



Research Article

Intercultural (mis)communication: Problematizing Taiwanese students' perceived sentiments on the delivery of online video conferences

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Globalization has made the world a 'smaller' place where, for all sorts of reasons, we need to communicate with people in other time zones (often from different cultures). This has catapulted English as a lingua franca - the language of communication used by people who do not share the same mother/native tongue(s) – to the number one language in the world. With the aid of new technologies such as chat platforms, social media and mobile apps, geographical distance is no longer a hindrance to communication; as a matter of fact, these have paved the way for instant accessibility in contacting people anytime anywhere. Recognizing the need to prepare students in facing the realities and challenges of intercultural communication in the global marketplace, many universities in Asia (indeed, in other parts of the world) have started to offer courses such as 'Inter- (Cross-) Cultural Communications', 'Language and Culture', 'World Englishes', etc. Some are even offering full or blended online programs where students are given the opportunity to talk to other foreign students in order to practice intercultural communication skills. But how do we assess the effectiveness of such online pedagogy? How do we know if the students are really engaged in learning and enhancing their knowledge, skills and attitudes? This study presents the findings of a qualitative research based on an open-ended questionnaire to gather student feedback on the effectiveness and failures of online live sessions as part of the instructional strategy in delivering the 'World Englishes & Miscommunication' course in a private university in southern Taiwan. Recommendations for creative alternatives where real communication can take place in online discussions are provided.

Keywords: Online communications; Inter- (cross-) cultural communications; World Englishes; Student feedback; Sentiment analysis

I. Introduction

With the aid of new technologies such as chat platforms, social media and mobile apps, geographical distance is no longer a hindrance to communication. People now have instant access to contacting people anytime anywhere. Globalization has also made the world a smaller place where international mobility is seen as a necessity when conducting business on a global scale (Braczyk and Heidenreich, 1998). Many universities in Asia (indeed, in other parts of the world) have recognized the need to prepare their students for facing the realities and challenges that internationalization brings (Altbach and Knight, 2007); one of them is possessing competence and proficiency in the English language, and the other is having good intercultural communication skills as key factors in achieving success in the global marketplace (Fantini, Arias-Galicia, and Guay, 2001). To answer these concerns, courses such as 'Inter- (Cross-) Cultural Communications', 'Language and Culture', and 'World Englishes' are now being offered to students. Some are even offering full, or blended online programs (combination of technology-based learning and face to face approaches i.e., traditional instructor-led classroom, cf. Porter, Graham, Spring, and Welch, 2014; Bonk and Graham, 2012) where students are given the opportunity to talk to foreigners via web-based conferences or live sessions to practice their communication skills, be familiar with foreign accents, and to experience how it is to carry a conversation with people from different cultural backgrounds. But how do we assess the effectiveness of such online pedagogy? How do we know if the students are really engaged in learning? This paper presents the findings of a qualitative study based on an open-ended questionnaire to gather students' feedback on the effectiveness and failures of synchronous online live sessions as part of the instructional strategy in delivering a 'World Englishes & Miscommunication' (WEM) course in a private university in southern Taiwan. In this study, students' learning experiences and perceptions were analyzed in terms of the benefits (positive experiences) and challenges

(negative experiences) of the live interactions with other foreign students on the WEM course. The following questions were addressed:

1. What benefits (positive) and challenges (negative) did the students experience in the World Englishes & Miscommunication (WEM) online live sessions?
2. What comments and/or suggestions do they have on the WEM live sessions delivery format i.e., students' presentations and Q&A sessions?
3. How would they rate their level of participation during the live sessions i.e., did they interact or not, if so, and to what extent?
4. What is their general feedback about the whole course i.e., face-to-face lectures and class meetings?

Practical recommendations for creative alternatives where real communication can take place during online discussions are provided.

1.1. Literature Review

An overview of the basic constructs in computer-mediated communication (CMC) and the factors that influence the success of online live sessions are presented in this section. A summary of research on online communication used in blended learning environments in Taiwan is also discussed below.

Harasim (2000) states that the framework of online education has undergone a paradigmatic shift that has influenced how instructional approaches are carried out and delivered. These changes are the results of rapid developments in mass media i.e., television and radio blending with online technology and massive changes in social media where most of the sites permit the use of computer-mediated communication (CMC); in particular, computer conferencing which allows synchronous and asynchronous tools by using video and audio teleconferencing (Berge, 1995). Both online modes enable and require collaborative learning (Harasim, 1996; Laurillard, 2002). And this, according to Harasim (2000) is what makes online education essentially a group communication phenomenon.

Berge and Collins (1995) suggest that CMC does not only entail adapting new technological tools to spice up traditional instructional methods and design, but also require teachers to alter focus from a teaching environment to a learning environment. In doing so, teachers encourage discussion and collaboration among the learners using the available technology. As Collins (1991) posits there is a wide range of technology and pedagogic tools emerging, and it is up to the teachers adopt a new educational vision to use them effectively. Similarly, Clark (1983) claims that technologies provide tools that aid in the delivery of instruction, but they do not have significant impact on student achievement in comparison with instructional strategies that are inherent in the learning materials. Bonk and Reynolds (1997) suggest creating challenging activities that tap metacognitive abilities while gaining meaningful knowledge, while Kozma (2001) advocates the use of simulations, role plays, and real-life models so learners can translate the lessons learned into real-life experiences.

In online education, especially when CMC is used, learner interaction is of paramount. Ally (2004) posits that in addition to learners interacting with the interface to access the learning materials, the interface lay-out should be user-friendly and one that is not visually overwhelming. Ally (*ibid*) also adds that learner to learner interaction is crucial just as learner to teacher and expert interaction should also be included. In other words, online communication involves interaction, collaboration, and participation in the formation of social networks and social presence so they can contextualize and construct their own learning.

There is a plethora of research and publications describe various technologies for computer-mediated communications i.e., asynchronous and synchronous modes; studies on synchronous web-based conferencing or live sessions used in Taiwanese classrooms suggest that a constructivist (student-centered) model of learning, particularly in discussion-based group work, is favored as it has more impact on the development of learners' skills; for example, they learn how to interact and share their opinions. However, employing CMCs with a constructivist's view of learning can suggest that teachers must be ready to adopt less traditional teaching practices.

A study conducted by Wen-chi, Yen, and Marek (2011) using a survey method, Exploratory Factor Analysis, and Structural Equation Modeling about which aspects of learning via videoconferencing have ramifications on learners' confidence, motivation, and ability. The study found that positive experience during the online

interactions is tantamount to students feeling delighted and happy. They also deem that authentic interaction in English made the learners more comfortable in using the target language. In the long run, such experiences increased their confidence and inspired them to engage in cross-cultural connections. They suggest that English teachers should endeavor in designing student-centered learning activities and increase opportunities for online chats and web conferences with native speakers.

Similar to Wen-chi, Yen, and Marek's (2011) findings, Kuo, Walker, Belland, Schroder, and Kuo's, (2014) study on the application of a web-based videoconferencing tool for synchronous learning sessions on an industrial technology course at a private university in Taiwan also found that online interactions with peers and instructors were cogent factors of student satisfaction, and that learner-instructor was a strong predictor. Using an online survey, they investigated the undergraduate students' Internet self-efficacy and their perceptions toward the online interactions with the instructor and fellow students, as well as their satisfaction level with regard to their overall learning experience. They also found that learners favored the ease of use and features of the videoconferencing tool such as emotion icons, talk, or raise hand, to interact with their instructor. However, the online tool used and the learners' Internet self-efficacy had less of an impact on their satisfaction level.

The research conducted by Wang and Reeves (2007) on the perspectives of international students from Taiwan on synchronous online learning experiences suggest though that they did not have a striking influence on the students' behavior and that they prefer traditional face-to-face courses. Their conclusions bear resemblance to the studies mentioned above that the instructional approaches carry more weight in affecting students' learning. They further suggest that instructional designs should also consider cultural issues in order to accommodate their learning needs.

Park and Bonk (2007) also conducted a study on learners' synchronous learning experiences; using qualitative methods, data were gathered from multiple resources such as an open ended questionnaire, individual interviews, observations, course evaluations, and analyses of documents archived in the course website, the researchers examined the perceived benefits and challenges of real-time communication mediated by a web-based collaboration system. The findings are akin to those studies presented above, that learners appreciated meaningful interactions, instructor support, connecting with peers, and gaining social presence. However, the learners in their study also found gaining multiple perspectives and spontaneous feedback as equally relevant. Time constraints, lack of reflection, language barriers, tool-related problems, and peers' network connection problems were regarded as disadvantages. These were particularly noted by students who were non-native English speakers as they experienced "difficulty in understanding peers verbal input" (p. 255) especially when technology broke down. It was times like this when the students appreciated the immediate teacher support and feedback. Park and Bonk (ibid) conclude that "synchronous learning communication provides unique environments that are different from asynchronous online discussion and face-to-face interaction" and that developing "instructional approaches that can maximize the benefits of the synchronous communication medium" is highly essential (p. 261).

The studies above seem to justify the correlation between interaction, social presence and satisfaction in a blended learning environment where CMC tools were used. So and Brush's (2008) research also suggests the same findings learners' relationship is a critical factor in collaborative online learning. Their study consisted of graduate students enrolled on health education; the course was delivered via blended format. Their findings suggest that students who perceived high levels of collaborative learning tended to be more satisfied with their distance course than those who perceived low levels of collaborative learning. Similarly, students with high perceptions of collaborative learning also perceived high levels of social presence. So and Brush (ibid) also provided an apt definition of terms for the three variables in their study (pp. 322-323), which will also be used in this paper for the sake of clarity:

Collaborative learning: An instructional approach in which a small number of learners interact together and share their knowledge and skills in order to reach a specific learning goal.

Social presence: A psychological degree to which a learner perceives the presence of, and connectedness with, other learners.

Satisfaction: An affective learning outcome indicating the degree of: (a) learner reaction to values and quality of learning, and (b) motivation for learning.

There are numerous studies that have been conducted on the use of web-based videoconferencing in enhancing intercultural communication skills, but these research investigations focused mostly on the application of Taiwanese students' productive English language skills i.e., speaking and writing. One such study is Freiermuth and Huang's (2012) where they explored the effects of intercultural online synchronic chat tasks on learners' motivation. Their study also involved chat exchanges with foreign students from Japan, and Taiwanese students learning English as a foreign language. They focused on four factors that affect motivation in doing the assigned tasks: the willingness to communicate, task attractiveness, task innovativeness, and the need to communicate in the target language. The results of the post-test questionnaire and the texts submitted during the tasks were encouragingly positive. They account for the well-designed online chat tasks which included making a joint-decision and conclusion via interaction.

Yang and Chen's (2007) case study of senior high school students' opinions about the integration of technology in learning English also reported benefits in learning, however, they pointed out that effectiveness can likewise be influenced by the students' attitude and behavior i.e., passive learning versus active and self-directed learning. The students have mixed views on the use of videoconferencing and chat rooms; they posit that few students with high proficiency in English were more actively involved while those with limited language skills were unable to participate due to shyness and their inability to follow the conversations. Although the findings of their study were varied and the course design revealed areas of flaws, they argue that "these weaknesses should not be seen as negative, but rather should be construed as a guide to future curriculum development, and as a guide for teachers to help with designing improved activities to foster collaboration, reflection and dialogue" (p. 876). The research conducted by Chen and Yang (2014) also looked at fostering foreign language learning but their study focused on the integration of intercultural projects and web-based tools (online forums, weblogs, Skype, and email) in a 7th grade English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class. The primary goal is to improve students' language skills and intercultural communicative competence by communicating with people from other cultures i.e., Dubai, Pakistan, and North America. The findings were gathered from data triangulation using qualitative and quantitative methods (questionnaires, interviews, and document analyses) from the learners' responses and learning processes. The students' were receptive to the use of technology which allowed them to experience authentic language learning and enhanced their intercultural communication skills.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

In analyzing the effectiveness of the intercultural communication in online discussions, this study will apply Byram's (1997) model for intercultural language teaching which consists of five factors: critical cultural awareness, knowledge of one's culture, intercultural attitudes, discovery and interaction skills, and interpreting and relating skills.

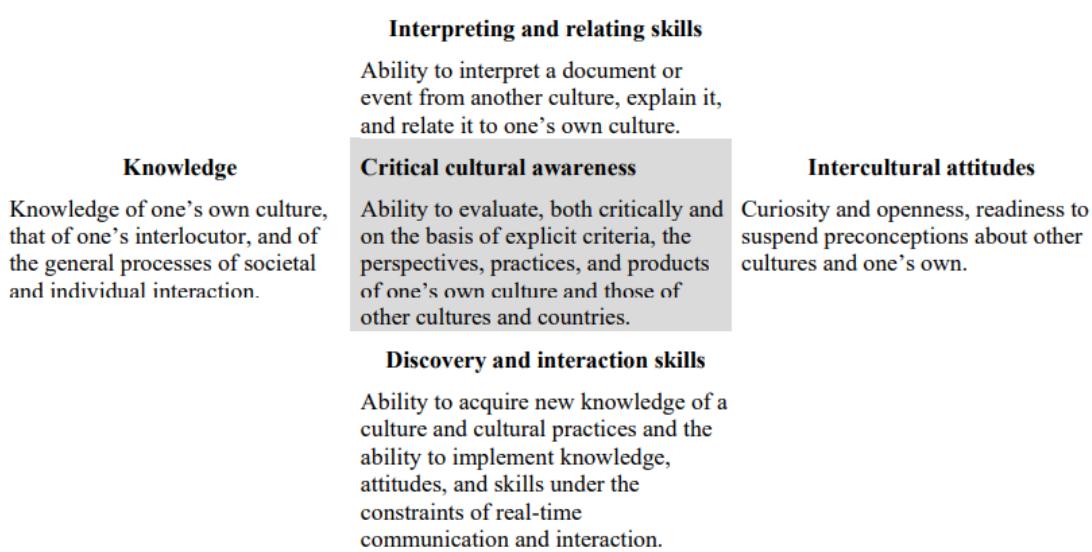


Figure 1. Byram's model of intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997, 2012, Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002) cited in Chen and Yang (2014, p. 59).

Based on Byram's model (cf Byram, Gribkova, and Starkey, 2002), intercultural language teaching should provide learners both the intercultural competence and linguistic competence necessary to engage in meaningful communication with people from other cultural backgrounds. He also stresses that accepting cultural differences require an understanding that people have different behaviors, opinions and values and that all these can be very subjective.

2. Method

The research design is qualitative in nature, and is based on phenomenological study (Creswell and Poth, 2017); the purpose is to identify phenomena focusing on students' subjective learning experiences, thus gaining understanding of their perspectives and insight into their motivations.

2.1. Participants

There were 54 college students enrolled on the Language & Culture/WEM course: five French exchange students, three Indonesian students (two regular degree students, one foreign exchange student), and the rest were all Taiwanese in the 4-year English degree program. The students were divided into groups for their presentations and given the following theme selection:

1. Taiwan English
2. English in Urban Linguistic Landscapes in Taiwan
3. Chinese Names and Cultural Identity
4. French English (for French students)
5. Indonesian English (for Indonesian students)

2.2. Data Collection

Data were collected through an open ended questionnaire distributed to students at the end of the semester in order to collect data on their synchronous experiences in this course. The written questionnaire asked about the perceived benefits and challenges they faced (cf Dey, 2003; Elo, and Kyngäs, 2008). The collected data were categorized by predetermined and emerging categories. The identified categories are:

- (1) Perceived benefits of the synchronous live sessions (positive)
- (2) Perceived disadvantages of the synchronous live sessions (negative)
- (3) Level of participation (positive-negative)
- (4) General feedback about the whole course i.e., face-to-face lectures and course content (positive-negative)

Qualitative analysis was used in analyzing the text data gathered from the open-ended survey responses (Kuckartz, 2014; Mile, Huberman, and Saldana, 2013). The opinions of students (narrative responses) were collated, transcribed, and coded. Two qualitative text data analysis software were used in this study: Voyant Tools (for corpus analysis and visualizing data) and Sentiment Analysis with Python Natural Language Toolkit (NLTK) Text Classification. Quantitative measures normally used to "identify the typical distributional patterns that occur across texts" (Biber, Connor, and Upton, 2007, p. 2). A text corpus is simply any large body of text which is saved as a digital file and uploaded to computer software for analysis to discern rules of language use or lexical patterns (Baker, 2006). Although corpus analysis was used in investigating the collocations and comparative word frequency for the set of text data in this study, the main objective was to find a pattern of language use in the passages by generating clusters of words and visualizing the data to determine theme/s (key words) and how they fit in the predetermined categories, or whether they are emerging categories that might be worth investigating further.

Voyant Tools, developed by Stéfan Sinclair (McGill) and Geoffrey Rockwell (University of Alberta), is an open-source web-based text reading and analysis environment (Sinclair and Rockwell, 2012). It supports scholarly reading and interpretation of texts or corpora in the field of digital humanities. Voyant Tools presents high-frequency words in the text graphically, the linkages of words in the corpus often suggest interesting themes, and word clouds enable intuitive visualization (Sinclair, and Rockwell, 2012). Before running the analysis on the set of text data, it is important to clean the file by removing unwanted text, also known as stop words e.g. in, the, of, etc. These words distort the visualization and obscure the results (Royal, 2015). However, a newer version of Voyant auto-detects the language of the text and automatically selects a stopword list.

Sentiment Analysis with Python Text Classification is a platform which was originally released by Bird, Klein, and Loper (2009) in conjunction with a computational linguistics course at the University of Pennsylvania. Sentiment Analysis is also used in text data mining, and according to Liu (2012), it “analyzes people’s opinions, sentiments, evaluations, appraisals, attitudes, and emotions towards entities such as products, services, organizations, individuals, issues, events, topics, and their attributes” (p.7)”. Saldaña (2018) posits that Sentiment Analysis is one of the Natural Language Processing (NLP) approaches which researchers apply to explore textual data. In particular, Sentiment Analysis looks at the “emotional intensity of words and phrases within a text” (par. 4). The software makes use of semantic orientations, or opinions expressed, which are then categorized as positive, negative or neutral (Ding, Liu, and Yu, 2008; Dave, Lawrence, and Pennock, 2003). It also draws on a lexicon-based method which scours for words that suggest opinion or sentiments e.g. great, poor, etc. In this study, the Sentiment Analysis performed was document-level sentiment classification (Liu, 2012) which analyze and judges a document based on a polarized opinion: either positive or negative sentiments.

2.3. Context

The current study examined the learning experiences in synchronous, web-based videoconferencing (live sessions) in the World Englishes & Miscommunication (WEM) course, which is integrated in a blended-learning undergraduate class, Language and Culture, in the field of English studies at a private university in Southern Taiwan. In this particular course, students learned about the connection between language and culture, and how these two are inseparable factors that shape people’s sense of belonging. The course also covered various subtopics such as language and power, language and identity, language and gender, and the different varieties of the English language and their linguistic features (intonation, accent, lexical and syntax differences, etc.) as well as their implications on self-identity, cultural belonging, and perceived value of learning/speaking a particular variety of English (cf Kachru, 1990; Bolton, 2005; Bhatia, 1997). WEM is part of an international collaborative endeavor since 2007 led by a Japanese university together with universities from other countries in Asia: Taiwan, Korea, Macau, and the Philippines. WEM aims to facilitate online communication among Asian students that will enable them to interact, share and learn about World Englishes and their perceived ideological notions of standard and non-standard varieties of English in relation to language and identity. WEM is integrated with face-to-face class meetings, thus out of the 18 class meetings for one semester, 5 meetings were devoted to the online web-based conference (live sessions) with the WEM partners. During the live sessions, assigned groups of students from each country made a presentation for about 15-20 minutes each on their chosen theme related to World Englishes. A Q&A (5-10 minutes) followed each presentation. However, due to time limitations only 1 or 2 questions were asked; thus limiting the depth of discussions. Regular class meetings and lectures were held in traditional classrooms with blackboard, an overhead projector, and a computer with internet connection. The 5 live sessions were held in a small theatre, normally used for special meetings and conferences. The theatre is equipped with a large overhead projector linked to a special computer system that allows for multipoint videoconferencing, which means several persons conferencing from multiple desktop computers (see Figure 2). The WEM course needed a system that could link one class with participating world-Englishes classes from other Asian universities; the system is designed to distribute video-on-demand multimedia with fast bandwidth capable of hosting a multi-channel videoconferencing server.



Figure 2. Multi-point Web-based Videoconferencing Live Session

The students were also given access (with user ID and password) to the world Englishes lecture materials archived online via the Japanese university's Course N@vi, an e-learning platform. The time and dates of the live sessions were pre-selected prior to the start of the semester, and the time was adjusted taking into consideration the time differences between Japan and Taiwan.

The WEM live sessions format (students' presentation followed by Q&A) mentioned above has always been the same arrangement for the WEM live sessions since the collaboration began more than a decade ago. The phrase If it isn't broke, don't fix it is a mentality that seem to be arbitrary. However, is it really working? What are the tell-tale signs that perhaps a change is needed? And what can be done about it? The fact that there has not been a change in student presentation-Q&A pattern of delivering the live sessions, it is but fair to point out that there is complacency in the way the synchronous online videoconferencing sessions are handled. The questioning of taken-for-granted issues, and delving deeper into the consequences on students' learning, sheds light on the hidden dilemma. This act of questioning, or elucidating tough questions is what Foucault (1984) termed as problematization. The idea is to explain how a certain issue or subject has been problematized and what information or lesson can be derived from this. Foucault's theory (*ibid*) offers a potential research approach for investigating, interrogating and reflecting on thoughts, attitudes, and practices. As Alvesson and Sandberg (2011) claim, through problematization, research questions can be developed in "identifying and challenging the assumptions" (p. 247). And for the purposes of this study, a good starting point for identifying a problem is by surveying the students' perceptions and behavior during the WEM live sessions. Once they are established, suggestions for implementing changes will be given.

3. Results and Discussion

Out of the 54 students enrolled in the Language & Culture WEM course, only 51 completed the open-ended questionnaire survey. Based on the student survey, there was a pattern of learning discontent in the way the WEM live sessions were conducted. The students were bored, unhappy, and therefore not benefiting from the presentation, which were supposed to be (and could have been) an interesting meeting for students only if they had been given more opportunities to talk about themselves and to hear their views on different English varieties and accents and what all that mean to them. The major problems according to the students were: low involvement/low interaction (out of 20-30 students only 1 or 2 were engaged in the Q& A because they only asked for one student to answer one question. The following are the responses to the main research questions of this study.

3.1. Research Question 1: What benefits (positive) and challenges (negative) did the students experience in the World Englishes & Miscommunication (WEM) online live sessions?

The most frequently used words as presented in the word cloud in Figure 3 in the positive feedback corpus were: different (40), English (29), countries (25), students (23), live (19). The key words below suggest the perceived benefits of the WEM live sessions. The larger the word, the higher the frequency of occurrence of that word in the corpus; these keywords also describe what the WEM live sessions were about: different, countries, English, students, live, know, think, learn, culture, good, accents, culture, understand, etc.

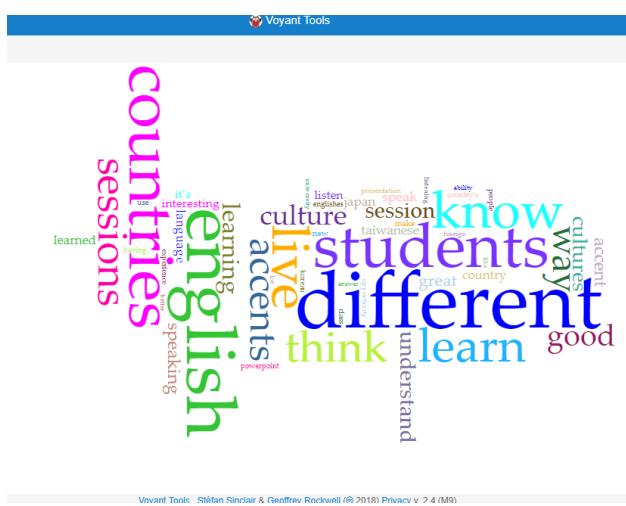


Figure 3. Word Cloud Cirrus

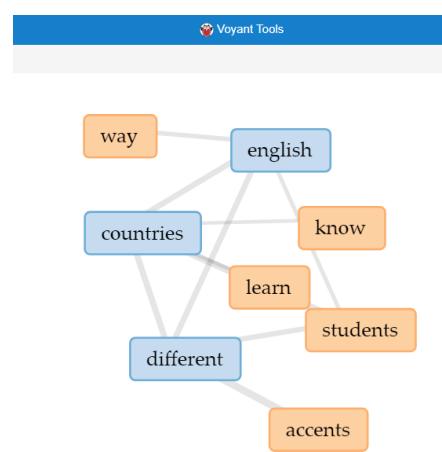


Figure 4. Collocate Graph

Similarly, the collocation graph in Figure 4 also aptly encapsulates the essence of the World Englishes course: learning different varieties of English, the different ways people speak different accents spoken by people from various countries, and all these increases students' awareness and equip them with the skills needed in surviving today's globalized world.

The keywords in context (Figure 5) show each occurrence of the words with the surrounding text (context) and seeing how the terms are used in context gives more clarity to the meaning of the texts. The frequent word different is used in a variety of ways. For instance, the first one suggests that the students had a different expectation from the WEM live sessions. The second is about the level of students from different countries were different from that of the Taiwanese students. The term different as used in the paired collocations highlights its positive meaning and suggests a distinct impression. It is interesting to see how words were paired and how the choice of words influences the overall meaning of the students' feedback.

Left	Term	Right
What happened is a bit	dif...	from my expectation. It is
level of students in other	dif...	countries. Being able to share
evolve in their countries. Learn	dif...	accent, choice of words, different
different accent, choice of words,	dif...	perspectives to hear different accents
words, different perspectives to hear	dif...	accents, how students from different
different accents, how students from	dif...	countries present their ideas. We
live sessions with schools from	dif...	countries. During the presentation, I
presentation, I can see the	dif...	way how people report and
also learn how English influence	dif...	country and what's their culture
English. We also can find	dif...	ways of learning. I think
learning English is like with	dif...	background. I learn what way
Use many examples to show	dif...	Englishes in their country (Korea
we could easily tell the	dif...	accents and their confidence while
the same. Also look into	dif...	behavior in different country. I
look into different behavior in	dif...	country. I think through live
that their accents are quite	dif...	, but most of the time
and use English and how	dif...	It is with our own
Live sessions, I listened to	dif...	accents. Although there is an
talk about Students can learn	dif...	subjects and know different accents
learn different subjects and know	dif...	accents. Very interesting to have

Figure 5. Keywords in Context

Table 1.
Intercultural Communication Skills

Prescribed Category	As defined in the literature	Students' Sentiments
Collaborative Learning	An instructional approach in which a small number of learners interact together and share their knowledge and skills in order to reach a specific learning goal (So and Brush, 2008)	<i>From the Korean university, they introduce their language and combine with English.</i> Sharing brings learning (effect).
Social Presence	A psychological degree to which a learner perceives the presence of and connectedness with other learners (So and Brush, 2008)	<i>Being able to share opinions with students overseas is surely beneficial and helpful on both our academic studies or speaking ability.</i> <i>It was a good opportunity to interact with foreign students from other countries by sitting in a conference room instead of spending a great amount of money to go abroad.</i> <i>Very interesting to have the possibility to speak online with students from different countries.</i>
Enhanced Intercultural Communication Skills (ICS): -Interpreting and relating -Knowledge -Discovery and interaction -Critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997, 2012; Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002)		<i>First, I understand now why we are talking about “international language” because as French it is easier to understand a Korean or Japanese than an English native speaker. I have noticed the influence of culture on language.</i> <i>From the Korean university, they introduce their language and combine with English. In my view, it is interesting, because I'm Interested in Korean culture.</i> <i>We can learn more about students' from different countries on learning English, or how the situation of using English is in their countries.</i> <i>By participating in the Live Sessions with other Asian universities, I can know the modes, how they do their reports are quite similar to us. Moreover, I can better identify the accent from other countries. And I find out those students are more active than the students in Taiwan. They think and ask more.</i> <i>The Live Session help us to know deeper about culture of other countries and how English is used and evolve in their countries</i> <i>We can see those other countries' students like Japan, they can easily answer and also be willing to share their opinion. Taiwanese students can learn their attitude in class and through the Live sessions, we can also have better understanding of other countries' English.</i> <i>I was interested in having these courses, and I really learned a lot in terms of different accents, different cultures, and different values. It was absolutely priceless to have those chances to know them.</i> <i>So in the end the influence is negative because speaking English is not enough to break through cultural barriers to enable communication to be as efficient as between native speakers.</i> <i>Some of the accents are so hard to understand, but I'll view that as my own problem. I need to get used to different “strong” accents.</i>

3.1.1. Satisfaction in Web-based Videoconferencing: WEM Live Sessions

In addition to the corpus analysis above, retaining the students' responses intact can provide a clearer understanding of the full context. The excerpts in Table I provide examples of texts that reflect the students' sentiments that were categorized using the Intercultural Communication Skills coding categories necessary for data analysis.

3.1.2. Challenges/Negative Experiences

There were a few challenges that students experienced during the WEM live sessions. Exhibited in Figure 6 is the word cloud cirrus visualization for the challenges (negative) corpus data. The word PowerPoint shows prominence; rightly so because the live sessions were merely PowerPoint presentations where students were regurgitating the lecture notes from the course e-learning platform. Interestingly, the word different was also used in this corpus; however, since it is paired with other terms that have negative connotation, it has also taken on a contrasting view. Other negative lexical terms included were: boring, shy, really long, hard, afraid, etc.



Figure 6. Word Cloud Cirrus Visualization for Challenged (Negative) Corpus Data

The following is an example of electronically preserved student postings which can be coded for lexical terms (in *italics*) that express perceived challenges and negatives experiences of the WEM Live Sessions. Please note that the excerpts below are the students' original texts; syntax and lexical errors have not been edited.

- But I expect that we can have real discourse by communicating instead of sitting there and watch PowerPoint that I am not interested in. Their topic might be interesting but they really need to improve their skills of presenting.
 - For me personally, I didn't learn that much than the ordinary course (in-class lectures) because they are students sharing thing about world Englishes which are very theoretical. Some of them did not present it well. I think this is why some students might not be listening to the presentation. I like the idea of having live sessions with other universities, we can see the way they explain and present the same topic, but some of the presentations were too long.
 - However, I think I'm not very interested in other's lectures because their presentations are not interesting.
 - The subjects are quite boring and long, the video equipment is bad (screen are too small, can't read what they are trying to present).
 - Yet, the accents are sometimes hard to understand and the PowerPoint screen is too small. It's a pity that they put so many effects on the PowerPoint and we cannot see clearly.
 - I cannot see the words on PowerPoint sometimes too small, some topics seems to be talked over and over again.
 - Although it is interesting to have chance to have class with other countries; students, sometimes would feel a bit bored. Maybe the time of live sessions is too long.

- But I expected more interactions and discussions with them and not only listening to their presentations. **The discussion part was too short.**
- I think we should have other interactions, not just presenting. Too official or formal would make us dare not to talk.
- If no one push us or tell us to answer questions, we don't have the motivation every time because sometimes we get tired.
- Difficult to be interested with what they're saying- it was easy for us to fall asleep. If we can see the full PowerPoint on the screen, then it will be better.
- It is a little hard to communicate as the pattern of a big group to a big group of people via a big screen. It is because most of Asian students are shy and seldom speak up in class.

Applying the definition given by So and Brush (2008), satisfaction is an “affective learning outcome indicating the degree of: (a) learner reaction to values and quality of learning, and (b) motivation for learning (pp. 322-323)”. The students’ reactions to the overall interactions during the WEM live sessions indicate dissatisfaction and they seem to have made valid claims. If the objective of learning is to engage and to motivate students to take an active part in learning, the WEM live session format has serious pedagogic flaws.

3.2. Research Question 2: What comments and/or suggestions do they have on the WEM live sessions delivery format i.e., students’ presentations and Q&A sessions?

The keywords shown in context below (Figure 7) from the Suggestion corpus are some ideas from students regarding ways of improving the WEM live sessions. By asking them to contribute their opinions, it also allows them to tap into their metacognitive skills and to think about how they would re-format the web-based videoconferencing for future live sessions.

Left	Term ↑	Right
the only way to improve	students	· participation is to force us
next session. 24. Maybe give	students	additional points. 25. I think
think the teacher can tell	students	that their participation in the
be graded or scored. Taiwan	students	still do not like to
conducted in smaller class so	students	could be brave enough to
it may be better if	students	get to know a little
games about cultural issues. 32.	students	have to concentrate on Live
can provide some questionnaire for	students	to answer which can make
to answer which can make	students	to concentrate. 37. Teachers can
Maybe the teacher can choose	students	randomly to answer, maybe can
in return. 42. I think	students	should communicate with other students
students should communicate with other	students	from other universities more. Students
students from other universities more.	students	were too shy to talk
talk to others. 43. Maybe	students	can share more information with
discuss the same issue with	students	from other countries. Not only
Il be assigned a country (students) whom you can exchange postcards
the topics were more interesting.	students	would be more willing to
48. We can group the	students	and after each speech, the
50. To ask or choose	students	to ask questions few days
have more interactions with foreign	students	

Figure 7. Suggestions Corpus Collocations

The suggestions given above imply that they prefer activities that would be interesting enough for them to partake in, such as more interactions with foreign students, conduct post-live-session group discussions, more interesting topics, and enhance contact with international students. It is interesting to see the students’ recommendations i.e., the use of bonus points or extra grades for their participation, and if at all that does not work, they suggest using “force”, which may not necessarily bode well in the long run.

3.3. Research Question 3: How would they rate their level of participation during the live sessions i.e., did they interact or not, if so, and to what extent?

More than half of the class admitted to not actively participating in the WEM live sessions. The excerpts below are the unedited responses, where original texts are retained. Words in italics can be correlated to the perceived challenges (negative experiences) presented in research question 2.

- I have not participated much because I did not have that much interest in the topic of the presentations unfortunately I still feel shy somehow about talking in English in public (classes, presentations, etc.) which must be due to the accent or other. Still ever since this course began I felt some progress on this.
- I will rate my participation level 3 if the maximum is 5. I think I did participate but not very much, I think it is because I am still a bit shy to express my opinions in front of the public.
- I think I only deserve 3 points out of 10. I was never involved in any of the discussions. I would pay attention for about 5 minutes since the beginning of the presentation then start spacing out afterwards because I found it annoying to try to figure out what they are trying to say.
- Maybe 6 out of 10. I was there and I was listening, but I didn't participate actively during the question part. I think some questions should be answered by Taiwanese because some questions are about culture
- I'd rate myself 6 out of 10. I'm a visual learner, sometimes if I can see what I'm learning, it will help a lot. But the problem is I can't read a single word on the screen.
- I didn't participate in the Live sessions because sometimes I didn't understand the questions other schools asked, and sometimes I was afraid that I can't express my answer well.
- I participated almost every time except for the very last time due to my sickness. As a language major, I think we should seize every single chance to interact with foreigners and learn different culture and perspectives from them.
- 4 out of 10. I didn't participate because I am shy and not confident to speak in front of the whole classmates but I did discuss some questions with classmates sitting next to me.
- I seldom participated. It was boring.
- Yes, but not very often. The questions can be vague sometimes.
- Half. Sometimes the topic did not interest me but sometimes it does. Good contents and arrangement of the presentation is important. The contents were sometimes too difficult.
- I think the reason that kept me from participating is the class being too big and I'm afraid my speaking skills are not good enough.
- The topic is not very interesting to discuss with. I believe the creativity and opinion come from life. If the topic is more near real life, maybe more people will try to have more interaction.

The students' level of participation speaks of their motivation and interest in the activity. Initial excitement and involvement in the live sessions during the first few meetings could fluctuate.

3.4. Research Question 4: What is their general feedback about the whole course i.e., face-to-face lectures and course content?

The feedback given by students on the regular class, the lectures, and the instructor sheds light on a different general classroom atmosphere. It is apparent that the students were impressed with her pedagogic skills and delivery of lectures and that has repercussions on their motivation to sit (and still maintain interested) in a 3-hour class.

- The topics of your lecture were really interesting and you are always delivering it in a passionate way that makes it more interesting. Moreover you often try to tell students beat their shyness to talk in English in public which is really nice. Despite the length of the class (3 hours is too long for me (not used to it) I really appreciate this course.
- I love the professor. I love the way she lectures. I never get bored. I had a lot of teachers who only read papers during class. Usually a 3-hour course is a pain in the neck for me. However, this course passes by way too quickly.
- For the live session, it is not that useful. For the regular lectures, they're really good that I learn a lot of things in a 3-hour class. The lectures are well prepared, delivered clearly, not too fast or too slow, so that I have time to digest the class content.
- Online live sessions would help and force students to make conversation with each other.

- Taiwanese students are not suitable for the sessions. Taiwanese students have few ideas and thought and are passive to give out opinions. Those who dare to share opinions are seen as weirdo or showing off by others.
- The idea of live sessions is good but maybe lesser students on one class would be better.
- It's a special experience since there aren't any courses like this. However, the WEM should make it more fun.
- Before the live session begins, it may be better if students get to know a little bit about what other groups from other schools will be presenting that day.
- More examples in the WEM class would be great because students are not interested in serious theories. Students are fond of real examples.
- One presentation for one day will be better.

The qualities their instructor possesses based on students' evaluation carries weight on how they perceive an effective teacher: someone who is passionate in his/her craft, gives interesting lectures, is well prepared, has appropriate pacing in teaching and learning, supportive and provides encouragement to students. With regards to the class size, students believe that a smaller class would be preferable and be more ideal as this encourages them to participate and to be more engaged in the lessons. Their opinions about their peers and classroom participation also deserve mention. They reckon that making conversations and engaging in discussions (about real life experiences and situations) is very important. However, they also pointed out that those who are highly engaged in class (talk in class, engage in discussions with the teacher and classmates) are sometimes frowned upon as they are seen as somewhat conceited.

3.4.1. Sentiment Analysis

As discussed in the literature section, Sentiment Analysis aims to gather an overall evaluation of the "emotional intensity of words and phrases within a text" (Saldaña, 2018). In this study, the Sentiment Analysis performed was document-level sentiment classification (Liu, 2012), which analyzed the lexicon in the corpus based on polarized opinions: positive or negative. Since the corpus collected was lifted from the students' feedback, it is but logical that the percentage of the subjectivity of the texts was high with a polarity percentage of 0.80.

The Sentiment Analysis results on the perceived benefits of the WEM live sessions was positive, with polarity percentage of 0.60. Nonetheless, the negative sentiment was 0.40. The result correlates with the corpus analysis using Voyant, and the text analysis presented previously, that although students felt that their WEM experiences were positive, it is undeniable that nearly half of the students also felt that there is room for improvement. The Sentiment Analysis for the perceived challenges is negative, yet the polarity percentage is 0.50 (Figure 7). The general tone of their grievances paints the WEM atmosphere as an environment that lacks interaction and active discussion. However, the emotional sentiments of students also reflect how they evaluate themselves. Some take responsibility for not participating, while others blame it on the technology i.e., PowerPoint screen was too small, etc.

3.4.2. Sentiment on Challenges

Sentiment Analysis on the overall course (Language & Culture/WEM course) was positive with a polarity percentage of 0.60. The result correlates with the text analysis presented in Figure 8.

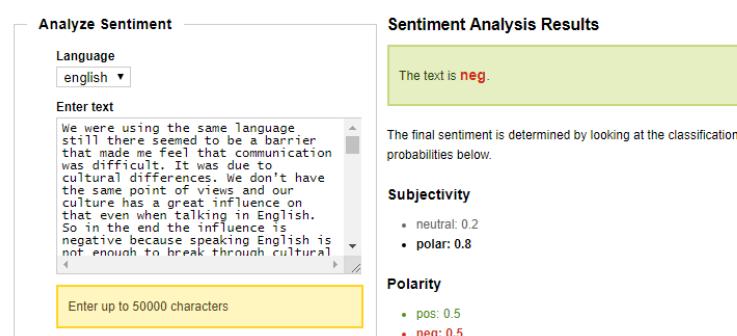


Figure 7. Sentiment Analysis on Challenges

4. Development of new programs: Use of the psycholinguistic approach

After having carried out a background check and mentioned both the limitations and the relevance of the experimental emergence -from the introduction of experimental models- within this field, it is important to point out that a modern program applied to the teaching of languages, based on psycholinguistic foundations would integrate a set of both behavioral and cognitive technologies, which are summarized at the end of the accounts in the detailed study of a series of behaviors to be controlled -dependent variables- at the time of administration should be applied to a series of core and flexible principles, depending on the characteristics of the context where they are manifested (Lee, 2012).

Likewise, other behaviors of both affective and motivational nature could also be manipulated, taking into account other aspects related to the personality and the particular interests of each subject (apprentice, user), which are the main axes that determine the continuity of these with the service offered and will depend in turn on the age group to which they will be addressed -children, adolescents, adults-, responding to their particularities and intrinsic characteristics thereof, and considering the evolutionary variable -intervening- as one of the main factors that could significantly influence the course and modifiability of the program.

Finally, the use of digital strategies is not exempt from this procedure, since after properly integrating the use of modern ICT (as is the case with applications [App], whose demand has now been exponentially increased), the results would be even more substantial and effective, providing, consequently, greater validity to the approach.

3.5. Recommendations

World Englishes theories and linguistic features are informative and important, but what is a better trajectory for online discussions where real communications can actually take place? The following suggestions are based on the students' responses, which are linked to the theoretical concepts on critical thinking, conversational interchange (dialectic discussions) (cf de Bono, 1994), and intercultural communication skills (cf Byram, et al., 2002; Byram, 2012). This can be done by focusing on World Englishes and identity, and encourage students to share real experiences and their stories; their narratives are interesting materials for discourse. This can be executed in various ways:

- *More Interaction*
The ping-pong game of communication, the give and take of comments, questions, and response, verbal endorsements when we agree or disagree with something, repetitions, restatements, debates and display of politeness or impoliteness, and back channels. According to Rosenfeld (1978), the most common back-channel signals are head movements, brief vocalizations, glances, and facial expressions. In conversation, a back-channel signal is a noise, gesture, expression, or word used by a listener to indicate that he or she is paying attention to a speaker.
- *Integrate Group Collaboration Activities: Case Scenarios*
Create scenarios that the group must work through together, encourage them to discuss the solution to a problem via live chat or online forums, or ask them to post their opinions about a particular lesson on social media sites. The problem format encourages deliberate thinking, and these can be derived from many different sources:
 1. A glance at a newspaper will generate world or more immediate problems
 2. Everyday life problems
 3. Problems may be suggested by the students.
 Select topics that are related to the World Englishes, languages, learning English, etc.
- *Digital Storytelling*
Instead of regular PowerPoint presentation, students can create a photostory using their smart phones or phone applications (Apps). They can use the following resources or materials:
 1. Graphics and images- use photos or illustrations, combined with audio or video recording. Subtitles can be added too.
 2. Audio recording of their stories. Students can record online or share their audio file in a private social network group or upload it on the e-learning platform.

3. Produce their narratives as film productions. This may take some time to prepare, so give students ample of time for production. Students can submit their scripts as well. Permission must be granted to tell and share their stories. Use only those that they feel comfortable. Stories can be very empowering, and real life experiences are a more powerful tool for engaging others.
- *Getting students' feedback after the live session*
After the live sessions, spend 10-15 minutes for group or class reflection. In this way, they share what they think of the topics. Those who did not speak in previous discussions should be given the chance to express their opinions.

These are materials that can be shared with peers. By telling their stories, they are actually saying that they are in a much stronger place than they were months or years ago. This will also encourage others to share their own stories.

4. Conclusions

This paper, albeit limited in terms of scope and size of collected data, provided insights into students' learning experiences in synchronous, web-based videoconferencing (live sessions). Applying Byram's intercultural communications model (cf. Byram, Gribkova, and Starkey, 2002) as an evaluation tool, this study was able to 1) assess the intercultural competences necessary to engage in meaningful communication, and 2) to conclude that the WEM live sessions were not effectively used in satisfying the learning needs of the students.

The major implication of this study for future research and educational practices is that we have seen how problematizing (Foucault, 1984) can help teachers reflect on the students' feedback on an online and/or blended-learning courses. It is about listening to them and doing something that would alleviate the problem(s), and make learning happen when and where it is intended to happen. By asking students what they think of a program, an activity, or a class-related event, they are being empowered, and they are given control of what and how they think they could perform better in class. Follow-up action is needed as it arises from the problem, and finding an immediate solution. In other words, reflective feed is a must. In some cases, teachers do not have to look far to see if students are learning. Look at their faces. Look at how they are responding. These are examples of reflection in action which speeds up collecting feedback. Teachers do not need to wait for the next semester to implement changes; be quick in responding to students' immediate learning needs. Longitudinal, empirical research studies are still needed to validate the findings and conceptual data provided in this paper. In particular, follow-up research can provide valuable data regarding the implementation of the suggested discussion activities, their (in)effectiveness and challenges (if any). Application in multi-cultural educational contexts is also encouraged as it can contribute knowledge and influence practices of online educators.

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