Intercultural Virtual Teamwork), as seen in Figure 2.

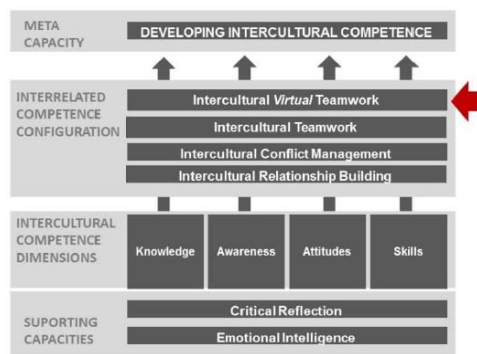


Figure 2. Intercultural Competence Model. Modified from EMIC (2015b, p. 13). Available at: www.emic-project.org/emic-toolkit. Modified with permission

With the addition of a new element to the composition of the model, four corresponding indicators were also included in EMIC's original list of learning outcomes. Such outcomes approach intercultural virtual teamwork from the following different perspectives: knowledge about the main characteristics of virtual work (IVT1), awareness of the impact that technology has on intercultural communication (IVT2), the attitudes needed to carry out virtual teamwork effectively (such as creativity) (IVT3) and finally the ability to carry intercultural virtual teamwork in practice (IVT4).

IVT1	Understand the main characteristic of virtual communication and the role it plays in a globalized workplace
IVT2	Develop awareness of the impact that virtual communication has on intercultural virtual teamwork
IVT3	Have a positive attitude in relation to creating strategies to overcome barriers posed by virtual communication
IVT4	Put strategies to overcome barriers posed by virtual communication into practice when working in intercultural virtual teams.

Table 1. Intercultural Virtual Teamwork (IVT) – Learning Outcomes

Tasks Sequence Structure

As mentioned previously, the structure of the task sequence proposed herein is based on the typology of tasks found in the work of O'Dowd and Ware (2009). As so, it is composed of an icebreaker, a comparison and analysis of cultural products and two collaborative assignments. We opted to use this sequence because it combines different approaches to achieving varied Intercultural Competence learning outcomes and is

consonant with what is suggested by other works from the literature (Guth & Rubin, 2015; Kurek & Müller-Hartmann, 2017; Müller-Hartmann & Schocker-von Ditzfurth, 2010; Müller-Hartmann, 2006). It also takes into account the importance of fostering relationship building and social presence in telecollaborative teams (Liaw & English, 2017; Müller-Hartmann, 2000) by going from simpler activities, which present and exchange personal and cultural information, to tasks that are more complex and which require more collaboration. Table 2 offers a detailed description of each task.

As can be observed in Table 2, the task sequence considers the importance of reflection in the process of developing Intercultural Competence (Guth & Rubin, 2015; Müller-Hartmann, 2006) and, after completing each activity, students are asked to reflect about what they have just done. For the icebreaker, the group contract and the final assignment tasks, students receive a link to complete the related reflection tasks in Google forms. The reflection tasks consist of open questions which ask students to reflect on different aspects of the collaboration process (Figure 3). For the Comparison & Analysis task, the group report handed by students should carry their reflections on the differences and similarities found between group members according to Hofstede's dimensions and therefore can be considered as a reflection task.

The image shows a Google Form titled "Reflection". At the top, there are tabs for "PREGUNTAS" and "RESPUESTAS" with a count of "82". Below the title, there is an instruction: "After watching the videos from your group colleagues, answer the following questions." The form contains three numbered questions, each followed by a "Texto de respuesta larga" (long text response) input field:

- 1- What could you learn from the differences and similarities between group members? *
- 2- Do you believe that such differences and similarities are related to culture * or are they only individual characteristics in your opinion?
- 3- Do you believe that such differences and similarities might have an impact * on the relation between group members? How?

Figure 3. Example of Reflection Task in Google forms

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<u>Task</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Pedagogical strategy</u>	<u>Learning outcomes</u>	<u>Tools</u>	<u>Estimated workload</u>
Course introduction	Presentation of the task sequence (with its objectives and format) and delivery of other practical information such as: timeline for the completion of the different tasks, composition of working groups and instructions on the technology tools to be used (including on how to access the online learning platform - e.g. Moodle, Google Classroom - if any is adopted). Besides sending the information by e-mail/platform, teachers should brief students in a face-to-face induction session to make sure that they learn how to use the technology tools selected for the exchange. The teachers can also provide students with video tutorials about the tools to be used and inform them about any local technical support services that the universities involved might offer.	Delivery of information Pre-exchange briefing	Preparation of students for the programme	Instructions: E-mail and/or platform adopted + face-to-face induction session held by teachers in each locality	40-50 min
Pre-tests (self-evaluation)	Students are asked to self-evaluate their level of Intercultural Competence in relation to the 48 indicators defined in the Intercultural Competence model. They are also asked about their previous international experience and asked to analyse two intercultural incidents so that their initial level of Intercultural Competence can be grasped.	Self-evaluation	All the outcomes listed	Instructions: E-mail and/or platform adopted Questionnaire: Google forms	40 min – 1 hour
Icebreaker	Group members are asked to introduce themselves to each other by posting a video on the shared platform. Alternatively, if a platform is not adopted, videos can be, for example, uploaded to Google Drive folders. In the videos, students should mention points like name, age, family size, curiosities about their cultures and expectations towards the virtual collaboration.	Exchange of personal information for relationship building	Intercultural Knowledge (K1), Intercultural awareness (AW1, AW2, AW3), Intercultural Relationship Building (IRB2)	Instructions: E-mail and/or platform adopted Video recording: Students can record their videos on their own mobile	50 min-1 hour

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					devices or computer camera	
				Video sharing:	Google drive or platform adopted	
Icebreaker - reflection task	Students are asked to answer the following reflection questions related to the icebreaker task in a Google forms: 1. What could you learn from the differences and similarities between group members? 2. Do you believe that such differences and similarities are related to culture or are they only individual characteristics? 3- Do you believe that such differences and similarities might have an impact on the relationship between group members? How? 4 - How do you relate yourself with your own culture? In which aspects do you believe that your culture shapes what you are? 5. How much did you like this activity? Why?	Critical reflection	Critical Reflection (CR4, CR5)	Instructions:	E-mail and/or platform adopted	50 min-1 hour
				Questionnaire:	Google forms	
Comparison & analysis of cultural products	In this activity, students are asked to meet online in order to jointly explore the similarities and differences of the cultures represented by group members according to the six National Cultural Dimensions proposed by Geert Hofstede (individualism x collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, femininity x masculinity, restraint x indulgence, long term x short-term orientation). For doing so, they should use Geert Hofstede's Country Comparison Tool (online open source available at https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/) as basis for discussion. Afterwards, students must elaborate a report containing:(1) a brief summary of the	Comparison and analysis of cultural products, exchange of cultural information, online discussion and collaborative group work.	Intercultural Knowledge (K1, K3, K4), Intercultural Awareness (AW1, AW2, AW3), Skills (S4), Intercultural Teamwork (ITM2, ICM2), Intercultural Relationship Building (IRB1, IRB2, IRB4), Developing Intercultural	Instructions:	E-mail and/or platform adopted	4 hours
				Comparison tool:	Geert Hofstede's webpage	
				Video conferencing:	Students can choose the tool with which they feel more comfortable with (Skype,	

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	results; (2) reflections on how the different group members relate or not to the results given for their respective cultures; (3) an analysis of how differences and similarities in the countries' results can represent possible challenges or potentials for the upcoming groupwork and (4) suggestions of strategies to be used by the group in order to overcome possible identified barriers. At least two weeks should be left for the completion of this activity.		Competence (DIC3)		Google Hangouts, etc)	
Comparison & analysis – reflection task	Students are asked to elaborate a group report with the reflections derived from the group discussion about the comparison of National Dimensions.	Group reflection	Critical Reflection (CR3, CR4) and Developing Intercultural Competence (DIC3)	Shared document:	Google docs	1 hour
Elaboration of group contract	Before starting to work on the final assignment, (which is next in this sequence), as a 'pre-production' task, students are asked to meet their group colleagues online in order to discuss their different communication styles and cultural expectations towards group work. They are also asked to elaborate a group contract to rule the collaboration during the development of the last assignment. Teachers provide the following topics for discussion (which should appear in the contract): the frequency of group meetings, tools to be used by the group in order to compile all the work, expectations related to the quality of the work to be delivered, expectations related to the relationship between group members (dedication, effort, ethics...), the different communication styles present in the group (e.g. formal/informal, high context/low context), time management, strategies to maintain the communication	Group discussion for verbalization of cultural expectations, group reflection and collaborative assignment	AW2, AW3), Intercultural Attitude (AT1, AT3), Intercultural Skills (S1, S2, S3, S4, S6), Intercultural Teamwork (ITM1, ITM2, ITM3), Intercultural Conflict Management (ICM1, ICM2, ICM 3), Intercultural Relationship Building (IRB1, IRB2, IRB4), Emotional Intelligence (EI2, EI3, EI5), Developing Intercultural	Instructions: Video conferencing: Shared document:	E-mail and/or platform adopted Any tool students feel more comfortable with (Skype, Google Hangouts, etc) Google docs	1,5 hour

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	flow in the group and get the work done, strategies to deal with conflicts that might arise. A template for the contract can be provided by the teachers (for an interesting Learning Contract template, see Palomera, Briones, & Gómez-Linares (2017))		Competence (DIC3), Intercultural Virtual Teamwork (IVT1, IVT2, IVT3)			
Elaboration of group contract – reflection task	. Students are asked to answer the following reflection questions related to the task in a Google forms: 1. How would you define your communication style? 2- How was it for you to verbalize your (cultural?) expectations? How did you feel? 3- Did you need to adjust your expectations or behavior at any time during the elaboration of the group work contract so that a common agreement could be met? 4- Do you believe that technology might impact the communication in the group? 5- Do you believe that the cultural differences between group members might affect the functioning of the group work? 6- Did you like this activity? Why?	Group reflection and collaborative assignment	Critical Reflection (CR1, CR2, CR4, CR5), Developing Intercultural Competence (DIC3),	Shared document	Google docs	40 min
Final collaborative assignment	For this final task, teachers should elaborate an assignment related to the participating courses' core studies. Such assignment can be designed by teachers in different formats, depending on the subjects involved. Teachers from Business, for example, might ask students to deliver a 5-page joint business case analysis or a marketing plan. Law teachers might ask students to deliver a comparison of how the law in the different countries involved approach a certain issue. Given its higher complexity, students should be given more time/weeks to engage in collaboration and communication with their peers. Besides the learning	Group work and collaborative assignment	All outcomes listed (except for K2, EI1, CR3, DIC1, DIC2, DIC4, DIC5, DIC6 and IVT1)	Instructions: Communication between students:	E-mail and/or platform adopted Video conferencing (Skype, Google Hangouts, etc), e-mail exchange, social media and/or platform adopted	5 hours

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	<p>outcomes related to Intercultural Competence, teachers might decide to use this assignment material for assessing other objectives related to the content of the subjects involved. During this phase (last part of the semester), students will have more autonomy and teacher should be available to help them to manage conflicts in case they arise.</p> <p>An example of instruction for this assignment in a telecollaboration between two undergraduate business courses would be: "In this task, you are asked to pick a company which has business in different countries and analyse how this company adapts to local cultures. You can analyse elements like the marketing strategy adopted by the company in different countries, the kind of communication that they use in their websites when translating it to different languages, their hiring policy in different countries, facilities in different geographic locations, etc. You can choose classical case studies like Coca-cola and Ikea or, inversely, you can also propose an intercultural business strategy to a company that still does not have one. The report must be 4.000-5.000 words long and be structured around an introduction, a theoretical background, the case study presentation, a critical analysis of the case and a conclusion."</p>			Shared document:	Google docs
Collaborative assignment – reflection task	<p>Students are asked to answer the following reflection questions sent by the teachers and related to the task in a Google forms:</p> <p>1 - During the development of the assignment, did you notice if, at any moment, participant's cultural backgrounds were influencing the group work? How did that happen?</p> <p>2- Did you feel judgmental about the behavior that any</p>	Individual reflection	Critical Reflection (CR1, CR2, CR4, CR5)	Instructions: Questionnaire:	E-mail and/or platform adopted Google forms
					60 min – 90 min

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of your group colleagues manifested during the development of the assignment?

3 - Did you need to adjust your expectations or behavior at any time during the elaboration of the project so that a common agreement could be met? If so, how did you feel about it?

4- Did you put in practice any communication strategies that your group had defined in the work contract or any other that you might have seen as useful while working in the intercultural virtual team?

5 - Were there any misunderstandings or conflicts during the production of the assignment? If so, could you describe it and comment on your position in relation to it?

6 - How do you think your group mates perceived your behavior during group work?

7 - How was it for you to shift between working with your colleagues in the virtual team and with your colleagues in the face-to-face sessions?

8 - Were you able to notice if any member of your group had a lower level of Intercultural Competence? If so, do you believe it had an influence on group work? How did you deal with it?

9 - Did you have a leader in your group? If so, how do you think it influenced the work?

10 - Did you build any kind of relationship with your virtual groupmates? If so, how was it?

11 - How did you feel during the development of the assignment? Was there any moment in which your emotions played any role in the work/collaboration?

12 - Do you believe that your own cultural assumptions played any part during the group work?

13 - How do you believe that the technology influenced the communication between group members (if it did at all)?

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	14 - Did you need to use any strategy to overcome barriers posed by technology during the virtual group work? How was it?					
Posttests	Students are asked to self-evaluate their level of Intercultural Competence in relation to the 48 indicators defined in the Intercultural Competence model (to be contrasted with results from pre-test). They are also asked to analyse two intercultural incidents which are similar to the ones provided in the pre-test. The idea is to try to identify in students' incident analysis if their discourse changed/improved somehow after the collaboration (from pre to posttest).	Self-evaluation	All outcomes listed	Instructions:	E-mail and/or platform adopted	40 min – 1 hour
				Questionnaire:	Google forms	
Course conclusion	Wrap-up of the telecollaborative programme. A satisfaction survey can be applied by teachers to all students in order to grasp their perceptions towards the telecollaborative programme.	Delivery of information Exchange wrap-up	Conclusion of the course, grasp students' perceptions towards the programme	Instructions:	E-mail and/or platform adopted	30-40 min

Table 2. Task sequence with instructions.

Integration of online tasks to the coursework

Since the task sequence aims at being adaptable to the subject into which it will be implemented, it proposes a gradual integration of the tellocollaborative programme into the core subject of the courses. In order to do so, it defines non-specific activities to be held first (Ice-breaker, Comparison and Analysis and Group Contract) to then request a subject-related assignment to be developed in the last task. Ideally, the proposed sequence should be maintained once, as said before, the tasks are ordered in a way to build trust among group members. For better integration to the coursework, it is also suggested that tasks are evenly distributed along the whole course span, following principles of learning process.

We provide in Figure 4 an instance of how the task sequence proposed is currently being implemented in two tellocollaborative projects at University of Deusto (UD) in collaboration with two foreign universities. Example 1 consists of a telecollaboration between UD and a French university as part of a joint master course in International Business. Example 2 is a partnership between UD and a Dutch university in an undergraduate Business course.

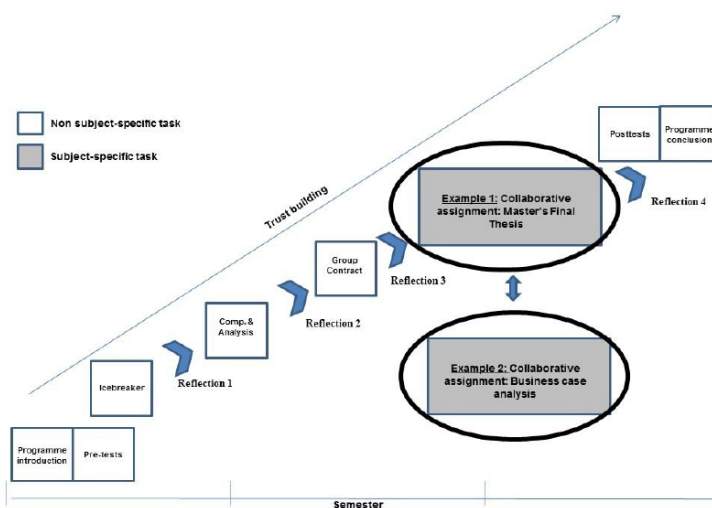


Figure 4. Examples of the integration of the proposed task sequence into course unities (main references: Guth & Rubin, 2015; Kurek & Müller-Hartmann, 2017; Lewis & O' Dowd, 2016b; Müller-Hartmann, 2006; O' Dowd & Ware, 2009)

As one can see in the examples given, when following the task sequence, teachers from both projects implemented the icebreaker, the comparison and analysis and the elaboration of the group contract without making any changes to the original format proposed, whereas, for the final assignment, students in Example 1 are collaborating in the development of their Final Master's Thesis while students from Example 2 are working in a small business case analysis.

Technology tools

Given that literature showed that the low level of teachers' e-literacy was one of the greatest barriers to the adoption of telecollaboration as a practice in Higher Education (O'Dowd, 2013a), we suggest what we consider to be basic and well known tools to be used in each task. The choice for Google apps for education (Google Docs, Google Forms, Google Drive) for most of the activities is justified by the increasing adoption of Google by Higher Education institutions (Owayid & Uden, 2014), by their collaborative and intuitive features (which are useful for the kind of tasks proposed) and by their 'open access', which provide a common ground in which students and teachers from collaborating universities can work together without the need to deal with registration and privacy issues related to specific universities' platforms. Still, teachers can opt to use other tools that they are more comfortable with. In whatever way, we suggest that they adopt the tools that will be of easy use for all parts involved and which will mostly attend the cultural diversity present in groups (Cagiltay et al., 2015).

The screenshot shows a Google Classroom interface. At the top, the instructor's name 'Luana Ferreira Lopes Silva' and the date '21 sept. 2017' are displayed. Below this, the assignment title '2 - Icebreaker' is shown. A progress bar indicates that 7 students have completed the task and 0 have not. The assignment instructions are as follows:

Icebreaker
Hello all!

For the icebreaker, we invite you to record a 2-minute video to introduce yourselves to your group colleagues. In the video, you should mention:

- Your full name
- Nationality
- Hobbies
- Any likes or dislikes
- Family size
- Any interesting facts/aspects about your culture and a comment on how you relate/don't relate to those
- Your expectations for the course/collaboration in the group

As examples, we (the instructors) are posting our videos on the main board of the group so that you can know us better and have our posts as examples.

Figure 5. Example of the usage of an online learning platform (Google Classroom) for posting task sequence instructions.

The adoption of an online learning platform (e.g. Google Classroom or Moodle), to which students and teachers from both universities can have access, is strongly recommended, since it can hold all the material related to the course together as well as serve as a platform for intra-group interaction and between students and teachers (see example in Figure 5). In

this case, usability features should be carefully considered and, the more intuitive the use to of the platform is, the less technical problems are likely to arise during collaboration.

Assessment Plan

In alignment with what literature suggests, the sequence sets forth an ongoing, integrated and multi-method assessment plan to evaluate the development of students' Intercultural Competence during telecollaboration. In order to do so, it suggests that the collection of evaluation material should be placed at different points of the course. Assessment in this material also makes use of different instruments (self-evaluation, videos, reflection tasks, group reports) so to collect different kinds of evaluation material (quantitative and qualitative).

<u>Type of evaluation material</u>	<u>Instrument of collection</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Collection point</u>	<u>Suggested tools</u>
Quantitative + qualitative	Pre and posttest self-evaluation questionnaires	Pre and posttest questionnaires through which students evaluate their own level of mastery in relation to each learning outcome of the programme (scale from 1-5) (quantitative evaluation) and also respond to open questions related to two intercultural incidents (qualitative evaluation).	Beginning and end of the programme	Google forms
Qualitative	Students' videos	The videos posted by students in the icebreaker task can be analyzed in order to assess certain initial attitudes towards the collaboration and cultural self-awareness. The specific evidences expected to be manifested through this instrument can be consulted in the appendix	Icebreaker	Videos uploaded to the online platform (if any is adopted) or shared through a sharing tool like Google Drive
Qualitative	Reflection questions	After icebreaker and collaborative assignments, students receive questions to answer about the collaboration with the foreign peers during the development of the tasks	After icebreaker, group contract and final collaborative assignment	Google forms
Qualitative	Group reports	The reflections present in the reports developed by students as a result of the Comparison and Analysis task and also the Group Contract are considered for evaluation	Comparison and Analysis and Group Contract	Shared documents (Google docs)

Table 3. Intercultural Competence Assessment Plan

Since literature shows that telecollaborative activities should be seen as assessable and credit-bearing tasks (O' Dowd, 2013), it is suggested that the work derived from the online

exchange corresponds to at least 15% of students' grading in the courses in which it is being implemented.

In order to operationalize EMIC's learning outcomes for the assessment of students' contributions, we have also specified in a table (appendix) the evidences which are expected to be manifested/delivered by students per instrument in each if of the tasks proposed. The idea is to provide teachers with a concrete instrument to assess how each task of the sequence contributed to develop students' Intercultural Competence.

Finally, the results from pre-post tests can be contrasted with the evidences manifested by students through the application of the qualitative instruments. This way, a more holistic diagnostic of students' Intercultural Competence development during their participation in the proposed sequence can be obtained.

Conclusion

This paper aims to make a contribution to the development of Intercultural Competence through telecollaboration. As shown by the previous works analysed, there is a need for instructional design models for the development of interculturality (Zapata, 2014) and for implementing and evaluating sustainable formats of telecollaboration to allow more students and educators to engage in this practice with important implications for the internationalisation of Higher Education (Helm, 2015).

To this end, a task sequence is proposed to support Higher Education teachers in the design and implementation of telecollaborative programmes for the development of Intercultural Competence. Based on the typology of tasks from O'Dowd & Ware (2009) and on other important works from the field of instructional design in telecollaboration, the task sequence is composed of an icebreaker, a comparison and analysis of cultural products and two collaborative assignments. The material contained in this work not only suggests the adoption of the EMIC model as a theoretical reference for the definition and development of Intercultural Competence in the context given, but also adds a new block and four related learning outcomes to its original composition in order to approach the specificities of virtual teamwork. The sequence also offers concrete and detailed instructions for the tasks proposed including the time estimated for completing each of them. Furthermore, guidelines on the implementation of tasks and on the selection of technologies are given as well a a multi-perspective and multi-method assessment plan. Another contribution from this work is the elaboration of a table which lists the specific evidences that are expected to be manifested by students in each of the tasks proposed and that can serve as a practical instrument for the assessment of students' Intercultural Competence with reference to EMIC model.

The proposed sequence aims at being interdisciplinary and customizable. Although only the theoretical background is presented in this article, it is being currently implemented in two telecollaboration projects at University of Deusto in collaboration with other foreign universities. By doing so, we expect to be able to evaluate the effectiveness of the learning programme proposed by the guide in developing students' Intercultural Competence through telecollaboration and intend to grasp students perceptions towards the different aspects of the programme. The lessons learned from such implementations will offer suggestions of improvements for future applications of the guide in different Higher Education contexts.

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We expect that this proposal will be of interest for the integration of Intercultural Competence development into Higher Education by means of telecollaboration.

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Appendix

EMIC Learning Outcomes + Intercultural Virtual Teamwork with Respective Expected Evidences per Task

EMIC Intercultural Competence Dimensions + Intercultural Virtual Teamwork		EMIC Learning Outcomes + learning outcomes for Intercultural Virtual Teamwork	Expected evidences per task			
			Icebreaker	Comparison & Analysis	Group contract	Final assignment
Knowledge	K1	Develop an increased understanding of the concept of culture, how cultures differ and the notion of 'otherness'	RT – After watching the videos from his/her peers, the student points out specific cultural aspects learned from other colleagues' cultures	Report – The report explains how the different cultures present in the group differ according to the six dimensions of Hofstede's model	RT - Student mentions specific aspects of the individual cultures represented in the group that he/she learned during the elaboration of the contract	RT - Student mentions specific aspects of the individual cultures represented in the group that he/she learned during the development of the assignment
	K2	Gain knowledge of the main concepts related to Intercultural Competence	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
	K3	Identify vocabulary and concepts that are required in intercultural situations	N.A.	Report – The comparison of cultures presented uses specific and appropriate vocabulary according to Hofstede's theory (e.g. collectivism x individualism, uncertainty avoidance, etc.)	Contract – The contract approaches key concepts according to which cultures may differ (like time management, expectations, work style, Hofstede's National Dimensions and communication style)	RT – When reporting about the process of collaboration, the student uses appropriate vocabulary and approaches key concepts according to which cultures may differ (like time management, expectations, work style, Hofstede's National Dimensions and communication style)
	K4	Develop an understanding of the relationship between culture-specific knowledge and stereotypes	N.A.	Report – The contract expresses understanding that Hofstede's dimensions are general cultural descriptions and that individual's behaviors are influenced by many forces other than those	RT - Student explicitly reflects on the relationship between stereotypes that he/she had before the collaboration and the behavior from colleagues in practice during the group work	RT - Student explicitly reflects on the relationship between stereotypes that he/she had before the collaboration and the behavior from colleagues in practice during the group work

Awareness	AW1	Develop intercultural awareness - awareness of differences between cultures	RT - Student points out cultural differences and similarities between group members	Report - The differences and similarities of the cultures represented in the group according to all the six of Hofstede's National Cultural Dimensions are highlighted	Contract - The contract clearly indicates cultural differences and/or similarities between group members in terms of time management, expectations, work style, Hofstede's National Dimensions and communication style RT - Student mentions differences and similarities between group members which he/she noticed during the elaboration of the contract	RT - Student mentions differences and similarities between group members which he/she noticed during the development of the assignment
	AW2	Increase cultural self-awareness - awareness of oneself as a cultural being and of the fact that our own behavior, views and reactions are conditioned by our own cultures	Video - Student provides information about his/her own culture	Report - The report contains reflections on how different groups members relate or not to their own cultures' scores and characteristics in relation to the six of Hofstede's National Cultural Dimensions	RT - Student indicates how his/her own culture influences his/her work style	RT - Student explains if and/or how his/her own cultural assumptions influenced the group work during the development of the assignment
	AW3	Increase awareness of specific cases when cultural conditioning is at play - not only knowing that culture is supposed to influence human behaviors but being capable of identifying this influence in practice	RT - Student reflects on how the behavior/information that group colleagues deliver in the videos might be influenced by their respective cultures. An example of this type would be: "I could see that all students from the other group demonstrated to be very open towards the collaboration whereas students from our group were more serious and this might be connected to their cultural background"	Report - The report contains real examples of how the different dimensions from Hofstede's theory are expressed in practice in the different cultures represented in the group. Statements from this type might be	RT - Student reports to have noticed cultural forces playing a role during the elaboration of the contract and describes how it happened	RT - Student reports to have noticed cultural forces playing a role during the elaboration of the contract and describes how it happened
Attitudes	AT1	Become aware of attitudes needed for higher levels of Intercultural Competence (such as acceptance of differences, openness, non-judgmental attitude, tolerance, a cooperative mindset, flexibility, valuing diversity and respect for culturally-different others)	N.A.	N.A.	Contract - Attitudes needed to ensure a good intercultural interaction between group members, such as openness, empathy and respect, are mentioned in the contract RT - Student explicitly reflects on the attitudes needed to ensure a good intercultural interaction between group members, such as openness, empathy and respect in his/her answers	RT - Student mentions how him/herself or other members of the group having or lacking certain attitudes needed to ensure a good level of Intercultural Competence affected the group work

	AT2	Practice applying non-judgmental attitudes - not judging culturally-different behavior and non-judgmental attitudes in general	N.A.	N.A.	RT - Student reports examples of him/herself or group members applying non-judgmental attitudes during the collaboration RT - Student reports cases when judgmental attitudes affected the group work	RT - Student reports examples of him/herself or group members applying non-judgmental attitudes during the collaboration RT - Student reports cases when judgmental attitudes affected the group work
	AT3	Develop openness to adjust behavior in intercultural interactions	N.A.	N.A.	Contract - Openness to adjust behavior as is explicitly mentioned in the contract as one of the keys/strategies to a successful intercultural interaction in the group	RT - Student reports if he/she had to adjust behavior at any time during the elaboration of the project so that a common agreement could be met
Skills	S1	Develop practical intercultural communication approaches	N.A.	N.A.	Contract - The contract proposes practical communication approaches to be taken by the group in order to ensure a good communication flow RT - Student reports practical intercultural communication approaches adopted by the group during the elaboration of the contract	RT - Student mentions practical communication that were adopted by the group in order to ensure a good communication flow during the development of the assignment
	S2	Develop an ability to mediate in an intercultural situation	N.A.	N.A.	RT - Student reports if he/she had to mediate the collaboration at any point and how he/she did it	RT - Student reports if he/she had to mediate the collaboration at any point and how he/she did it
	S3	Practice verbalizing cultural expectations and norms, discussing expectations and speaking about culturally different practices that are disturbing, ability to speak about cultural differences	N.A.	N.A.	RT - Student reports how it was for him/her to verbalize his/her cultural expectations during the elaboration of the contract	RT - Student reports how it was for him/her to verbalize his/her cultural expectations during the development of the assignment
	S4	Identify the impact of cultural differences in misunderstandings	N.A.	Report - the report contains reflections of how differences and similarities between the countries' results might cause misunderstandings between group members	Contract - The contract identifies specific aspects in which cultural differences present in the group might cause misunderstandings (for example, in time management or expectations in terms of quality of work) RT - Student reports if cultural differences created misunderstandings at any point during the elaboration	RT - Student reports if cultural differences created misunderstandings at any point during the elaboration of the contract

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	S5	Develop an ability to check how one's behavior is perceived in an intercultural context	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	RT – Student describes how he/she believes that his/her behavior was perceived during the collaboration
	S6	Develop an ability to adjust one's behavior in a culturally diverse context	N.A.	N.A.	RT - Student reports to have adjusted behavior at any time during the elaboration of the contract so that a common agreement could be met	RT - Student reports to have adjusted behavior at any time during the elaboration of the project
	S7	Improve the ability to shift between cultural environments	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	RT – Student reports how it was for him/her to shift between working with your colleagues in the virtual team and with your colleagues in the face-to-face sessions
	S8	Develop strategies for dealing with people with (perceived) lower IC	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	RT - Students report to have had to deal with peers who had perceived lower IC
Intercultural Teamwork	ITM1	Develop skills for working with diverse teams	N.A.	N.A.	RT – Student gives information/evidences about group work dynamics so that his/her participation in such work can be grasped (for instance, student explains how they shared the work, how the communication was, how he/she felt about it, etc.)	RT – Student gives information/evidences about group work dynamics so that his/her participation in such work can be grasped (for instance, student explains how they shared the work, how the communication was, how he/she felt about it, etc.)
	ITM2	Increase understanding of leadership roles and strategies for intercultural teams	N.A.	N.A.	Contract – The contract defines different roles needed to get the group work done and assigns group members to each role according to their expertise or communication styles	RT – Student informs if his/her group had a leader and explains how the work of this leader impacted the group dynamics
	ITM3	Develop skills of mediation in intercultural teams	N.A.	N.A.	RT - Student reports if he/she had to mediate the collaboration at any point and how he/she did it	RT - Student reports if he/she had to mediate the collaboration at any point and how he/she did it

Integrating Intercultural Competence development into the curriculum through Telecollaboration. A task sequence proposal for Higher Education. Luana Ferreira-Lopes, Maria José Bezanilla and Iciar Elexpuru.

Intercultural Conflict Management	ICM1	Understand the impact of Intercultural Competence on conflicts	N.A.	N.A.	Contract – The contract identifies specific aspects in which cultural differences present in the group might cause conflicts RT - Student reports if cultural differences created conflicts at any point during the elaboration of the contract	RT - Student reports if cultural differences created conflicts at any point during the elaboration of the contract
	ICM2	Be aware of strategies for identifying, analyzing and solving intercultural conflicts	N.A.	N.A.	Contract – The contract identifies specific strategies for addressing conflicts that might arise from cultural differences present in the group RT – Students report if any conflict arose during the elaboration of the contract and explains how he/she or the group dealt with it	RT - Student reports strategies used by the group to overcome conflicts that might have derived from the cultural differences existing in the group
	ICM3	Develop skills for effectively dealing with conflicts related to cultural differences	N.A.	N.A.	Contract – The contract lists potential challenges that the cultural differences present in the group might impose to the creation of relationship between group members RT – Student explicitly reflects on the potential challenges that the cultural differences present in the group might impose to the creation of relationship between group members	RT – Student reports if any conflict arose during the development of the assignment and explains how he/she or the group dealt with it
Intercultural Relationship Building	IRB1	Increase awareness of issues and challenges in intercultural relationship building	N.A.	Report – The report presents potential challenges that the intercultural differences in the group might impose to the upcoming teamwork	Contract – The contract lists potential challenges that the cultural differences present in the group might impose to the creation of relationship between group members RT – Student explicitly reflects on the potential challenges that the cultural differences present in the group might impose to the creation of relationship between group members	RT - Student reports on relationship challenges and issues derived from cultural differences that might have arose during the collaboration
	IRB2	Develop a positive attitude to intercultural relationships	RT - Student shows a positive attitude towards building relationship with group members from other culture	Report – A positive attitude towards the intercultural relationship building between group members is expressed in the report with statements like “despite of our cultural differences, we believe that we can develop good relationship”	RT – Student expresses a positive attitude towards the intercultural relationship building between group members with statements like “I am very excited to work in this group” or “we are working really well together”, etc.	RT – Student expresses a positive attitude towards the intercultural relationship building between group members in the aftermath of the telecollaboration with statements like “working with the international peers was a very nice experience and I am looking forward to having this kind of experience again”

	IRB3	Develop ability to form, develop and maintain intercultural relationships (private or work)	N.A.	N.A.	RT - Student provides evidence that group members are building relationship with statements like "we started the conversation talking about the assignment, but in the end we were talking about our personal lives. I think we will be more than groupmates and might become friends"	RT - Student provides evidence that group members built relationship with statements like "the work was really nice, we talked about many things and created a good work atmosphere"
	IRB4	Develop strategies for encouraging intercultural relationships in one's environment (private or work)	N.A.	Report - Strategies for encouraging intercultural relationships between group members are highlighted	Report - Strategies for encouraging intercultural relationships between group members are cited in the contract	RT - Student reports to have used strategies to encourage intercultural relationships between group members
Emotional Intelligence	E1	Gain knowledge about the concept of emotional intelligence and its use	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
	E2	Develop awareness of one's own emotions	N.A.	N.A.	RT - Student reports how he/she felt when verbalizing his/her cultural expectations during the elaboration of the contract	RT - Student reports how he/she felt during the development of the assignment
	E3	Increase one's ability to manage own emotions	N.A.	N.A.	RT - Student reports to have needed to manage his/her own emotions when verbalizing his/her cultural expectations and coming to agreements for the contract	RT - Student reports that to have needed to manage his/her own emotions when interacting with students from different cultural backgrounds during the collaboration
	E4	Improve one's ability to notice and understand emotional perspectives of culturally different others through empathy	N.A.	N.A.	RT - Student explicitly reflects on how colleagues from other cultural backgrounds expressed (or not) emotions during the elaboration of the contract	RT - Student explicitly reflects on how colleagues from other cultural backgrounds expressed (or not) emotions during the elaboration of the contract
	E5	Develop an ability to deal with emotions in teamwork and conflict situation	N.A.	N.A.	RT - Student reports to have needed to manage with their own or others' emotions during the elaboration of the contract	RT - Student reports to have needed to manage with their own or others' emotions during the elaboration of the contract

Critical Reflection	CR1	Develop the capacity to deal with stereotypes (they have themselves or others might have about their culture)	N.A.	N.A.	RT - Student explicitly reflects on the relationship between stereotypes that he/she had before the collaboration and the behavior from colleagues in practice during the group work	RT - Student explicitly reflects on the relationship between stereotypes that he/she had before the collaboration and the behavior from colleagues in practice during the group work
	CR2	Develop cognitive flexibility and/or ability to analyze intercultural encounters through a culturally-aware perspective and seeing things from different cultural perspectives	N.A.	N.A.	RT - Student gives concrete examples of situations when different cultural backgrounds influenced the group work during the elaboration of the contract, "telling the story" from different perspectives	RT - Student gives concrete examples of situations when different cultural backgrounds influenced the group work during the development of the assignment, "telling the story" from different perspectives
	CR3	Develop a critical approach to culture-specific knowledge	N.A.	Report - The report "holds a discussion" with Hofstede's theory, highlighting how members relate or not to results and not only reporting the scores in an automatic way	N.A.	N.A.
	CR4	Increase critical awareness of one's own assumptions and behavior in an intercultural context	RT - Student explicitly reflects on how his/her behavior is influenced by his/her own culture	Report - Reflections on how each member relates or not to the score results for their respective cultures are presented	RT - Student reflects on how culture influences his/her own communication style	RT - Student explicitly reflects on how he/she believes that his/her own culture influenced his behavior during the group work
	CR5	Increase critical awareness of others' behaviors in an intercultural context	RT - Student identifies characteristics of group colleagues which are linked to their respective cultural backgrounds and not only take them as simple individual manifestations	N.A.	RT - Student reports to have noticed patterns in the behavior or characteristics from collaborating peers that are influenced by culture (e.g. "I could notice that students from the other university are in general more direct and organized...")	RT - Student reports to have noticed patterns in the behavior or characteristics from collaborating peers that are influenced by culture (e.g. "I could notice that students from the other university are in general more direct and organized...")
Developing Intercultural Competence	DIC1	Demonstrate understanding of learning strategies for developing Intercultural Competence	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
	DIC2	Increase understanding of one's own learning and development approach to IC development	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.

	DIC3	Know how to identify logistic, specific and in-depth knowledge of individual cultures	N.A.	Report - Report presents logistic, specific and in-depth knowledge of individual cultures represented in the group in relation to Hofstede's six dimensions	RT - Student mentions specific and in-depth aspects of the individual cultures represented in the group that he/she learned during the elaboration of the contract	RT - Student mentions specific and in-depth aspects of the individual cultures represented in the group that he/she learned during the development of the final assignment
	DIC4	Develop an attitude of lifelong-learning in relation to Intercultural Competence development	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
	DIC5	Develop awareness of one's own level of Intercultural Competence in order to identify developmental needs	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
	DIC6	Develop an ability to set objectives, plan actions and reflect on own's progress in Intercultural Competence development	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Intercultural Virtual Teamwork	IVT1	Understand the main characteristics of virtual communication and the role it plays in a globalized workplace nowadays	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
	IVT2	Develop awareness of the impact that virtual communication has on intercultural virtual teamwork	N.A.	N.A.	RT - Student explicitly reflects on the impact that technology might have on the intercultural group work	RT - Student describes how technology impacted the group work during the development of the assignment
	IVT3	Have a positive attitude in relation to creating strategies to overcome barriers posed by virtual communication	N.A.	N.A.	RT - Student expresses a positive attitude towards working with peers from the other cultures through technology. Statements of this type would be: "although working from a distance might not be easy, if we follow the strategies defined in the contract, I believe we will be able to work well together"	RT - Student expresses satisfaction with the strategies adopted by the group to overcome the barriers posed by technology
	IVT4	Put strategies to overcome barriers posed by virtual communication into practice when working in intercultural virtual teams	N.A.	N.A.	RT - Student reports the strategies used by the group in order to deal with technology during collaboration	RT - Student reports the strategies used by the group in order to deal with technology during collaboration

Legend: N.A. = Not Applicable; RT = Reflection Task

Modified from EMIC (2015). Available at: www.emic-project.org/emc-toolkit. Modified with permission

Task-sequence implementation

Publication 2

Ferreira-Lopes, L., Elexpuru, I., Bezanilla, M. J., Narvaiza, L., & Larreina, M. (2019). Espacios de telecolaboración para el desarrollo de la competencia intercultural. In A. Eizaguirre, M. J. Bezanilla, A. Arruti & N. Saénz (Coord.), *Espacios de aprendizaje en Educación Superior* (pp. 159-174). Barcelona: Octaedro.

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Key findings, discussion and conclusions

Intercultural competence has become an essential tool to navigate every-day life in increasingly diverse communities and workplaces. Literature and experience have been showing that the development of intercultural competence does not occur automatically with the contact with people from different cultures. Instead, developing intercultural competence has been proving to be a complex cycle that demands not only exposure to different cultures but also an intense process of critical reflection in order to raise awareness of the difference between cultures and especially of one's own cultural beliefs.

As intercultural competence has been demanded on many fronts, universities have been expanding efforts to offer their students the opportunity to develop such competence. Although in the past decades such efforts have been channeled mainly through physical mobility, more recently, Higher Education institutions have also been including the development of intercultural competence in their curricula. By adopting new approaches and pedagogical strategies to the development of students' intercultural competence, universities have been reaching to establish what has been called by experts in the field as "Internationalization at home" (Knight, 2004; Wachter, 2003).

In this context, technology has been key. Digital tools have not only allowed institutions to recruit students from all over the world to their online courses, but has also provided teachers with the opportunity to enrich the learning experience in their every-day classes with digital resources and with the possibility of having global interconnectedness from within the limits of classroom walls.

On this wise, Intercultural Virtual Collaboration (IVC) has been employed by teachers and institutions to connect students from different locations to develop different kinds of learning outcomes, being intercultural competence one of the most frequent of them. Since the turn of the millennium, IVC has been more and more explored by practitioners. An array of research works has provided interesting insights on different aspects of IVC, since, despite its demonstrated potential to develop students' intercultural competence and other skills, the practice has not yet become an integrative part of university curriculum. The complexity involved in the implementation of IVC projects still hinders its establishment and "educators often struggle to see the value of the activity or are unable to conceptualize how such student-centered online collaboration could contribute to their coursework" (O'Dowd, 2016, p. 289). For this reason, there is a demand for developing and sharing models and practical resources for the development of intercultural competence through IVC.

In order to address such demand, this doctoral thesis proposed to (1) design a comprehensive teaching-learning strategy/task-sequence for the development of intercultural competence in Higher Education through intercultural virtual collaboration based on the review of the literature on the subject. It also aimed at (2) analyzing the effect of the proposed task-sequence in students' development of intercultural competence according to students' perceptions and at (3) exploring how much students enjoy participating in each task of the sequence as well as at finding out what they most and least like about it.

Different research strategies were used in order to pursue such objectives and the results of the whole research process are distributed along the four publications that compose this compendium. In this section, we (a) summarize the key findings of the study, (b) draw the main conclusions that emerged from it and (c) reflect on the limitations of the work as well as on recommendations for future related research and practice.

1. Key findings and discussion

1.1. Designing a task-sequence for the development of students' intercultural competence through intercultural virtual collaboration

With the ultimate objective of designing a comprehensive teaching-learning strategy for the development of intercultural competence in Higher Education through intercultural virtual collaboration, the first phase of this study consisted of a review that sought to analyze in literature the different models for the development of intercultural competence in Higher Education and the existing pedagogical strategies for developing intercultural competence through IVC in university studies.

In this direction, from the multiple intercultural competence models available in research, this thesis selected the EMIC Intercultural Competence Model (EMIC, 2015b) to serve as a reference for the definition, development and measurement of intercultural competence in the Higher Education context. The EMIC model defends that intercultural competence is a multidimensional concept composed of building blocks (knowledge, awareness, attitudes and skills), supporting capacities (emotional intelligence and critical reflection), a meta-capacity (developing intercultural competence) and three interrelated competence configurations or sub-competences (intercultural teamwork, intercultural conflict management and intercultural relationship building). In order to better suit EMIC to the online work that takes place in intercultural virtual collaborative environments, this doctoral research also proposed the addition of a new configuration (intercultural virtual teamwork) and four related indicators to the original composition of the model.

Regarding the instructional design for IVC, our study developed a task-sequence based on the typology of tasks proposed by O'Dowd and Ware (2009). Such typology suggests that students take part in a guided sequence that gradually increases in complexity and that progressively builds trust between peers. It is composed of an information exchange task, in which students get to first meet each other by exchanging personal information; a comparison and analysis of cultural products and a final collaborative assignment in which students are invited to work together in order to deliver a joint product.

In the task-sequence proposed herein (Figure 2), for the (1) icebreaker, students are asked to record 2-minute videos introducing themselves to group members located on the other side. For the (2) comparison and analysis task, it is suggested that students

produce together a report comparing the National Cultural Dimensions (Hofstede Insights, 2020) of the countries represented in the group. For the production phase, our work proposes (3) the elaboration of a group contract, which aims at having students negotiating cultural expectations, and (4) the development of a final collaborative assignment related to the core subject of the courses into which the sequence will be integrated (in Business studies, for example, we suggest that students develop a case study comparing how international companies adapt their business to local cultures). Based on findings from literature that indicated that fostering critical reflection is key for the success of online collaboration (Sarah Guth & Rubin, 2015; Müller-Hartmann, 2006) the sequence also proposes after-task questions that invite students to reflect about the intercultural collaborative process that they go through after each task.

As for technology, the sequence suggests the use of well-known and user-friendly tools and the adoption of a learning management system to create a sense of a virtual space dedicated to the project and through which participating students can communicate with each other and with the teachers. The task sequence proposed also provides considerations to support teachers in the pre-implementation set up process and suggests that a multi-method assessment (with different types of assessment tools) is adopted to better capture students' intercultural competence development.

The detailed sequence developed by this doctoral work can be found in Publication 1 and a summary of the tasks from the sequence can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Task-sequence designed in the first phase of this research study



1.2. Exploring students' perceptions towards the task-sequence proposed

In a second phase of this study, the task-sequence designed as part of this doctoral work was implemented in two different IVC projects.

First, from November 2016 to May 2017, with the objective of refining the design of the task-sequence proposed and of exploring the viability of its implementation in general terms, a pilot implementation was carried out in a master program involving universities from two different countries (Spain and France). In its turn, from September to December 2017, the final implementation of the task-sequence developed by this study took place in a project involving undergraduate Business students from Spain and undergraduate Business students from Holland. The objective was to explore students' perceptions towards the task-sequence designed in order to grasp the effect that it had on the development of intercultural competence and to find out how much students enjoyed participating in the different tasks proposed.

The results obtained from the final implementation showed that students perceived that the sequence proposed had a positive effect on their level of intercultural competence development. The data analysis of pre/posttests revealed an increase of statistical relevance ($p < 0.05$) in the average of students' intercultural competence. In a scale ranging from 1 to 5, before participating in the intercultural virtual collaboration, the average of students' intercultural competence was 3,70 (SD =0,29) while, after the intervention, this number raised to 4,15 (SD = 0,13) (unpublished results). In the same line, according to the results from the after-task questionnaires (Publication 4), more than 50% of students indicated that all tasks from the sequence 'very much' developed the different indicators that were targeted by them while the rest of answers fell mostly under the "more or less" category, and very few (below 4%) indicated that the tasks developed the indicators to a 'very little' extent. Accordingly, open-ended answers given in the final satisfaction survey (Publication 3) confirm students' perception that the task-sequence proposed developed different aspects of intercultural competence.

In addition to the perception towards the development of intercultural competence, results also evidenced that most students enjoyed participating in the tasks proposed by the sequence developed as part of this doctoral work.

We provide the highlights of such findings in the following lines.

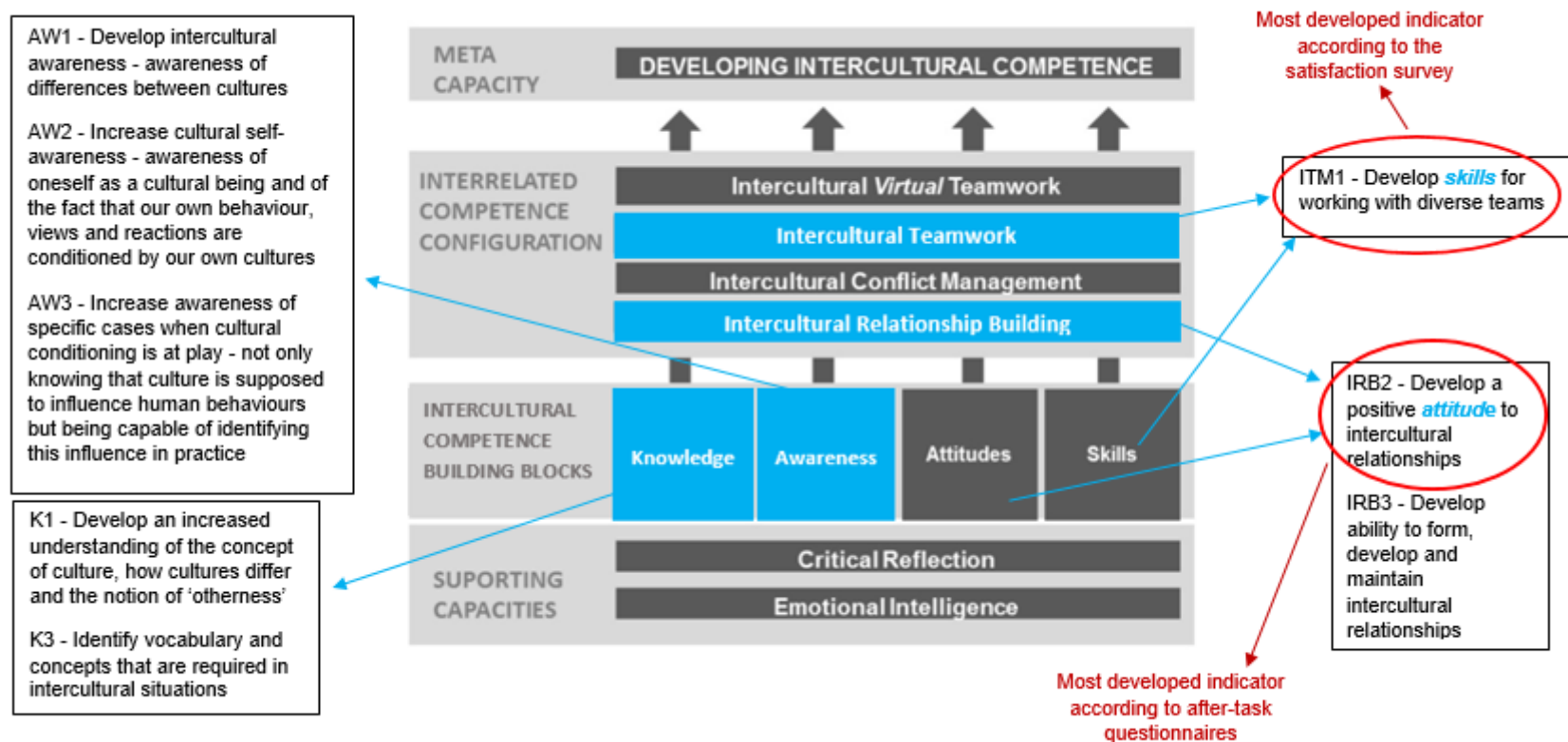
1.2.1. What intercultural competence indicators are mostly developed across the task-sequence proposed?

The analysis of the data collected through after-task questionnaires (Publication 4) and the satisfaction survey (Publication 3) revealed that, according to students' perceptions, the most developed indicators across the sequence proposed in this thesis directly related to two building blocks (knowledge and awareness) and two interrelated competence configurations (intercultural relationship building and intercultural teamwork) from the adapted version of the EMIC model (EMIC, 2015b) (Figure 3).

In addition, according to the responses given to the after-task questionnaires, the indicator that was mostly developed across the sequence was *IRB2 – Develop a positive attitude to intercultural relationships*. Besides demonstrating the high potential of the sequence to approach intercultural relationship building, as seen in Figure 3, such indicator is linked to the building block of 'attitudes' in what it captures the attitudinal aspect of intercultural relationships. The same happens to *ITM1 – Developing skills to work in diverse teams*. Besides being among the most developed indicators across the sequence according to after-task questionnaires, this was the indicator that students mostly manifested in their answers to the question 'What did you learn with this project?' in the satisfaction survey. Again, in this case, this indicator not only evidences the potential of the sequence proposed to develop the ability to work in intercultural teams but also reveals a link to the building block of 'skills' in what it literally mentions the development of *skills* to work in diverse teams. Such relationship between building blocks and the interrelated competence configurations is acknowledged by EMIC model which states that such configurations or sub-competences "map onto the 4 building blocks as they each consist of the knowledge, awareness, skills and attitudes that are needed to become competent in an intercultural context" (EMIC, 2015b, p. 15). Building blocks (knowledge, awareness, attitudes and skills) were also found as outcomes of previous intercultural exchanges, as demonstrated by a review carried out by Lewis and O'Dowd (2016b).

Figure 3

Most developed intercultural competence indicators across the task sequence and their relation to EMIC's building blocks and configurations



1.2.2. What indicators are mostly developed by each task of the sequence?

An analysis of the responses to the after-task questionnaires allowed for an identification of the most developed indicators in each task of the sequence according to students' perceptions (Figure 4).

Figure 4

Most developed intercultural competence indicators per task of the sequence proposed



Another relevant finding related to individual tasks is that, as complexity grew along the sequence, the average students' perception of their intercultural competence development tended to decrease. Differently from the icebreaker and comparison and analysis tasks (which had at least two or more indicators very well evaluated by students) in the group contract and final assignment, only one indicator had more than 70% of students informing that it was 'very much' developed while the other evaluations fell under the 'more or less' level. This finding is in line with Müller-Hartmann (2000), who argues that the more complex a task is, the more room it gives to incidents that generate frustrations and misunderstandings and, as we conclude, to a consequent lower level of learning perception. It also shows that further implementations of the sequence proposed herein could leave more space for discussion of "such moments of miscommunication" since they "can be valuable learning opportunities for both students and teachers (Ware & Kramsch, 2005, p. 190).

1.2.3. How much do students enjoy participating in each task of the sequence proposed and what did students most and least like about the sequence?

Results from the after-task questionnaires show that the majority of students very much enjoyed participating in all the tasks from the sequence (Publication 4). Additionally nearly all students who completed the satisfaction survey (74 out of the 75) informed that they would recommend the telecollaborative project to be implemented again with new students (unpublished results).

The quotes from students retrieved from after task-questionnaires also provided us with important information about what to consider when refining the sequence for future implementations. In the icebreaker, for example, the fact that a few students might not feel comfortable with recording themselves was identified. In this case, we advised teachers to be aware of such fact in order to offer support in these specific cases. As for the comparison and analysis of cultures, although numbers of low satisfaction with this task were low, it is important to remark that few students reported the sensation that this task presented too many concepts and, therefore, it is suggested that teachers be ready to provide support in clarifying content-related doubts. The final assignment was the task that students mostly reported to enjoy. Despite the frustration with miscommunication moments that was expressed by very few students, the vast majority of students appreciated the opportunity of working with people from different cultures and reported learning from the case study developed.

As for what students most liked about the sequence, answers given in the satisfaction survey mentioned (1) having the experience of working in intercultural teams, (2) the real-life application of the project, and (3) the opportunity to learn about other cultures. On the other extreme, students reported to have least liked (1) the amount of workload, (2) some aspects of instructional design (specific tasks, task length and instructions), and (3) miscommunication between group members.

As mentioned in Publication 2, course coordinators involved in both implementations also considered the IVC to be an enriching element to their programs in what it provides students with a practical experience similar to the one that they are going to encounter in their future professional careers. Beyond the evident need for training those lacking virtual team experience before they get to the workplace (Gilson, Maynard, Jones Young, Vartiainen, & Hakonen, 2015), recent research has also showed that students have been gradually giving more importance to aspects relating to course structure and learning experiences than to future career opportunities (Larson, 2018). As so, having students' highly satisfied with the IVC project can contribute to their overall satisfaction with their university programs as a whole and, therefore, result in higher attraction and retention.

In any case, as stated in Publications 2 and 3, implementing the intercultural virtual collaboration in both programs required adjustments at different levels. In a first moment, at the institutional level, the implementations demanded an intense dialogue between international offices and course coordinators from the different participating universities. In such setting up process, as expected, it could be observed that the fact of having a clear pedagogical proposal to work with facilitated discussions and allowed agreements to depart from a more advanced stage. At the teachers' level, the suggestions for pre-implementation setup found in Publication 1 were too useful to guide participating teachers in the preparation of the implementation, especially in what comes to defining instructions, aligning different academic calendars, and exchanging information about syllabi. Holding a face-to-face meeting was also key for a kickoff of the project and contributed especially for trust building between the teachers and for a more immersive exchange of information between institutions. Still, adjustments and decisions needed to be made by teachers along the semester, especially in terms of how to assess the productions of students according to the same parameters, how to follow-up on those students who were not responsive to group members and on how to assist students with technical problems.

2. Conclusions

We list below the main conclusions drawn from this doctoral work in response to the objectives established:

- The task-sequence proposed herein proved to be operationalizable in practice as it was implemented in two different Business courses at different academic levels (in undergraduate studies and in a master program) and with partnerships involving different institutions and countries (Spain-France and Spain-Holland). Having a 'pre-packaged' and concrete pedagogical strategy at hand facilitated discussions and allowed agreements between collaborating universities and teachers to depart from a more advanced stage.
- According to students' perceptions, the most developed indicators across the sequence were *IRB2 – Developing a positive attitude towards intercultural relationships* and *ITM1 – Developing skills to work in diverse teams*. Other indicators which students reported to have been very much developed by the sequence were related to two building blocks (intercultural knowledge and intercultural awareness) and four intercultural competence configurations (intercultural relationship building and intercultural teamwork) from the EMIC model (EMIC, 2015b). The indicators that were most developed in each task correlated with the tasks' main objectives: in the icebreaker, the most developed indicators related to intercultural relationship building. In the comparison and analysis, the most developed indicators related to intercultural knowledge, intercultural awareness and intercultural relationship building. The group contract mostly developed students' positive attitude towards intercultural relationships and the final assignment demonstrated to be mostly effective in developing students' skills to work in diverse teams. Such findings indicate that combining different types of tasks in a sequence allow for a more comprehensive approach to the development of students' intercultural competence.
- The great majority of students very much enjoyed participating in all the tasks from the sequence and nearly all students would recommend the telecollaborative project to be implemented again with new students. When asked about what they most liked about the project, students mostly reported their excitement with the opportunity of working in intercultural teams, of gaining cultural knowledge and highlighted the real-life application of the project. On the other hand, workload, some aspects of instructional design (specific tasks, task

length and instructions), and misunderstandings in the group were the issues that students least liked about the sequence.

As it demonstrated to be operationalizable in practice, well-perceived by students and effective in developing different intercultural competence building blocks and configurations, the task-sequence proposed herein proved to facilitate the integration of intercultural virtual collaboration into university curriculum and became a sustainable and integral part of both the master program in which the pilot took place and in the two undergraduate courses involved in the final implementation. As so, it has been successively applied in the referred programs in the academic years that followed the ones described in this study. In the case of the IVC project involving Spain and Holland, the high satisfaction of all involved parts with the initiative caused the project to collaborate in different manners since its first implementation:

- *Increase in the number of participating students:* in the Netherlands, the number of participating students doubled in the implementation that followed the one described in this study allowing groups to have a better balance of members from both locations;
- *Replication of the task-sequence in other IVC projects:* the task-sequence proposed herein was used by the Dutch teacher in another similar exchange held in partnership with a university in the United States;
- *Integration of a new partner:* in the last implementation that has just taken place in the academic semester of September 2020-January 2021, a third university (Universidad Autónoma de Chile) was integrated into the project, enriching it with the South American cultural perspective;
- *Broadening the concept of intercultural competence:* also in the implementation of 2020, teachers decided to start to incorporate to the project some principles of global citizenship (Byram, 2008; Council of Europe, 2016) by inviting students to discuss in the intercultural virtual groups, as part of the final assignment, how the COVID situation has been addressed by governments in the countries represented in the group and to reflect on how such approaches have impacted every-day life and businesses in such places. Although the task does not reach a deep level of active engagement in society – which is the ultimate goal of global citizenship (O’ Dowd, 2019) – it does aim at “encouraging learners to engage with themes which are of social and political relevance in both partners’ societies” (p. 11).

Future works could go deeper into and beyond these aspects; showing in what ways the task-sequence proposed in this work can evolve and exploring the implications that such developments might have on students' intercultural competence and satisfaction. We reflect on other possible future developments in the next and final section of this thesis.

3. Limitations and recommendations for future research

As in every research study, the methodological decisions taken in this doctoral thesis lead the work through a certain path that, despite providing enough data to address the established research objectives, left out many other valid and interesting research strategies.

To begin with, although the different instruments in the final implementation provided us with an abundance of data to analyze students' perceptions towards their participation in the task-sequence proposed, it is certain that more implementations could complement the findings obtained. Transversal studies could allow for confirming if results are consistent along the time and with different groups. In regards to the results from pre-posttests, our sample can be considered quite small and, although statistical tests demonstrated that the questionnaires had a high level of internal consistency, greater numbers of respondents to the questionnaires could provide more robust results. Moreover, although Publications 2 and 3 present some reflections from the participating teachers and course coordinators, by opting to rely mainly on students' perceptions as a source of data, this work did not explore in detail the implementation of the sequence from the teachers and coordinators' perspectives. Further works systematically reporting teachers' perceptions of students' learning development and the institutional challenges they may encounter when implementing such sequence in their coursework will be of high value to complement the findings of this doctoral work. Other implementations could also investigate how the task-sequence developed as part of this study would perform when implemented in other knowledge areas outside Business, in other levels of Higher Education studies (doctorates and technical studies, for example) and even in other educational levels (for example, in secondary and professional education).

In addition, given that the objective of this work was to shed light on the highest potential of each task of the sequence proposed to develop students' intercultural competence, the intercultural competence indicators that were less significantly developed by the sequence remained underexplored. In this direction, future studies could investigate "the flip side of the coin" by examining in more detail the performance of the less developed indicators in the sequence and maybe even propose alternative learning strategies to develop them. Further implementations could also explore the potential of the task-

sequence proposed to develop other learning outcomes besides intercultural competence, such as digital literacy, language development and learning autonomy. Works approaching the new intercultural competence configuration of 'intercultural virtual teamwork' would be of especial interest both for making specific improvements in the sequence to raise students' understanding of the impact that technology has on intercultural communication and for grasping to what extent the new configuration and indicators are effective in capturing such development.

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