

# ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF LANGUAGE VIRTUAL EXCHANGE APPROACHES ON INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

MEDICIÓN DEL IMPACTO DE LOS SISTEMAS DE INTERCAMBIO VIRTUAL DE LENGUAS SOBRE EL DESARROLLO DE LA COMPETENCIA INTERCULTURAL EN ESTUDIANTES UNIVERSITARIOS

ÉVALUER L'IMPACT DES APPROCHES D'ÉCHANGE VIRTUEL LINGUISTIQUE SUR LE DÉVELOPPEMENT DE LA COMPÉTENCE INTERCULTURELLE CHEZ DES ÉTUDIANTS UNIVERSITAIRES

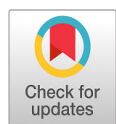
AValiação DO IMPACTO DAS ABORDAGENS DE INTERCÂMBIO VIRTUAL DE IDIOMAS NO DESENVOLVIMENTO DA COMPETÊNCIA INTERCULTURAL ENTRE ESTUDANTES UNIVERSITÁRIOS

**Stefania Arias-Cifuentes**

Instructor, Universidad Tecnológica de Bolívar, Cartagena, Colombia.  
sarias@utb.edu.co  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8024-2231>

**Iris Laudith Solano-Cahuana**

Assistant Professor, Universidad Tecnológica de Bolívar, Cartagena, Colombia.  
isolano@utb.edu.co  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8196-0710>



## ABSTRACT

Intercultural competence is key for foreign language acquisition since it allows learners to understand sociolinguistic and behavioral variations and to convey meaning effectively. This mixed-methods study involved the participation of 145 undergraduate students at a private Colombian university to assess whether and to what extent different approaches to virtual language exchange with native speakers of a target language contribute to their developing intercultural awareness/competence. Drawing on quantitative and qualitative analyses of the online surveys implemented before and after participating in the virtual exchange, we found that students' awareness/knowledge increased, particularly in the group that received intercultural communication training (ICT), who could elaborate further on their individual analyses of non-observable features of the target culture. This research paper offers insights into the effectiveness of virtual language exchanges and the role of ICT in developing intercultural awareness/competence in foreign language learners. Findings suggest that the implementation of strategically designed virtual language exchanges can provide more in-depth understandings of cultural variations.

**Keywords:** intercultural communicative competence, foreign language acquisition, virtual language exchange, intercultural awareness, language and culture

## RESUMEN

La competencia intercultural es clave para la adquisición de una lengua extranjera pues permite a los estudiantes entender variaciones sociolingüísticas y comportamentales

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y transmitir el significado de manera más efectiva. El presente estudio mixto incluyó la participación de 145 estudiantes de pregrado de una universidad colombiana para evaluar si el cambio de abordajes en intercambios lingüísticos virtuales con hablantes nativos de una lengua objetivo contribuía a desarrollar la consciencia y la competencia interculturales y en qué medida lo hacían. Con base en análisis cuantitativos y cualitativos de varias encuestas en línea aplicadas antes y después de su participación en el intercambio virtual, hallamos un aumento de la consciencia y el conocimiento de los estudiantes, en especial en el grupo que recibió formación en comunicación intercultural, pues estos fueron capaces de una mayor elaboración de las características no observables de la cultura meta. Este artículo ofrece perspectivas sobre la efectividad de los intercambios lingüísticos virtuales y el rol de la formación en comunicación intercultural entre estudiantes de lenguas extranjeras. Los hallazgos indican que la implementación de los intercambios lingüísticos virtuales diseñados estratégicamente puede ofrecer una comprensión más profunda de las variaciones culturales.

**Palabras clave:** competencia intercultural comunicativa, adquisición de lenguas extranjeras, intercambios lingüísticos virtuales, consciencia intercultural, lengua y cultura

## RÉSUMÉ

La compétence interculturelle est essentielle pour l'acquisition d'une langue étrangère, car elle permet aux apprenants de comprendre les variations sociolinguistiques et comportementales et de transmettre le sens de manière efficace. Cette étude à méthodes mixtes a impliqué la participation de 145 étudiants de premier cycle d'une université privée colombienne afin d'évaluer si et dans quelle mesure différentes approches d'échanges linguistiques virtuels avec des locuteurs natifs d'une langue cible contribuent à développer leur conscience/compétence interculturelle. Sur la base d'analyses quantitatives et qualitatives des enquêtes en ligne réalisées avant et après la participation à l'échange virtuel, nous avons constaté que la sensibilisation/connaissance des étudiants s'est accrue, en particulier dans le groupe ayant reçu une formation à la communication interculturelle (CIC), parce qu'ils pouvaient développer davantage des analyses individuelles des caractéristiques non observables de la culture cible. Ce document de recherche donne un aperçu de l'efficacité des échanges linguistiques virtuels et du rôle de la CIC dans le développement de la conscience/compétence interculturelle chez les apprenants de langues étrangères. Les résultats suggèrent que la mise en œuvre d'échanges linguistiques virtuels stratégiquement conçus peut permettre une compréhension plus approfondie des variations culturelles.

**Mots-clés :** compétence communicative interculturelle, acquisition d'une langue étrangère, échanges linguistiques virtuels, sensibilisation interculturelle, langue et culture

## RESUMO

A competência intercultural é fundamental para a aquisição de um idioma estrangeiro, pois permite que os alunos compreendam as variações sociolinguísticas e comportamentais e transmitam o significado de forma eficaz. Este estudo de métodos mistos envolveu a participação de 145 alunos de graduação em uma universidade privada colombiana para avaliar se, e em que medida, diferentes abordagens de intercâmbio virtual de idiomas com falantes nativos de um idioma-alvo contribuem para o desenvolvimento da consciência/competência intercultural. Com base em análises quantitativas e qualitativas das pesquisas on-line realizadas antes e depois da participação no intercâmbio virtual, constatamos que a conscientização/conhecimento dos alunos acrescentou, principalmente no grupo que recebeu formação em comunicação intercultural (CIC), enquanto eles puderam aprofundar suas análises individuais de características não observáveis da cultura-alvo. Este trabalho de pesquisa oferece percepções sobre a eficácia dos intercâmbios virtuais de idiomas e o papel da formação em CIC no desenvolvimento da conscientização/competência intercultural em

alunos de línguas estrangeiras. Os resultados sugerem que a implementação de intercâmbios virtuais de idiomas estrategicamente projetados pode proporcionar uma compreensão mais profunda das variações culturais.

**Palavras-chave:** competência comunicativa intercultural, aquisição de uma língua estrangeira, intercâmbio virtual de idiomas, consciência intercultural, idioma e cultura

## Introduction

Developing cultural awareness and enhancing intercultural communicative competence (ICC) when learning a second language remains a subject of core interest for scholarly research, considering that the lack of exposure to social elements of the target culture is still a reality in many countries (Cong-Lem, 2025; Pemberton, 2024). FL teaching has shifted to a focus in communication in contexts with diverse speakers, where awareness of one's own culture and understanding of cultures differences is quite relevant (Cong-Lem, 2025, Kramsch, 2014). This allows FL learners to have better communication and interpersonal relationships with speakers of the target culture (Tran & Duong, 2018).

In the Caribbean coast of Colombia, cross-cultural communication in English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) academic programs is generally addressed superficially by introducing and sometimes comparing cultural facts such as celebrations, eating habits, or clothing differences without articulating critical content and activities that encourage global awareness and intercultural understanding (Rodríguez Urbina, 2017). In fact, classroom practices should not focus on binary comparisons that separate "us" versus "them"; instead, they should examine cultural aspects and individual identities as complex contextually-influenced conceptualizations (Fielding, 2022) that also affect language learning beyond superficial observable differences. Therefore, it is important to foster a self-reflective stance in language students and to create opportunities to interact with speakers of their target language so that they can experience the nuanced nature of intercultural communication.

Recent research exploring this issue emphasize on the important role of direct contact with native English speakers and of getting involved in authentic communication for the improvement of EFL university learners in terms of intercultural knowledge, attitudes, awareness and skills (Zhou & Burhanudeen, 2023). One of the best options to facilitate one-on-one interactions, despite constraints

for international mobility, is taking advantage of digital options such as virtual mobility (Carr & Beaudry, 2023).

To show the crucial role of ICC in FL learning, this article has a general review of the literature regarding the definition and components of ICC, their link to FL teaching, and recommendations to incorporate this approach in the FL classroom through virtual exchanges. To assess the effectiveness of this approach, this mixed-methods research examines whether and to what extent the participation of low-intermediate English learners in virtual language exchanges contributes to develop intercultural awareness and to improve intercultural competence. This study also examines how different approaches to those language exchanges may influence students' intercultural awareness and the complexity of the themes addressed in the interactions. Participants' perceptions before and after the language exchange were elicited through online surveys including closed and open-ended questions. Results are presented using quantitative and qualitative methods and discussed considering theoretical references and previous scholarly findings before drawing some concluding remarks.

## Theoretical Framework

To show the link between ICC and FL teaching, this section is divided into three subsections, including a general review of the literature regarding the definition and components of ICC, followed by an explanation of the crucial role of this competence in FL teaching and recommendations to incorporate this approach in teaching practices based on previous research, with a focus on virtual exchanges. The last subsection also links virtual exchanges to the development of one ICC component, *savoir s'engager*.

### Intercultural Communicative Competence

Byram and his colleagues (1997) proposed ICC as an encompassing term that emphasizes the ability to look at oneself from an external perspective and to adapt one's own behavior, values, and

beliefs to mediate our interactions with other cultures. The term culture, here, does not refer to the objective or visible part of it, which includes architecture, food, clothing, etc., but to subjective intangible elements, such as beliefs, values, behaviors, and social norms (as cited in Shaules, 2007). Through ICC, people can identify cultural aspects in cross-cultural interactions and manage such interactions in a way that is comfortable for all participants (Crozet et al., 1999).

In recent years, the model has been questioned by alternative perspectives and re-conceptualizations stating that focusing on adapting behaviors and values can sometimes oversimplify cultural interactions, which are characterized by pluralist perspectives and opinions (Hoff, 2020; Tornberg, 2004). This is because no culture is homogeneous in terms of values and beliefs, even within the same nation (Dervin, 2016). Therefore, a variety of identity markers must be considered, beyond nationality, to facilitate understanding in intercultural encounters (Risager, 2018) and to avoid enhancing superficial adjustments rather than deep, transformative learning experiences. Although these alternative perspectives are well-founded and valid, they also entail clear limitations as a guideline for educational practice since they aim at addressing a “non-essentialist view of culture as dynamic and boundless, where learner identities are seen as unstable and co-constructed” (Hoff, 2020, p. 58), leading to ambiguities and contradictions in intercultural communication that are too subtle to be taught in a structured foreign language curriculum.

To address those ambiguities and contradictions, the present study focuses on one of the five knowledge components proposed in Byram’s model (Byram et al., 1997): *savoir s’engager*, often translated as critical cultural awareness (Agudelo, 2007; Jaramillo Cárdenas, 2023), which tackles the critical analysis of explicit criteria in one’s own’s and other’s culture, and aligns with scholarly demands for more reflective engagement to deepen the learning process beyond surface-level

adaptations. However, before describing how the *savoir s’engager*, component was examined, it is necessary to briefly explain what Byram’s ICC model entails and its stance on foreign language (FL) education.

### ICC and FL Learning

Due to its impact on communication and interaction patterns, culture influences language teaching both linguistically and pedagogically, since it affects it on semantic, pragmatic, and discourse levels (McKay, 2003). To incorporate an intercultural approach in foreign language FL teaching, the target language and culture must be taught in contrast to the learners’ first language and culture (Crozet et al., 1999). To develop ICC, Byram and his colleagues (1997) provide a clear-cut list of components:

- Attitudes (*savoir être*): refer to learners’ openness and willingness to evaluate and reconsider their own culture, values, and beliefs as potentially different from those in other cultures.
- Knowledge (*savoirs*): involves learners’ understanding of practices and general processes of societal and individual interaction.
- Skills (*savoir comprendre*): refer to the ability to compare and interpret documents, events, and behaviors from another culture and to relate those discoveries to one’s own.
- Critical awareness (*savoir s’engager*): involves the ability to use new knowledge in interaction (previously called *savoir faire*); (Byram, 1997; Byram et al., 1997; Council of Europe, 2020).

The first step to incorporate this comparative approach to language education is to foster self-awareness of students’ own cultural identity (Byram et al., 1997; Kramsch, 1993). Initially, this will happen at a superficial level with students understanding basic facts and objective cultural characteristics, but, after exploring their own beliefs, students will be able to engage in analytical and rational evaluations of



perspectives, products, and practices related to the target culture (Byram, 1997). In other words, they can grow through different levels of comparative conflict, appreciation of differences, and empathetic attitudes (Gaston, 1984).

To spark students' interest and willingness to get involved in comparative analyses and the subsequent development of knowledge, teachers can engage in class discussions comparing cultural features and stereotypes from the local and the target culture, role-play performances to act out specific situations, or the projection of films and other media sources reflecting the target culture (Hughes, 1986). In this type of activities, learning is seen a process of discovery where the teacher plays a facilitating role.

Once knowledge (*savoirs*) and attitudes (*savoir être*) have been addressed, the second step is to generate real or simulated opportunities for interactions (*savoir s'engager*) with individuals of diverse cultural backgrounds (Byram, 1997). To do so, teachers can create spaces where students engage with foreign people from different cultures. Having such spaces to promote reciprocal relationships allows the cultural information presented to learners to come from intimate knowledge, which is transferred from one learner to another in a more realistic and meaningful way than information presented in class materials (Freiermuth & Huang, 2021). Some examples include visits from international guests in the classroom, study away programs, or virtual meetings with learners from different cultures.

Certainly, learning strategies, classroom dynamics, activities, and materials vary and should be adapted to the context to enhance students' reflection on cultural values and their acknowledgement and respect for the identities of others (Byram, 2006). In addition, class activities should be conducted as an ongoing (continuous) formative process of evaluation (Lussier et al., 2007), where students receive recurrent feedback (from teachers, classmates, and/or through self-evaluations) on their

cognitive, behavioral, and affective performance (Brindley, 2001).

### Virtual Exchanges to Develop *Savoir S'Engager*

As mentioned in the previous section, to develop intercultural communication, students should engage in tasks along with individuals from different cultures (Byram, 1997). One way to achieve this is through international student mobility. However, this represents a barrier for some students, due to constraints such as lack of opportunities, lack of information, and financial issues. In addition, developing intercultural awareness should not be considered a result of a study abroad experience but as an ongoing process (Deardorff, 2006).

To overcome those limitations, research has shown how online alternatives also enable students' development of the target language, foster social connections with native speakers abroad, heighten intercultural awareness, and boost second-language communication confidence (Brinckwirth, 2012; O'Dowd, 2021). One of the virtual tools proposed is eTandem Language Exchanges, where learners with different native languages communicate with different native languages and take part in collaborative tasks to practice their target language (Rahimi & Fathi, 2022). During the language exchange, a specific time should be devoted to each target language and each counterpart should have a native role speaker role (Vassallo & Telles, 2006).

eTandems can be incorporated into the curriculum to foster communication, interaction, analysis, and interpretation of behaviors and practices (Zhou, 2023). These exchanges allow learners to communicate with people outside of their peer groups, practice the target language in a real context, and share personal experiences and opinions with others (Freiermuth & Huang, 2021). Therefore, eTandems are based on reciprocity because participants learn from each other, but

they are also based on autonomy due to learners' role in taking ownership of their learning process (Cappellini, 2016; Vassallo & Telles, 2006). Thus, the teacher mainly takes a facilitator role, which entails defining learning goals, coordinating interaction dynamics and spaces, and assessing students' learning process (Pörn & Hansell, 2020).

In an eTandem Language Exchange project between learners of English and learners of Mandarin, Tian and Wang (2010) evaluated learners' perspectives regarding language learning and intercultural competence. Their results showed that participants manifested interest in their partner's culture and perspectives, made an effort to manage cultural differences, and self-reflected about their own culture. Moreover, after the eTandem experience, learners increased their intercultural interactions, manifested more respect, and were more mindful of intercultural differences (Jin & Erben, 2007; Tian & Wang, 2010). Therefore, eTandems were suggested as a sustainable way to practice the target language, in a real context, outside the classroom (Freiermuth & Huang, 2021; Tian & Wang, 2010), while supporting the development of intercultural competence in language learners (Freiermuth & Huang, 2021; Perren, 2018; Ware & Kramsch 2005).

To assess the effectiveness of these online alternatives and the overall impact of including language/cultural exchanges into the curriculum, one path is the implementation of a subjective pre-test before the course starts in order to identify students' initial intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Corbett, 2003), and a post-test to determine their progress after the course has ended.

Following a rigorous comparative analysis, this research examines whether and to what extent the participation of low-intermediate English learners in virtual language exchanges contributes to their development of intercultural awareness and intercultural competence. The study also examines how different approaches to those language

exchanges may influence students' intercultural awareness and the complexity of the themes addressed in the interactions.

## Method

This article presents a mixed-methods approach to identify the participants' intercultural awareness and competence before and after experiencing a virtual exchange. The comparison focuses first on assessing how the recognition of cultural differences may have an impact on manifested cultural awareness. Then, it tackles the way in which different approaches to language exchanges may influence the manifested intercultural awareness, during and after online interactions, through the analysis of themes discussed and the complexity of individual reasonings about the experience.

To achieve this, participants filled out a survey before and after participating in the exchange. The survey had the same questions for both moments, which allows for identifying changes in cultural awareness and cultural competence. A quantitative analysis of the survey responses was performed to identify the correlation between the recognition of cultural differences and their manifested cultural awareness. Furthermore, the second survey included a section with open-ended questions, which permitted a qualitative analysis of the responses to identify how the language exchange influences the participants' manifested intercultural awareness through the interactions with their counterparts.

It is important to state that the final description of our methodology was checked on ChatGPT to help corroborate whether the study was missing any reliability or validity components to ensure a comprehensive data analysis. We also verified that the statistical tests implemented were indeed the most suitable options for the sample size and the type of data collected in case any innovative model became available after the analysis was completed. Based on the suggestions received by the AI tool, we pointed out some ambiguities in the text and

rewrote some paragraphs to provide clearer justifications of specific choices and more detailed explanations of contextual factors that could have an impact on our research outcomes. A couple of sentences summarizing the choice of statistical tests were borrowed from the OpenAI source.

### Context and Participants

The study was conducted at a university in Colombia, where undergraduate students take English language courses as part of their program requirements. The courses go from English 1 (A1 level of proficiency) to English 5 (B1 level of proficiency). The English 4 course was chosen to be part of the study not only because of the English proficiency level of the students but also because of the cultural topics covered at the beginning of the course, which included several units focused specifically on developing cultural awareness and cultural changes over time. A minimum of low-intermediate language proficiency was also considered a key factor in the selection of participants for this research since the ability to interact with speakers of the target language would be significantly reduced among students with elementary levels of proficiency. Moreover, aiming at data uniformity and since the virtual exchange experience also intended to facilitate language practice and intercultural communication for US students learning Spanish, it was important to select participants with similar levels of proficiency.

The research included 145 participants from a target population of 405 undergraduate students enrolled in English 4 courses (focused on A2+/B1 proficiency levels according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), which constitutes 35.8 percent of the said targeted student population. A total of seven courses took part in the study. A purposive sampling or criterion-based sampling model (Patton, 2002) was followed, where groups that met the criteria—i.e., curriculum, proficiency levels, and a class schedule aligned to the schedule availability

of their counterparts at a foreign university—were selected to take part in virtual language exchanges during the first semester of 2023. Since the target population was categorized as small, with a total of 405 students enrolled in the English 4 courses at the moment of data collection, a sample of 35.8 percent would be large enough to capture the diversity of the population. Still, it is important to understand that the findings of this research only intend to assess the outcomes of a specific and contextually adapted cultural and linguistic experience; thus, results are presented with careful consideration in terms of their replicability.

### Procedure

This study had institutional endorsement by the Ethics Committee of the higher education institution where the research took place. This process started with the preparation and submission of a detailed description of the research proposal, according to the guidelines of the university's Office of Research, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship. The description included information about the length of the study, organizations involved, objectives, a detailed account of the data collection tools, and the target population, as well as the information and procedure established to obtain informed consents to collect and analyze data and to ensure data security before, during, and after the study was completed. The proposal was also presented in person before the Ethics Committee, where further inquiries in terms of relevance and research impact were also addressed before approval was granted.

In addition, participation in the study was voluntary after candidates received a detailed explanation of its characteristics, anonymization process, benefits, risks, and the possibility to withdraw at any time without any repercussions. Those willing to participate in the study were required to sign an informed consent before answering the online surveys. All personal information was anonymized during the data collection process and was not included in the analysis of data.



The participants were divided into two groups. Group A (standard) participated in the virtual exchange program following a free-conversational pattern, where students could discuss random topics with their counterparts in the United States. On the other hand, Group B received specially designed intercultural communication training (ICT) in addition to their regular class curriculum, which was later linked to the topics discussed during the language exchange.

### Data Collection and Instruments

Data collection took place with the implementation of two online surveys during the first academic semester of 2023, between February and June. The target population was composed of students currently enrolled in level-4 English courses and scheduled to take part in virtual language exchange sessions with Spanish learners from universities in the United States. The discussions took place during the sessions of their English courses.

#### *Pre-Survey*

For both groups, the initial survey was conducted at the beginning of the semester before any of the cultural awareness lessons were taught. The goal was to determine the students' initial understandings, perceptions, and levels of awareness, which could be compared to their responses after taking part in the virtual exchange. On average, the questionnaire required five minutes to be completed. It started with four options where the student had to indicate whether he or she was informed about the purpose, nature, and confidentiality of the study in which he or she was participating voluntarily, and whether he or she authorized the analysis of the information provided for research purposes. After providing consent, participants could proceed with the content-specific questions, which were divided into two parts.

The first part of the survey addressed participants' perceptions about different aspects of intercultural

awareness and socio-cultural knowledge. Therefore, their opinions were categorized according to a Likert scale of agreement. Except by a few statements, items were mostly taken from the cultural awareness survey developed by the language institute at that higher education institution in Colombia (for a version of the questionnaire in its original language, see Appendix B):

1. I understand the difference between cultural characteristics and stereotypes.
2. Culture is more about traditions, celebrations, and history than about values.
3. My cultural identity does not influence how I perceive the world.
4. Most people have similar ideas about what is good and right.
5. Acknowledging my own cultural identity is essential for good learning.
6. I consider that, to avoid cultural misunderstandings, I must treat people the same way I want to be treated.
7. My cultural identity does not influence the way I communicate with others.
8. When talking to someone from another culture, I should take his/her background into account.
9. Punctuality is considered important in every culture.
10. Women's conversational style differs from the conversational style of men.

The second section of the survey addressed individual manifestations of cultural awareness according to a Likert scale of frequency where participants could examine their familiarity with cultural differences and their conduct. The statements given were the following:

1. I recognize many differences when I compare two different cultures.
2. I recognize many similarities when I compare two different cultures.
3. I talk about cultural beliefs, values, and traditions referring to my culture.

4. I am comfortable talking with people from other countries and cultures.
5. I change the way I talk depending on whom I am talking to.
6. I have noticed that people from other cultures use different body language when they talk.

### *Intercultural Communication Training (ICT)*

Considering the components of ICC (Byram et al., 1997), a training session was designed and implemented in several groups of students enrolled in level-4 English courses. The training consisted of two sessions where students engaged in role-plays specifically designed to foster the experience and subsequent analysis of different behaviors related to verbal and non-verbal communication from different cultures. Every interaction was represented in pairs with one of the students acting the way he or she would normally behave, and the other one representing some cultural practice assigned after picking up a piece of paper from a box. Nobody else would know what the assigned behavior was until they saw it manifested played out in the conversation.

Some examples of culture-driven behavior include staring at the other person, avoiding eye contact, standing very close to the other person, speaking loudly or very fast, asking personal questions, constantly interrupting the other person, etc. After all the cultural situations already prepared were played out, teachers discussed the difference between stereotypes versus generalizations and guided discussions leading students to evaluate whether those behaviors represented cultural generalizations or stereotypes.

During the second training session, teachers explained key cultural values that would help students reflect on the underlying factors influencing the examples of behaviors previously seen, such as informality, directness, individualism, and privacy, among others. The goal was to enhance an analysis of how cultural differences could lead to miscommunication. The session closed with the collective

preparation of different questions that students would like to ask their counterparts in the United States during the virtual exchange, keeping in mind the information previously examined in the ICC training (see Appendix A for more details about the training sessions). Every session lasted 50 minutes, classes were composed of 25 students or less, and resources included printed cards with the description of different behaviors to be represented along with PowerPoint presentations showing the information to be discussed throughout the entire training.

After training, students in Group B took part in a virtual language exchange session with foreign universities with whom they could further discuss cultural matters, guided by some questions they had previously prepared. It is worth noticing that this ICT training complemented the two standard lessons on the development of cultural awareness included in the course syllabus. The standard study plan was the path followed by Group A, which took part in the virtual language exchange experience with a freer exchange discussion format.

### *Post-Survey Analysis*

For Group A, the survey was conducted after reviewing the cultural awareness topics included in the syllabus. For Group B, the survey was conducted after the language exchange. The goal was to identify potential variations in individual knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions between the observed group and the influence of each approach taken (i.e., basic teaching plan vs ICT training) in the outcomes.

The survey included the same two sections of the pre-survey with an additional section, consisting of an open-ended question about similarities and differences between American culture and the participant's culture. This question was added to collect information about the cultural aspects that participants were able to identify and the complexity of their interactions during the virtual language exchange.

## Data Analysis

Since the purpose of our statistical analysis is to identify a correlation between the variables rather than determining causation, a Pearson coefficient test was conducted between the identified rise in participants' manifested cultural awareness and their behavioral manifestations of that awareness. However, since this correlation coefficient is often simply categorized as a descriptive statistic, the analysis of the responses before and after the virtual language exchange also included a two-sample equal variance t-test to determine whether the data support or reject the null hypothesis: *People's increased recognition of cultural differences has no impact on their manifested cultural awareness.*

The combination of the *Pearson correlation coefficient* and the *two-sample equal variance t-test* represents an effective data analysis approach because together they offer a comprehensive analysis of both descriptive and inferential statistics. For instance, they can provide valuable information on the degree of association between the variables and determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between those variables before and after the intervention. Many alternative statistical methods, such as ANOVA or regression analysis, require larger sample sizes to achieve reliable results. The t-test is more appropriate when dealing with smaller samples because it can provide valid conclusions about differences in means even when sample sizes are not large.

Overall, the Pearson correlation coefficient and the two-sample equal variance t-test are the best choices for this study because they align well with the research objectives, the nature of the data, and the sample size. Together, these tests provide a balanced approach that combines the strengths of correlation analysis and hypothesis testing to provide an interpretation of the results that goes beyond simple descriptive statistics and ensures both the reliability and validity of the findings.

As previously mentioned, the post-survey included one open-ended question: "Between the United States culture and your culture, what differences and similarities were you able to find?" (For more information about the post-survey, see the Methods section). A thematic analysis was conducted on the answers provided for this question following the guidelines of Jessica Nina Lester and colleagues (2020), which include the following phases: data preparation and organization, data familiarization, addition of notes and comments to the data, coding, and categories development and production of topics names. Survey results showed how participants differ in their comparative perceptions of American and Colombian culture (see Appendix C).

Furthermore, the reliability of qualitative data has been considered in relation to the degree of consistency of the results when the research is performed several times (Kirk & Miller, 1986; Silverman, 2005). However, conducting the research several times to examine participants' personal perceptions and performing a subjective interpretation of the results is usually not feasible. (Dörnyei, 2007). In such a scenario, reliability checks are performed on sub-processes within the thematic analysis (Dörnyei, 2007). In this study, a double revision of the data analysis took place, with one of the authors performing the qualitative thematic analysis and data codification and the other one revising the process followed and the similarities and differences identified.

## Results

This section is divided into three sections. The first subsection is related to the contribution to and the extent of the development of intercultural awareness in low-intermediate English learners after participating in a virtual language exchange. The second subsection focuses on the development of intercultural competence while the third subsection examines the themes addressed in the interactions during the virtual language exchange, and how the complexity of these themes was

influenced by having different approaches to the language exchange.

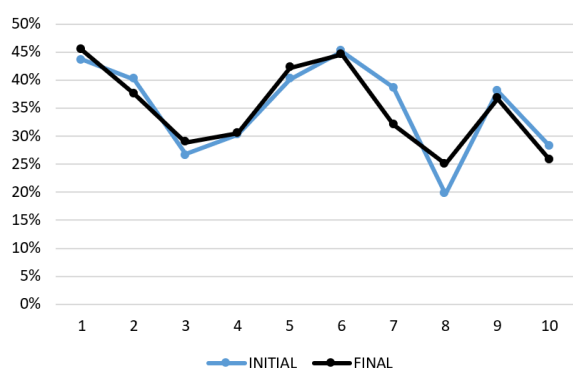
### The Impact of Virtual Exchanges on Intercultural Awareness

Based on the level of agreement manifested by the participants, the ten statements proposed in the first section of the questionnaire aimed to determine respondents' awareness of their own cultural identity and their general perception and awareness of cultural variation around the world.

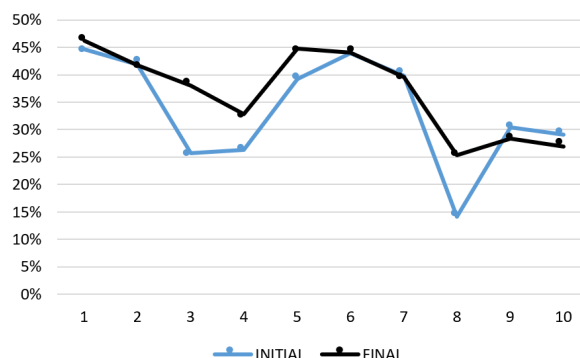
After comparing the responses from the initial and the final surveys at the end of the semester, the results showed that groups A and B both improved their levels of intercultural awareness. For example, by acknowledging the influencing role of cultural identity on world perception (statements 3 and 5) or the importance of taking into consideration other people's background when interacting with them (statement 8). Similarly, the small reduction in the rate of agreement with statements 2, 9, and 10 also denotes a slight increase of awareness since those statements expressed superficial definitions and false cultural and social generalizations (the survey results are presented in Figures 1 and 2).

In other statements, there was little to no variation in participant's rate of agreement, but the overall tendency was toward a positive rise in students'

**Figure 1** Group A: Rates of Agreement with Statements in Initial and Final Surveys



**Figure 2** Group B: Rates of Agreement with Statements in Initial and Final Surveys



levels of intercultural awareness and socio-cultural knowledge. These results were two times higher among students from Group B, with an increment of 2 and 4 percentage points between the initial and final surveys, as opposed to group A that elucidated exhibited an increment of 1 and 2 percentage points.

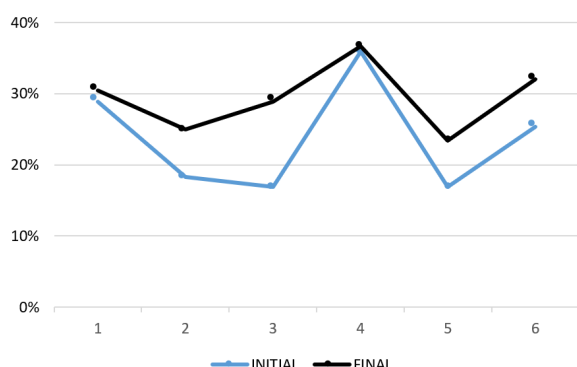
### The Impact of Virtual Exchanges on Intercultural Competence

As previously mentioned, the second section of the surveys examined individual manifestations of intercultural competence through Likert scales of frequency. Once again, students' answers from the initial and final surveys were compared to determine the impact of the two approaches taken to prepare them for the virtual language exchange.

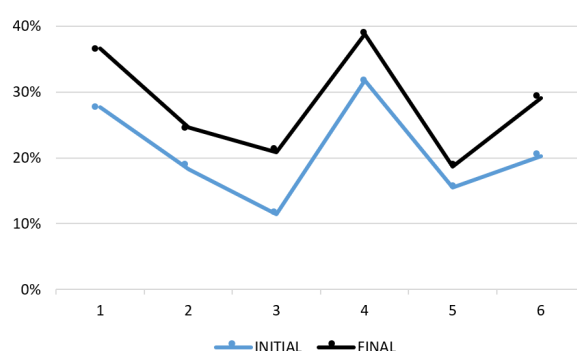
Results in this section also indicate that both groups manifested a self-perceived change towards more culturally aware behavior. For instance, the higher percentage of participants rating statements 2, 3, and 5 as something they do always or frequently indicates that they are now able to recognize similarities when comparing cultures, that they acknowledge and talk about their own cultural values and traditions, and that they can consciously adapt to their interlocutors' conversational style and behavioral patterns (the manifestations of cultural awareness in the initial and final surveys are presented in Figures 3 and 4).



**Figure 3** Group A: High Frequency Manifestations of Cultural Awareness in Initial and Final Surveys



**Figure 4** Group B: High Frequency Manifestations of Cultural Awareness in Initial and Final Surveys



It is important to note that, in this section of the questionnaire, group B also showed a moderately higher overall percentage of improvement (8%) between the initial and final surveys when compared to the responses of the participants in group A (6%). Only in statements 3 and 5 did group A ranked slightly higher than group B.

To further assess these outcomes, a Pearson coefficient test and a two-sample equal variance t-test were conducted during the second section of the questionnaire before and after the virtual language exchange in order to examine the correlation between participants' recognition of cultural awareness and their behavioral manifestations of that awareness. The main goal was to establish if the data support or reject the null hypothesis:

**Table 1** Comparison of Culturally Aware Perceptions and Behaviors

Group	Pearson R	T-Test
A – Standard	0.67	0.27
B – CCCT	0.52	0.16

People's increased recognition of cultural differences has no impact on their manifested cultural awareness (Table 1).

The results of the statistical tests illustrate how, in both cases, there is a positive correlation (Pearson R) between increased perceptions of cultural awareness and the behavioral adaptation acknowledged by participants (see Table 1). Yet, being greater than 0.05, the correlation is not strong, which also aligns with the outcomes of the t-test. Hence, the increased percentages identified in participants' cultural awareness are not statistically significant and fail to reject the null hypothesis. Overall, quantitative analyses produce interesting outcomes whose statistical significance restricts them from conclusions that could be confidently generalized.

### Recognition of Cultural Features in Virtual Exchange Interactions

To further assess the influence of virtual exchange on participant's intercultural awareness and competence, this study examined individual experiences through their perceived differences and similarities in cultural features. The topic names assigned during the thematic analysis were based on Frank's (2013) analysis of the elements of culture, which also considers Hall's (1976) cultural iceberg analogy and the products, practices, and perspectives of culture (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1999). Frank (2013) argues that every culture has easily observable products or features (the tip of the iceberg above the surface), such as food, music, and clothing, practices such as interpersonal relationships, and perspectives, including values and



attitudes, as well as non-observable features like cultural practices and social perspectives (the submerged part of the iceberg either at the subsurface or deeply submerged) (Frank, 2013, p. 3). In tandem with this, students' responses were categorized as part of the surface, sub-surface, or deep level.

The *surface level* includes the observable features of culture, such as food and holidays. The *sub-surface level* includes showing affection, non-verbal communication, concept of time, and class behavior. The *deep level* encloses values, attitudes, and beliefs. Examples of identified values include close or distant interpersonal relationships with family or friends, individualism, and the levels of formality required to communicate in specific social situations and contexts.

As an example, for the response "In our culture I feel we have a closer relationship with our families" (translation), the code assigned was "closeness to family," then the category assigned was "values," and the topic assigned was "deep level." During the thematic analysis, responses that were not specific or difficult to categorize (as similarity or difference), were coded as "Response is not clear" or "Does not specify similarity or difference," respectively. It is also important to note that, for long answers, two categories and two topics could be assigned according to their content.

### *Surface Level*

In both groups, participants noted similarities in terms of food, such as a shared taste for coffee and seafood: "They eat crab as we do in the Colombian Caribbean Coast" (GB, S35), "...we love coffee..." (GB, S33). Contrasting findings were also expressed by both groups, such as S43's declaration that "one difference is the scarcity of fruits" (GB) or S35's surprised realization that "they eat a lot of pizza [compared to Colombia]" (GA).

Only participants in group B commented on holidays, talking about Christmas. S37 mentioned that "It is very similar how they celebrate Christmas

with their families," and S42 manifested, "we like the same holiday which is Christmas" (GB, S42).

### *Sub-Surface Level*

In both groups, people mentioned that "the way they express themselves when they are talking is different to the way we express ourselves" (GA, S8). S36 from group A and S9 from group B expressed similar ideas. These conversational patterns are easily visible in the perceived openness of the American culture and in the social/friendly attitude recognized in both American and Colombian cultures.

"Culture in United States is more open and inclusive" (GA, S11).

"...we [Americans and Colombians] are very friendly when we meet someone for the first time" (GA, S52).

It must be noted that only students' responses from group B were related to showing affection and the concept of time. Group B students mentioned that Colombians show more affection. S44 manifested that "...Colombians are more open when it comes to show[sic] our feelings while Americans are more reserved," and S40 claimed that "Americans are a little bit more reserved when it comes to communicating with other people." Moreover, students referred to the concept of time in their declarations, talking about the priority given to productivity in the American culture. Particularly in relation to the importance of punctuality: "Punctuality" (GB, S66), "They are more productive" (GB, S20).

Other common responses in both groups constituted behaviors related to the university, which was not unexpected considering that all participants were at this stage of their lives. On this subject, participants in group A highlighted the fact that Americans usually live at the university dorms: "the most outstanding difference is that most of the students live on campus and that is weird here" (GA, S43). The finding is rather unusual for Colombians because "in our culture, we don't do that" (GA,

S53). On the other hand, participants from group B highlighted a difference in class behavior. For instance, S45 highlighted that “it is not prohibited to use your phone in class,” which led them to conclude something as “They have more freedom to use their phone during class” (S25).

### *Deep Level*

Responses in both groups mentioned interpersonal relationships, in particular those related to closeness to relatives. S24 from group A, for example, talked about the opposing tendency manifested by the fellow student from the US: “They do not spend a lot of time with their families, and they are not close to them” (GA). S50 and S21 from group B agree with this statement by assuring that “...it is not usual for them to spend time with family members” and that “in our culture I feel that we are closer to our families” (GB). In addition, Colombians build stronger bonds with other people as opposed to “People [in the United States, who] usually do not develop strong bonds” (GB, S60). These attitudes could be categorized as manifestations of individualism, where Americans seem to be less community oriented and more independent than Colombians.

Other manifestations of individualism can also be found in the age at which people move out of their parents’ household and start working, which were found in students’ responses. Both the age to move out and to start working is earlier in Americans than Colombians. Regarding the age to move out, S30 claims that “One difference that I found was that young people are more independent from their parents than in my culture” (GA, 30). About the age to start working, people in the United States “... work from a young age while we live with our parents” (GB, S3). Other respondents went further in their analyses by linking this working age feature to the idea of being more independent. For example, S40 mentioned how “they love working from a young age which I suppose is for being independent” (GB).

It must be noted that references to levels of formality were only found in the responses of students from group B. These responses are related to the way individuals address their professors and peers, which shows variations in the levels of formality depending on context and on a person’s position or role:

“The students [in the United States] usually address their professors by their title and last name” (GB, S17)  
 “People are addressed with titles, for example, Doctor or Professor, but in some contexts if there is a close relationship, titles are not relevant” (GB, S54)  
 “... similarities, that we use informal greetings with friends” (GB, S14)  
 “One similarity is that we use nicknames” (GB, S13)

## **Discussion**

This section includes the data analysis of the results presented in the previous section, focusing first on quantitative data, highlighting an increase in intercultural and social-cultural awareness as outcomes of the virtual exchange. Then, the analysis of qualitative shows how learners’ interactions are linked to observable and non-observable features of culture. This subsection also highlights the recognition of non-observable features by the learners who participated in the intercultural communication training.

### **Intercultural Awareness and Socio-Cultural Knowledge**

Findings from the comparative quantitative analysis of the surveys at the end of the semester showed that groups A and B both increased their levels of intercultural awareness and socio-cultural knowledge. This tendency is visible in the rate of respondents acknowledging the influential role of cultural identity on individual perceptions of the world and in students’ declarations of being more culturally aware. Hence, many of the participants from both observed groups perceive themselves as being able to recognize similarities when comparing cultures, to consider other people’s background, and to consciously adapt to their

interlocutors' conversational style and behavioral patterns during interactions.

Yet, the fact that the results were greater than 0.05 shows a weak correlation between the identified rise in participants' recognition of cultural awareness and their behavioral manifestations of that awareness, which also aligns with the outcomes of the t-test. Therefore, the increased percentages identified in participants' cultural awareness are not statistically significant. This could indicate that, in the observed groups, increased awareness does not necessarily lead to the recognition of individual behavioral adaptation. Longitudinal analyses would be required to further explore this claim.

### Developing *Savoir S'Engager* Through Language Exchange

Students' responses to the survey's open-ended question were categorized into one or more of the three levels of a given culture, which distribute cultural features according to how easy it is to observe them. Recognizing cultural features of a foreign culture and being able to make comparisons with one's culture can be linked to cultural awareness. Thus, students' responses can be related to the ability to compare, interpret, and relate to those features (*savoir comprendre*) and the skill to use the new knowledge to interact with others (*savoir s'engager*). Considering the results, it is possible to state that both groups developed an interest in their counterparts' culture, were able to reflect about their own culture, and became more mindful of the differences between the Colombian culture and American culture. This aligns with the findings of Tian and Wang (2010) in China.

Both groups were able to identify features in the surface, sub-surface, and deep layer of culture. This shows that the qualitative data concurs with the quantitative data previously described. For instance, at the *surface level*, both groups talked about food; at the *sub-surface level*, both mentioned non-verbal communication; and, at the *deep culture level*, both commented on

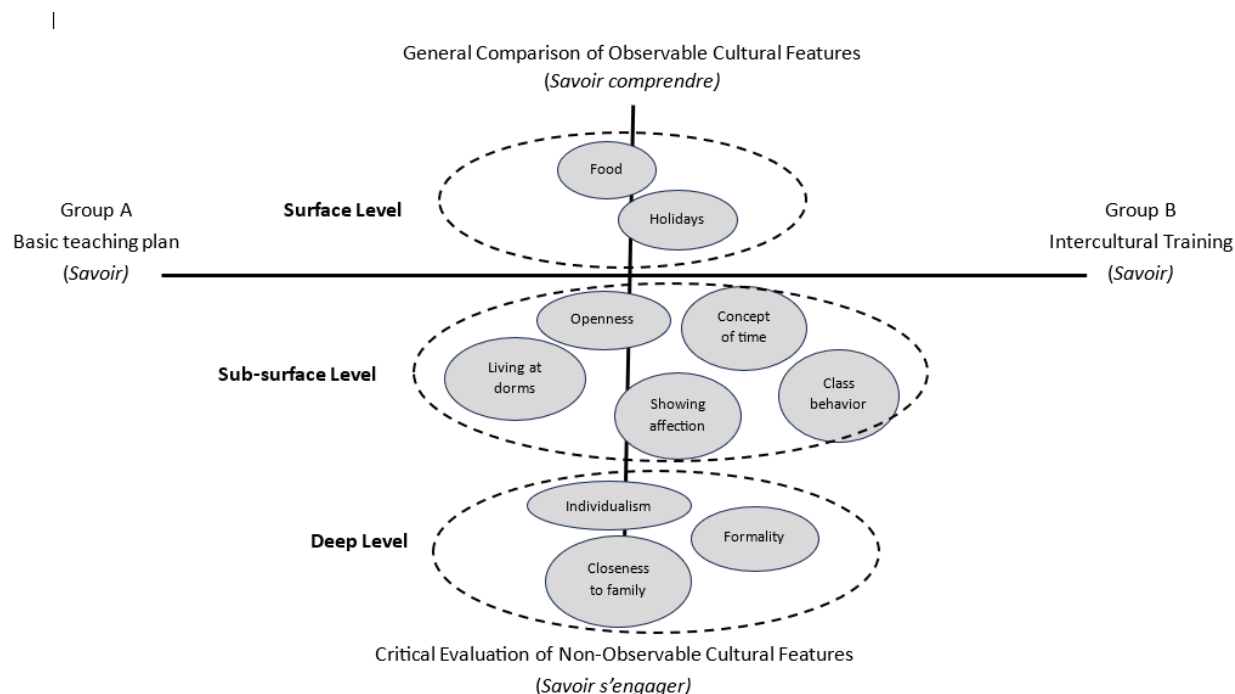
interpersonal relationships. It must be noted that responses in the same categories may be related to different codes. In the category of interpersonal relationships, which is part of the *deep culture level*, students in Group A mainly referred to both cultures sharing similar open and friendly styles of communications whereas those in Group B were more concerned with the lower importance of bonding with the family and showing affection in American culture.

The students who took part in the intercultural training were able to elaborate further on their individual analysis, by including a higher number of categories related to the sub-surface layer and deep layer of culture. These students talked about showing affection, the concept of time and class behavior, which are related to the sub-surface level. Moreover, they mentioned the age to start working (linked to individualism) and levels of formality (which relate to the deep level of culture). Hence, Group B's descriptions of behavioral features, formality, and individualism were not only more thorough, but they also tackled many categories of non-observable features that were neglected by those in Group A.

Figure 5 summarizes the topics found in each group's responses, highlighting the topics in common, the variation among the clusters of students of both groups, and the distribution of the categories according to the three levels of the culture. Figure 5 also shows that students in Group B were able to identify more non-observable features, which reflects a deeper analysis of cultural similarities and differences may be attributed to the IC training received before the language hence contributing to the development of intercultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*).

To conclude, a comprehensive study of this intercultural knowledge (*savoirs*) is essential to enhance students' cultural awareness, allowing them to be better prepared before virtual exchanges, and to have more meaningful experiences oriented to the development of their intercultural competence.

**Figure 5** Content Analysis of Student's Cultural Comparisons



The main study limitation is the sample size, of the sample since it includes a large number of students from the university's level English 4 courses, but only a fraction of the general student population. Hence, it is advised not only to replicate the research with a larger sample but also in other universities and with language learners of different cultural backgrounds and with different proficiency levels (e.g., beginner and upper-level courses) to compare the outcomes and assess their potential for generalizability potential. Adding other methods, such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, or classroom observations, would also provide rich qualitative data about students' experiences and perceptions.

## Conclusion

Virtual language exchanges can contribute to increasing the intercultural awareness and social-cultural knowledge of language students, but implementing an intercultural communication training prior to the virtual exchange will allow students to be better prepared and will provide a more

thorough understanding of cultural similarities and differences. In turn, students may develop intercultural awareness. To support an intercultural approach in language teaching, teachers and policy makers must understand how language and culture are intertwined in language use (Crozet et al., 1999). It is important to highlight that, in the context where the research was conducted, language teachers and the department heads were supportive of the virtual exchanges and intercultural communication training.

Language teachers can include virtual language exchanges into the curriculum to enrich interaction, communication with native speakers, and interpretation of behaviors and beliefs of the target culture (Zhou, 2023). For implementation, before having a virtual exchange focused on cultural topics, it is recommended to have a free conversation virtual exchange; that way, students are aware of the process. In the upper-level courses, to take advantage of the outcomes mentioned, students may have an initial exposure to cultural awareness using teaching materials and/or topics already included



in the syllabus, followed by ICT to foster more complex critical analysis and interactions.

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## Appendix A. Intercultural Communication Training

Cultural Values Discussed in Class	
<b>1. Personal control over the environment</b> People can determine the direction of their lives. <i>Contrasting value- FATE:</i> What happens in life is a result of a grand plan or destiny.	<b>2. Equality</b> The ideal of all people being created as equal. <i>Contrasting value- HIERARCHY, STATUS:</i> People roles are defined by their relationship to others.
<b>3. Control over time</b> People shouldn't waste time. They must be productive. <i>Contrasting value- TIME WALKS:</i> There is no need to feel so pressured. Take it easy!	<b>4. Informality</b> First name usage, casual clothes, and lack of formal rituals. <i>Contrasting value- FORMALITY:</i> Use of titles and last names.
<b>5. Individualism and Privacy</b> Individual needs are considered primary. <i>Contrasting value- GROUP ORIENTATION:</i> The individual sacrifices his/her needs to those of the group.	<b>6. Directness and honesty</b> People should express themselves openly. <i>Contrasting value- "SAVING FACE":</i> Consider others' feelings when deciding what to say.

## Appendix B. Survey Questionnaire: Spanish Version

**A. Scale of Agreement:** Totally agree / Agree / I am indifferent / Disagree / Totally disagree.

- Entiendo la diferencia entre características culturales y estereotipos.
- La palabra CULTURA se refiere a tradiciones, celebraciones e historia más que a valores.
- Mi identidad cultural no influye en mi percepción del mundo.
- La mayoría de las personas tienen ideas similares acerca de lo que está bien y lo que es correcto.
- El reconocimiento de mi propia identidad cultural es esencial para el buen aprendizaje.
- Considero que, para evitar malentendidos, debo tratar a otros de la misma manera que me gustaría ser tratado.
- Mi identidad cultural no afecta mi comunicación con otras personas.

- Cuando hablo con personas de otras culturas, debo considerar sus antecedentes.
- La puntualidad es importante en todas las culturas.
- La manera de conversar de las mujeres es diferente a la de los hombres.

**B. Scale of frequency:** Never / Rarely / Sometimes / Usually / Always

- Identifico muchas diferencias cuando comparo dos culturas diferentes
- Identifico muchas similitudes cuando comparo dos culturas diferentes
- Hablo de creencias, valores y tradiciones relacionadas con mi cultura.
- Me siento cómodo hablando con personas de otros países y culturas.

5. Cambio mi manera de hablar dependiendo de la persona con quién estoy hablando.
6. Noto que las personas de otras culturas usan un lenguaje corporal diferente al mío cuando hablan.
7. Motivation: ¿Qué te motiva a aprender inglés?
8. Viajar al extranjero.
9. Cumplir con los requerimientos de mi programa académico.
10. Conocer otras culturas.
11. Open-ended question:
12. ¿Qué diferencias y que similitudes pudiste identificar entre la cultura de los Estados Unidos y la tuya?

## Appendix C. Thematic Analysis

Group A				
ID	¿Qué diferencias/similitudes pudiste identificar entre la cultura de EE. UU. y la tuya?	Código	Categoría	Tema
25	Es un país multicultural, y abierto a otras etnias y culturas.	Cultural diversity	Values	Deep culture
14	Les gusta mucho la comida de otros países a diferencia de nosotros que si disfrutamos más nuestras propias raíces en la cocina.	Cultural knowledge	Attitudes	
9	Siento que son más similitudes que diferencias, ambas culturas mostraron interés por la otra e intención de participar, tal vez la única diferencia es que en mi cultura estamos más informados de los artistas de su cultura que viceversa.	Cultural knowledge (Colombian culture)		
24	Son más libres, viven solo y no son muy familiares ni muy apegados a ellos.	Family relationships	Values	
30	La diferencia que identifiqué fue que en Estados Unidos los jóvenes son más independientes de sus padres que en mi cultura. La similitud fue que los jóvenes de la cultura de los Estados Unidos y la mía nos gusta salir a fiestas.	Individualism, leisure	Values Attitudes	
55	No creo que exista gran diferencia cultural, hay más similitudes que diferencias. Nos gusta leer libros de fantasía y aventura, tenemos valores similares, amor y cariño a nuestras familias y amigos, nuestra idea de diversión y pasatiempo es casi la misma. I don't think there is a big cultural difference, there are more similarities than differences. / We like to read fantasy and adventure books, we have similar values, love and care for our families and friends, our idea of fun / hobby is almost the same.	Reading habits, values, closeness to family, free time activities.		
42	El humor es casi el mismo, debatimos sobre nuestros gustos deportivos.	Sense of humor	Attitudes	
13	Una diferencia es el estilo de vida independiente.	Lifestyle		
29	Pude observar que allá el deporte que más se practica es el baloncesto, mientras que en Colombia se le da más importancia al fútbol.	Popular sports		
6	Pues no mucha, era una persona extrovertida y divertido a la hora de hablar, pude notar que las costumbres cambiaban un poco del cómo vive su día a día para estudiar y trabajar. Pero para divertirse y estar en familia es algo que se ve en nuestro país. La concepción del mundo es relativamente casi igual por lo que fue una experiencia única.	Routine, world view		

Group A (continued)				
ID	¿Qué diferencias/similitudes pudiste identificar entre la cultura de EE. UU. y la tuya?	Código	Categoría	Tema
10	Diferencias: pronunciación, manera de vestir y hablar. Similitudes en gustos y creencias.	Pronunciation, ways of expressing yourself, clothing	Conversational patterns Ways of dressing	Sub-surface culture
8	La manera como se expresan al hablar es diferente a la de nosotros.	Ways of expressing yourself		
12	La forma de expresarse era diferente a la de nosotros.			
21	Encontré diferencias en la manera como se expresaba.			
36	La manera de expresarse es una diferencia.			
20	Pueden llegar a ser muy sociables y descomplicados como nosotros.	Informal communication		
1	Que son más reservados.	Openness		
11	La cultura de los Estados Unidos es más abierta e inclusiva, la chica con la que me comuniqué sentí que estaba más receptiva a la comunicación y el diálogo.			
52	Similitudes: somos muy amigables al relacionarnos por primera vez con una persona.			
61	La forma de hablar de ellos es más conservadora que mi cultura.			
28	Acá nosotros vamos a las universidades a estudiar mientras que en estados unidos se vive en la universidad a manera de internado.	Living at the university	Behavior	
33	La diferencia es que ellos están como tal durante todo el semestre en la Universidad, nosotros solo venimos por periodos diarios a la universidad.			
39	Que ellos viven en el campus universitario y nosotros no.			
43	La diferencia más marcada es que la mayoría de los estudiantes vive en el campus y acá eso es raro.			
16	Diferencias: el tono al hablar, el lenguaje corporal. Similitud: Preferencia en los deportes, hobbies, actitud.	Tone, body language, sports, routines/hobbies	Conversational patterns Attitudes	Sub-surface culture Deep culture
37	Diferencias en el sistema educativo, donde tradicionalmente viven en la universidad, ven alrededor de 4 clases. Similitudes en las clases que toman en las mismas carreras, pero en diferentes países.	Living at the dorm, undergraduate programs (UP)	Behavior Beliefs	
54	Los chicos viven en el campus de sus universidades, hay mucha variedad en las carreras universitarias, el intercambio intercultural es muy importante para ambas partes.	Living at the dorm, UP, cultural knowledge	Behavior Beliefs / attitudes	
35	Comen mucha pizza.	Food	Food	Surface culture
59	Las comidas, su pensamiento en lagunas cosas fueron diferencias y en similitudes algunos hobbies como hacer deporte de manera frecuente o que le gusta el fútbol son cosas que a mí también me gustan.	Food, worldview, hobbies	Food Attitudes	Surface culture Deep culture
19	Escuchan música diferente, la forma en cómo viven y sus hábitos.	Music, habits	Music Attitudes	
48	Relación musical y hábitos similares.			

Group A (continued)				
ID	¿Qué diferencias/similitudes pudiste identificar entre la cultura de EE. UU. y la tuya?	Código	Categoría	Tema
53	Los estudiantes de Miami viven en el campus, mientras en nuestra cultura no se hace.	Living at the dorm, weather	Weather Behavior	Surface culture Sub-surface culture
44	El clima es muy variado y frío, en cambio en Cartagena es caluroso. La diferencia de climas, de estaciones, la manera de estudiar.	Weather and ways of studying	Weather Belief	
51	Diferencias en el clima, la forma de dar sus clases y en similitudes que al ellos se les hace difícil el español, así como a nosotros se nos hace difícil el inglés.	Weather, teaching methods, second language learning	Weather Behavior Attitudes	Surface culture Sub-surface culture Deep culture
4	La forma de vida.	Does not specify similarity or difference		
7	La alegría y amabilidad.			
15	El amor por el estudio, y esa gentileza de preguntar por la familia, estudios, estilo de vida.			
18	Son demasiados sonrientes y siempre buscan de qué hablar			
26	Son muy buena gente, y demasiado amigables.			
27	Las expresiones faciales.			
31	Ellos suelen ser amigables y respetuosos.			
34	La manera de conversar y los temas.			
41	La manera de ver y entender las cosas			
49	La forma de relacionarse.			
50	La manera de expresarse.			
56	Algunos aspectos de su política y gobierno.			
57	La forma de hablar, es decir, son personas muy conversadoras y amigables.			
58	El idioma, costumbres alimenticias, los gustos en escritores, etc. El patriotismo es claro.			
60	Les interesa saber sobre la cultura en general y no tanto en ahondar en lo individual.			
62	Sus comidas, lo que les gustaba aprender y la manera como lo hacían.			
63	La comida, las actividades culturales y su forma de hablar y expresarse.			
64	Cuando hablamos de la política del país			
38	Son muy trabajadores.	Unclear response		
23	Diferencias: Ninguna / Similitudes: Todo normal.			
40	Corporalmente.			
32	La diferencia es que en Colombia, el vocabulario es más amplio que el de Estados Unidos. Por lo que el idioma español tiene muchísimas palabras con diferentes significados.			



Group B				
ID	¿Qué diferencias/similitudes pudiste identificar entre la cultura de EE.UU y la tuya?	Código	Categoría	Tema
11	En general, no solo de Estados Unidos se puede aprender esto, sino de todos los países y es que cada país tiene sus culturas y se deben de tener en cuenta a la hora de hablar y/o convivir con personas de allá. Pude aprender que las cosas allá son un poco diferentes a las de acá y diría que hasta mejores ya que la gente allá está educada de manera diferente...	Cultural awareness; education	Attitudes	Deep culture
21	En nuestra cultura siento como que somos mucho más apegados a la familia.	Closeness to family	Values	
54	Aprendí que en América el uso de apodos a otras personas no es muy común como lo es aquí en Colombia, también que a las personas se les reconoce con su título, por ejemplo, Doctor ... O profesor ... Aunque en algunas ocasiones si se tiene confianza no es mayor relevancia.	Formality and nicknames	Formality	
14	Que cuando a ellos los invitan a salir y no quieren ir solo dicen no gracias mientras nosotros sacamos escuchas y como similitudes pues que usamos mucho los saludos informales con amigos	Declining an invitation		
16	En la cultura de Estados Unidos es muy normal llamar a los profesores por su primer nombre, acá es más adecuado llamarlos “profesor/a”.	Formality (university)		
17	Los estudiantes normalmente llaman a sus profesores por título y su apellido			
26	Muchas similitudes con mi cultura excepto que llamas a los profes por su nombre			
47	En US llaman a los profesores de la misma manera que en mi cultura.			
62	El respeto hacia las autoridades y el sentido de pertenencia	Respect to authorities		
39	Son un poco serios a comparación de nosotros los colombianos	Seriousness		
50	Son más independientes: se habla y se trabaja más de manera individual cómo ser único; no tienen esa cultura de pasar momentos en familia y demás.	Individualism	Individualism	
49	Diferencias, que allá le dan mucha importancia a la salud mental con respecto acá. // Similitudes hay, pero no me acuerdo.	Perception of mental health	Individualism	
56	Se notan bastantes los avances en la cultura de Estados Unidos, aunque en algunas cosas siguen siendo muy cerrados.	Cultural change	Change	

Group B (continued)				
ID	¿Qué diferencias/similitudes pudiste identificar entre la cultura de EE.UU y la tuya?	Código	Categoría	Tema
60	Las personas no suelen crear vínculos fuertes.	Openness	Interpersonal relationships	Deep culture
1	Teníamos casi las mismas razones para aprender una nueva lengua.	Motivation to learn a language	Attitudes	
27	Que los jóvenes de allá trabajan desde más temprana edad y viven solos.	Age to start working / independence	Individualism	
3	Desde muy tempranos edad trabajan, a diferencia de nosotros que vivimos con nuestros padres.	Age to start working		
52	Ellos buscan la manera de relajarse y divertirse en vez de trabajar y estudiar más tiempo.	Free time, routine	Attitudes	
28	Son muy amantes a los deportes, les gusta estar con amigos.	Leisure (sports, friends)		
34	Una de las diferencias que encontré es en que ocupan su tiempo libre y una similitud algunas acciones de la vida cotidiana.	Free time activities, routines		
24	Desde las diferentes preferencias en cuanto a actividades físicas y escolares, hasta actitudes y cosas que pueden ser normales en su cultura y no tan comunes en la nuestra.	Routines, attitudes, what is considered normal		
43	La forma de pasar el tiempo con amigos, La escasez de frutas Similitud, la forma de llamar a los docentes.	Leisure activities; formality (university)	Attitudes Formality	
15	De la conversación que tuvimos no hallé ninguna diferencia, puesto que hablamos de temas triviales, pero es de conocimiento general de que los estadounidenses tienen una sociedad competitiva y muy consumista, llegando casi al extremo, algo que no se ve mucho en mi país.	Competition and consumerism (difference)	Materialism	
36	Encontré muchas diferencias en cuanto a los precios y la calidad de vida.	Quality of life	Values	
29	La edad en la que se gradúa de la escuela.	Graduation age	Values	
23	Ellos se encuentran en comunidad con las fraternidades en las universidades y nosotros no.	Fraternities	Interpersonal relationships	
66	La puntualidad.	Punctuality	Concept of time	Sub-surface culture
44	La diferencia es la demostración de emociones nosotros los colombianos somos más abiertos al demostrar sentimientos mientras que ellos son más reservados. // La similitud ...	Showing affection	Showing affection	

Group B (continued)				
ID	¿Qué diferencias/similitudes pudiste identificar entre la cultura de EE.UU y la tuya?	Código	Categoría	Tema
48	Diferencias sería la pronunciación, las culturas y similitudes es que son muy buena onda.	Pronunciation, friendliness	Conversational patterns	Sub-surface culture
5	La forma de hablar, el tono y la velocidad.	Ways of expressing yourself, tone, and pace		
2	La forma de gesticular al momento de hablar y como están compuestas sus universidades en comparación con la nuestra.	Ways of expressing yourself; how universities are constituted		
25	Tienen más libertad de usar el teléfono durante la clase.	Class behavior (university)	Behavior	
13	Similitud: la manera de poner apodos cariñosos. / Diferencia: en Estados Unidos, los estudiantes universitarios viven en el campus; en Colombia, eso no es usual.	Nicknames; living at the university	Behavior Formality	Sub-surface culture Deep culture
40	Que las personas de EE.UU son un poco más reservadas al comunicarse con otras personas, también les encanta trabajar desde muy jóvenes supongo para independizarse, la mayoría de las ocasiones son bastantes educados.	Openness to other people and age to start working	Conversation patterns Individualism	
20	Son más productivos, pero casi siempre igual de fiesteros.	Leisure; productivity	Concept of time Attitudes	
9	La forma de hacer, ver e interpretar las cosas era totalmente distinta, las costumbres y las acciones, las expresiones todo era diferente, pero la comunicación era similar, la forma de expresarse y de cómo hacían las cosas.	Customs and perceptions; ways of expressing yourself	Conversational patterns Attitudes / beliefs	
45	Una similitud es que no está prohibido sacar el celular durante las clases y que en Estados Unidos es común llamar a los demás por sus títulos al igual que en Colombia	Class behavior and formality	Class behavior Formality	
42	Diferencias: cómo son los estados cómo se clasifican. Similitudes: que nos gustan la misma fecha de celebridad [sic] que es la Navidad.	Geopolitics; holidays	Holidays	Surface culture
10	Que en su cultura no manejan la letra ñ.	Alphabet	Language	
12	Que la letra Ñ no es manejada para ellos.			

Group B (continued)				
ID	¿Qué diferencias/similitudes pudiste identificar entre la cultura de EE.UU y la tuya?	Código	Categoría	Tema
53	Suelen ser más “simples” o cómodos a la hora de vestirse.	Clothing	Way of dressing	Surface culture
55	Que en Estados Unidos hay 4 estaciones del clima, en Colombia solo hay dos.	Weather	Weather	
57	Diferencias: Clima // Similitudes: Comida Rápida.	Weather; Food	Food/Weather	
35	Comen cangrejos, al igual que en la costa colombiana.	Food	Food	
7	Diferencias: Las aplicaciones de chats para comunicarse, las festividades. Similitudes: Modales, entusiasmo.	Holidays, values, manners	Holidays Values	Surface culture Deep culture
33	Depende de donde y de qué zona sean las personas en cuestión, podríamos decir que una similitud es que nos encanta el Café ☕, al igual de que estamos gobernados bajo un régimen parecido por las personas que están en el poder. Las diferencias pueden variar desde como los afecta el clima hasta su manera de decir los nombres.	Food preferences, government, weather, and formality	Food Weather Formality	
37	Es muy similar celebrar la Navidad con los familiares. En cambio, cuando se trata compartir con familia fuera de las fechas especiales en Estados Unidos es mucho más frecuente que acá en Colombia.	Holidays (Christmas); family time outside holidays	Holidays Interpersonal relationships	
63	El transporte que utilizan para llegar a estudiar es similar al de nosotros y la forma en como nos dirigimos a las personas también, una de las diferencias que pude identificar fue en la gastronomía y un poco en la parte cultural.	Means of transportation, formality, food	Food Behavior Formality	Surface / Sub-surface & Deep culture
22	La expresión corporal y la manera de vestir.	Does not specify similarity or difference		
41	La forma de hablar, celebraciones entre otras.			
46	El hablar fácilmente de temas como, por ejemplo, un deporte en específico.			
58	Sobre la religión, creencias.			
61	La forma de organización y de aplicar las cosas.			
64	La comida.			
65	Los jóvenes buscan mejores opciones para su futuro ya sea en otro país o en el mismo.			

Group B (continued)				
ID	¿Qué diferencias/similitudes pudiste identificar entre la cultura de EE.UU y la tuya?	Código	Categoría	Tema
8	Muchas.	Unclear response		
38	Generalmente pocas, es una cultura totalmente diferente y de diferente perspectiva. Pero me cayó bien la persona por como es.			
19	No hablamos mucho de la cultura, pero me di cuenta que son personas amables y alegres.			
4	Una diferencia en su cultura es que toman las situaciones de manera formal.			
6	Hablan muy poco.			
30	En algunos pensamientos.			
32	Varias.			
31	La cultura de Estados Unidos es más organizada.			
51	Son muy organizados, inteligentes y dedicados.			
59	Al ser de edades muy parecidas no noté tanta diferencia.			

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