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**THE USE OF FACEBOOK TO PROMOTE KOREAN EFL LEARNERS'  
INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE**

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by

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## ABSTRACT

This study explored the use of the most famous Web 2.0 tool, Facebook, as a computer-mediated communication (CMC) in terms of developing Korean learners' intercultural competence (IC) in an EFL classroom at the Korea National University of Transportation in South Korea in collaboration with a classroom at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) in the United States in an intercultural communications, 15-week course during the Fall 2012 semester. The main purposes of this study were as following: (1) examine the effectiveness and pedagogical viability of using Facebook as a new CMC tool to develop learners' IC in the context of the EFL classroom, (2) present learners' views and perceptions of using a Facebook tool and their intercultural learning experiences to provide a more complete picture of the effectiveness of this course, and (3) offer empirical and practical information and guidance on implementing Facebook as a new pedagogical tool to develop IC into the classroom environment to inform and contribute to current EFL classroom practices. Korean students reported enriching, helpful, and rewarding intercultural learning experiences by interacting and communicating with speakers of target culture, American students, via Facebook as a new CMC tool. Additionally, students successfully developed the components of IC by showing many instances that fall well within Byram's (2000) assessment criteria, (1) interest in other people's way of life, (2) knowledge about another country and culture; (3) knowledge about the intercultural communication process; (4) the ability to cope with living in a different culture; and (5) the ability to change one's perspective, even though there were some degrees of differences in development and some conflicting results. In addition, with regard to learners' views and reactions, most of

Korean students considered their overall intercultural learning experiences using Facebook as positive and rewarding. Based on the findings that point to advantages and disadvantages of the course, some conflicting results concerning Korean learners' IC development, and some discovered areas of improvement for the course, this study presents beneficial and practical information and also offers suggestions for teachers and practitioners to promote IC by adopting the Web 2.0 tool, Facebook, into the EFL classroom. This study contributes to a greater understanding of how a Web 2.0 tool such as Facebook can be adopted to promote EFL learners' IC development in the classroom setting. To date, this is the first empirical study on using Facebook to develop learners' IC in L2 research within the CMC context. Findings suggest that the adoption of Facebook, along with carefully-designed tasks, is one new effective, efficient, realistic, and practical model to facilitate the development of IC in the EFL classroom. It is particularly meaningful and useful for foreign language learners who have no opportunity to study abroad and who have no contact with the target culture as Facebook can bring numerous new possibilities for such interactions into the EFL classroom.

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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

In a today's globalized world, intercultural encounters occur everywhere. Intercultural interactions and communication not only happen in neighborhoods, but also across national borders through mediated channels in every aspect of life, including business, work, play, school, travel, family, community, and politics (Lustig & Koester, 2006). Advances in technology have increased the speed of this global phenomenon even further. In particular, the introduction of new technology such as Web 2.0 has opened up various real-time communicative activities and interactions around the world and enables a wide range of "languages and cultures coexisting and interacting at various levels" on the Web (Elorza, 2008, p. 261). This changing environment has forced individuals from countries worldwide to become more involved with one another and fosters the idea of a unified global community ("Global Village," 2012). In fact, the term "Global Village" is often used to describe social spheres of interconnections on the Web that modern technologies have enabled (Lustig & Koester, 2006). This new world requires people from different cultural and linguistic groups to develop the "ability to relate to and communicate with people who speak a different language and live in a different cultural context" (Byram, 1997, p. 1). These circumstances have created a more urgent need for intercultural competence than ever before (Bok, 2009). This concept has been defined as the ability "to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Deardorff, 2008, p. 33).

Accordingly, intercultural competence has emerged as an important and critical issue in a variety of subject areas including business, engineering, social work, health

care, and mass media communication among others (Deardorff, 2008). It has also touched various educational fields, including language education, global education, and international education, which have started focusing on intercultural competence as a way “to develop ‘global-ready students’—whether through study abroad, service learning, integrated curriculum or extracurricular activities” (Deardorff, 2008, p. 32).

### **1.1.1 Intercultural Competence and Second Language Education**

In line with these developments, one educational area that has embraced the idea of intercultural competence in an educational setting actively is education in second and foreign languages. In fact, in the last 20 years, many leading L2 researchers have argued that the goal of language learning should not be communicative competence (a proposal originating in linguistics research in the 1970s that emphasizes communication rather than mastering language forms), but rather intercultural communicative competence (ICC) (Pegrum, 2008). This new approach is often called intercultural competence (IC) (Bikowski, 2011). The most commonly cited definition of intercultural competence (so forth, IC) in foreign language education comes from the studies of Byram and his colleagues (e.g., Byram, 1997; Byram & Fleming, 1998; Byram et al., 2001 as cited in Baker, 2011). They introduced the concept of the “intercultural speaker,” which refers to someone who has the “ability to interact with ‘others,’ to accept other perspectives and perceptions of the world, to mediate between different perspectives, to be conscious of their evaluations of difference” (Byram, Nichols, & Stevens, 2001, p. 5). Byram (1997) stated that “intercultural communicative competence” is a recent tradition in foreign language teaching, and Byram, Nichols, and Stevens (2001) mentioned that learners clearly need “both linguistic competence and intercultural competence” (p. 5). As such,

developing intercultural speakers is a major goal in second and foreign language education.

With regard to IC in the L2 context, computer-mediated language learning environments, which assist learners develop IC, has received significant attention in recent years (Stickler & Emke, 2011; Wang & Coleman, 2009). For example, Wang and Coleman (2009) mentioned that “Internet-mediated approaches are widely used to support intercultural learning” (p.113) and Stickler and Emke (2011) stated “the benefits of the use of computer-mediated-communication (CMC) for intercultural learning have become increasingly obvious” (p. 147). As such, technology enables real opportunities to integrate intercultural learning into the language curriculum (Helm, 2009); thus, the role of technologies for intercultural learning is now widely recognized (Stickler & Emke, 2011). Given the previous prevalent assumption that intensive intercultural learning is available only through experience abroad (Stickler & Emke, 2011), technology has brought an innovative and promising change in second and foreign language education. To date, technology has provided a wide range of CMC tools (e.g., email, chat, Web-based message boards, blogs, Twitter, and podcasting to name a few) to promote L2 learners’ development of IC. A great deal of existing empirical research has explored possible pedagogical practices for developing IC using these CMC tools and has led to positive intercultural learning outcomes (e.g., Borau, Ullrich, Feng, & Shen, 2009; Chun, 2011; Elola & Oskoz, 2008; Helm, 2009; Schuetze, 2008; Wang & Coleman, 2009; Wilcox, 2009).

Recently, with the advent of Web 2.0 technologies (e.g., wikis, blogs, podcasts, social networking sites and so on), it is now possible to engage in open, real-time, intense,

and richer interactions and communicative activities than ever before (Elorza, 2008). Thus, the online learning environment must have new dimensions to adopt these new promising possibilities (Lee, 2011b). In the current L2 literature, there has been an ongoing interest in using Web 2.0 tools to focus on IC, as well as language learning and online literacy within the context of telecollaboration (Guth & Helm, 2010). Although the majority of studies have adopted Web 1.0 technology (e.g., email, chat, and Web-based discussion boards), however, little research to date has been conducted using Web 2.0 tools (e.g., blogs, podcasts, and Twitter) for intercultural learning. Because the use of recent Web 2.0 technological tools is new and is a clearly emerging and expanding topic to develop learners' IC in L2 research, it requires further investigation. Thus, future research on exploring the potential and promise of Web 2.0 tools for intercultural learning is significant and timely. In the world's current configuration, research in this area is expected to make meaningful and significant contributions to this field.

### **1.1.2 Facebook**

Among various Web 2.0 technological tools, social networking sites (SNS), such as Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, and Twitter have exploded in popularity, with each now boasting hundreds of millions of users. Social networking technology has introduced a fundamental change in communication and interaction among people, as well as the ways individuals access, share, and create ideas, knowledge, and information (Lee, 2009; Ajjan & Hartshorne, 2008; Dearstyne, 2007; Maloney, 2007; Robbie & Zeeng, 2008 as cited in Teclehaimanot & Hickman, 2011). In brief, SNS allow users to create personal spaces for online conversations, interactions, and content-sharing with friends, family, and others with similar interests (Selwyn, 2009; Stutzman, 2006; Teclehaimanot &

Hickman, 2011). Thus, with such tools, people are able to share their knowledge, experiences, feelings, and thoughts by interacting with people around the world in online environments (Soars, 2008).

Facebook is currently the leading social networking site with more than 750 million users and is considered the most popular platform among university students (Kabilan, Ahmad, & Abidin, 2010). In addition, Facebook is becoming a global Web site and the largest multilingual social networking site on the Internet ("Digitalbuzz," 2011) with an active user base of 100 million people that is available in 70 languages and 70 translations. Indeed, approximately 70% of Facebook users reside outside the United States (Facebook, 2011). The platform has also attracted the attention of many L2 researchers and educators in terms of its potential use in L2 pedagogy (e.g., Blattner & Fiori, 2009; McBride, 2009; Reinhardt & Zander, 2011; Stevenson & Liu, 2010). Research has increased, therefore, on the pedagogical possibilities and viability of Facebook in L2 learning in formal educational settings (e.g., Blattner & Fiori, 2009; Kabilan et al., 2010; Reinhardt & Zander, 2011). For example, Blattner and Fiori (2009) examined the possibilities and promises of using Facebook in L2 classrooms, highlighting the fact that Facebook offers a place for authentic language interactions and constructive educational experiences. In addition, Facebook can be conceived as a possible place for learning linguistic and cultural knowledge, resulting in L2 learners' intercultural and linguistic competence (cf. Lee, 2009; Sykes, Oskoz, & Thorne, 2008).

Because Facebook may offer great promise for L2 education, and its use in L2 learning is only beginning to emerge in the current literature, there is a pressing need for research to build theoretical and empirical foundations to incorporate and implement new

media such as Facebook into current L2 pedagogy. To date, few empirical studies on Facebook use in L2 classroom have been conducted and little information exists on what aspects of L2 learning, such as writing or reading skills, can be promoted by using Facebook. In particular, as of yet, no efforts have examined how to promote learners' IC—increasingly viewed as the main goal of today's L2 education—through using Facebook.

## **1.2 Research Context**

Considering the links between technology and IC, it is critical to investigate the regions in which promoting global-ready intercultural speakers is spotlighted and where technology use is highly advanced. South Korea might be considered one of those nations.

The wave of globalization is significant for understanding the EFL educational context in Korea. Considering the reality that English has become a lingua franca and is an essential communication tool in many parts of today's globalized world (Crystal, 2003), English proficiency has become considered “the quintessential tool for South Koreans to be globalized, and more generally, for economic advancement” (Lee, 2011a, pp. 48-49). Indeed, a good command of English is considered to be a crucial factor for national competitiveness in the global market in Korea (Kim, 2010). Therefore, at the government level, huge and costly efforts have been undertaken, such as “heavy governmental funding for a national EFL program, including curriculum development, teacher training, and education technology” (Jung & Norton, 2002; cited in Lee, 2011a, p. 49), to encourage Koreans to become equipped with proficient English skills. Since Korea's second national curriculum, which was announced in 1963, English has been the most prominent foreign language taught at schools, has been considered a very important

school subject, and played a big part in the college entrance examination (Shim and Baik, 2000; Yoo, 2005; cited in Ahn, 2011).

More recently, English proficiency has become “a powerful means to gain social prestige and personal, professional, and economic success” (Ahn, 2011, p. 691). Accordingly, in addition to public EFL education, individual interest and investments in Korea are increasingly focused on becoming fluent in English in the private education industry and overseas study and training (Ahn, 2011). Such interest clearly indicates that, through English, Korea can compete not only for more economic power in the era of globalization, but also for individual professional and financial success (Lee, 2011a). This realization has resulted in overwhelmingly celebratory promotion of EFL education as a tool for success on both the national and personal levels in Korea.

The emphasis on the importance of communication skills in English and authentic language use resulted in the latest national curriculum focusing on “developing learners’ communicative competence” rather than grammar and translation (Ahn, 2011, p. 692). Furthermore, experts are calling for the advocating of concepts such as “the multi-competence of learners (Belz 2002; Cook 1991, 1999) and L2 learners as intercultural speakers (Kramsch 1998)” while criticizing the monolithic view of native speakers as a model for Korean EFL education (Ahn, 2011, p. 692). As such, Korean EFL education has started promoting Korean learners as intercultural speakers and globally competent students given the reality of multilingual and multicultural societies.

Meanwhile, Korea has a well-established, highly developed information technology (IT) infrastructure (Kim, 2010) and is regarded as “among the world’s most technologically advanced and digitally connected countries” (Lim & Meier, 2011, p. 576).

Among OECD countries, South Korea has been in the top ranks with regard to its historical broadband penetration rates and households with broadband access (Lim & Meier, 2011). As a result of these strengths, Korea is emerging as one of the global leaders in the fields of information and communication technology (Ahn, 2009).

As with technological development, E-learning has been actively encouraged and adopted (Bonk, 2004) as a way of “an innovative tool to bring pedagogical changes to conventional education” in Korea (Jung, 2011, p. 450). Additionally, Korea is quite familiar with Web 2.0 technology, particularly with social networking technology. Korea supports the most popular social networking Web site named “Cyworld,” the Korean equivalent of “MySpace” or “Facebook,” with nearly half of the nation’s population of 49 million participating (Jacobs, 2006 as cited in Lim & Meier, 2011). In addition to Cyworld, currently 7.1 million Koreans use Facebook, accounting for 14.79 % of the nation’s population; this means Korea ranks 26 among all Facebook users by country (“South Korea Facebook Statistics,” 2012). Clearly Korean people are well familiarized with social networking sites, and Facebook use is popular in Korea. Given this drive, a growing awareness of Web 2.0 technologies (or social media) and their new technological functions has resulted, generating their increased recognition as a pedagogical tool for educators in Korea (Kang, Bonk, & Kim, 2011). However, the adoption of Web 2.0 technology as a new language-learning environment is still in its early stages, but it is increasingly emerging and expanding. Facebook’s use as a pedagogical tool for EFL learning has not yet been researched in Korea’s EFL educational context.

In summary, the zeal for English education in Korea is significant and is

supported by the government, educators, and parents. The increasing interest in developing Korean learners as globally competent intercultural speakers (Ahn, 2011) in addition to Korea's highly developed technology and online learning environment has led to growing recognition of Web 2.0 technology as a pedagogical tool for a communicative learning environment. In this respect, as the current study explored Korea as an investigation site, focusing on the educational use of Facebook to develop learners' IC, it made important practical contributions to improving Korean EFL pedagogy. Importantly, many of the studies on Facebook have only looked at college students in the United States. Because Facebook enables boundless social interactions across languages, people, cultures, and countries, it is important to investigate the possible benefits of Facebook use for students outside the U.S., such as English language learners in non-English-speaking countries such as South Korea. It is particularly important to consider such learners are developing IC, because the prevalent assumption is that successful intercultural learning is only possible through study abroad programs, actual contact, or face-to-face interactions with a target culture and language.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

As discussed, it is well recognized that developing learners' IC is a major goal in English as a second language (ESL) and EFL instruction. In addition, the emphasis on IC has become increasingly significant due to today's more globalized and interconnected world and rapid technological advances. As such ESL/EFL learners are being increasingly exposed to intercultural communication in both online environments and through face-to-face interactions. Despite the importance of IC, current L2 research reveals that there have been remarkably few empirical studies investigating how IC has

translated into practice and realized in the classroom. Indeed, there is a high demand for a practical understanding and information in this domain (i.e., teaching methods and instructional skills and strategies) for effective and successful IC development in the classroom. The critical need exists, therefore, for an inquiry into how IC can be realized and put into practice in the classroom.

In this respect, it is worthy to note that advances in technology start to play a critical role in intercultural learning when they enable worldwide online interactions and communication without time and space constraints. They are also important when they modify learning environments, such as providing technological teaching tools (e.g., CMC tools) for integration into L2 instruction. Accordingly, the current literature has focused increasingly on using technology to inform intercultural teaching and learning (e.g., telecollaboration) and on expanding empirical research on technology use, such as adopting CMC tools to develop learners' IC. This indicates that applying technological tools to develop learners' IC has led to positive intercultural learning outcomes. In addition, existing L2 research on IC in the CMC context shows that whereas the majority of studies have adopted Web 1.0 technology (e.g., email, chat, and web-based discussion boards), little research has been conducted using recent Web 2.0 tools (e.g., blogs, podcasts, and Twitter) for intercultural learning. In particular, even though Facebook, the most famous Web 2.0 tool, has great promise and possibilities in L2 learning, no empirical research has focused on developing learners' IC through Facebook. There is a need for research to build theoretical and empirical bases for incorporating and implementing new media such as Facebook into current pedagogy.

In this respect, because the potential of a Web 2.0 tool, Facebook, for intercultural

learning has been underexplored and requires further investigation in current literature, this study explored the educational possibilities of using Facebook to develop learners' IC using a classroom-based telecollaborative project between the U.S. and Korea. Telecollaboration is "an approach to intercultural learning that uses Internet technology as a tool to facilitate intercultural communication between classes of learners in different countries" (Helm, 2009, p. 91). This paper examined what learners' gain by using Facebook (in terms of IC) by participating in telecollaboration projects. In particular, the present research examined Korean EFL learners' IC development in a university EFL classroom in South Korea, where there is huge interest in English education; where intercultural speakers have been promoted; where Internet technology is highly advanced; and where most people are familiar with social network technology.

#### **1.4 Purpose of the Study**

This study investigated how learners develop IC by implementing a technological tool (e.g., the CMC tool) in classroom settings and met the critical need in the current literature to provide practical findings on developing IC that can inform actual L2 classroom pedagogy. As such, this study explored the effectiveness of the most famous Web 2.0 tool, Facebook, on developing Korean EFL learners' IC as it was applied in EFL classrooms at the Korea National University of Transportation in South Korea with a collaboration with health communication classroom at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) in the U.S for intercultural communication for 15 weeks in a fall 2012 course. The course of health communication at IUPUI aimed to develop students' communication skills and practical skills in designing public health campaigns by analyzing a target audience, South Korea, using Facebook as a CMC tool. This course

joined this research for the purpose of interaction with Korean students to learn Korean cultural backgrounds and promoted their communication skills. Further detail on both sites of research will be elaborated in Chapter 4. Methodology.

This research had several aims. First, this research was intended to examine the pedagogical viability of using Facebook as a new CMC tool to develop learners' IC in the context of the EFL classroom. As described in the current literature, various CMC tools have been employed for intercultural learning and have been shown to lead to positive outcomes. Facebook was selected for this study because of its worldwide popularity, and there is increased research on the pedagogical possibilities and viability of Facebook in L2 learning. Facebook can be conceived as a possible place for learning linguistic and cultural knowledge, resulting in L2 learners' intercultural and linguistic competence (cf. Lee, 2009; Sykes et al., 2008). To date, this is the first research on using Facebook to develop learners' IC in L2 research.

Second, this research was designed to initiate practical guidance on implementing technology, specifically Web 2.0 Facebook, into classroom environments under the curriculum system. In the current literature with regard to IC development, there is a severe lack of research offering practical information on how IC can be implemented in classroom settings. Given that there has been a significant increase in interest in applying technology to support intercultural teaching and learning in L2 practice, this research seeks to build practical foundations and reveal evidence to support adopting a technological tool, Facebook, for developing IC in classroom settings. Such foundations will help inform how the tool can be put into practice, as well as develop new and improved pedagogy suitable for the curriculum system.

This research study also seeks to contribute to knowledge that will inform educators, researchers, practitioners, policy makers, and other stakeholders in the education process who seek to enhance learners' IC in today's classrooms.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

The intent of this investigation was to explore the educational possibilities of Facebook with regard to promoting Korean EFL learners' IC and to offer practical guidance of Facebook use as a form of a computer-mediated language learning environment and a new pedagogical tool in the classroom setting.

Therefore, the guiding questions this study sought to answer were:

- Q. In what ways/ to what extent does using Facebook as a CMC tool between students in Korea and the U.S promote Korean EFL learners' development of IC?
- Q. How do learners view the effectiveness of using Facebook (CMC tool) for intercultural learning?
- Q. How can the instructional practices of using Facebook for developing learners' IC be approached and realized in an actual EFL classroom?

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

This research started by recognizing the importance and value of IC in the ESL/EFL classroom. It also addressed the critical lack of studies dealing with practical applications and of empirical research that has assisted pedagogical practices for promoting IC. Because this study examined the ongoing topic of developing EFL learners' IC and adopting Web 2.0 technology (e.g. Facebook as a CMC tool), which is also an emerging and expanding methodology for intercultural learning in the current L2

literature, this study also helped fill the gap for practical applications of such research. The benefits of this study also included a greater understanding of how a Web 2.0 tool, Facebook, can be adopted to promote EFL learners' IC development and how it can inform and contribute to current EFL classroom practices with regard to IC. In addition, noticing Facebook's great promise and possibilities in L2 learning, researchers are becoming increasingly interested in exploring its effectiveness on L2 learning to develop new, innovative, and improved pedagogy. In this sense, because no empirical research has examined how learners develop IC through Facebook, this study that investigated how Facebook can be used to promote learners' IC yielded beneficial information for pedagogical practice and helped to develop more effective and efficient intercultural teaching and learning in the classroom. For example, this research suggests useful implications and direction for incorporating new media such as Facebook that can help EFL learners become competent intercultural speakers. Importantly, it is significant to investigate the possible benefits of Facebook use for Korean EFL learners who are English-language learners in non-English-speaking countries. As discussed above, the prevalent assumption of successful intercultural learning is that it is only possible through study abroad programs, actual contact, or face-to-face interactions with a target culture and language. This study with Korean EFL learners aimed at developing IC through Facebook use showed much promise for developing ways to promote IC in the classroom without face-to-face interaction or immersion experience with a target culture although there was actual contact only mediated by the technology and provided further insights into the use of CMC tools to support intercultural learning.

## **1.7 Organization of the Study**

This study begins with this first chapter, Introduction, which includes the study's background, research context, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions and the study's significance. It presents brief backgrounds on using Facebook to promote Korean EFL learners' IC to develop an understanding of this study; its importance in the current literature; and the possible role this study plays in EFL/ESL educational settings. The next two chapters review the current literature on IC in second/foreign language education, sociocultural theory, IC and technology, and Facebook research in second/foreign language education. These areas are examined critically as they relate to the study and to gain a better sense of situating this research within the current literature. The fourth chapter offers a detailed description of the methodology, including the research questions, the concept of virtual ethnography, study method, data collection, procedures, data analysis, and validity. This chapter elaborates how this research explored how using Facebook was leveraged to promote Korean EFL learners' IC. The fifth chapter reports findings of this study regarding how Korean learners developed IC throughout the course that implemented Facebook as a CMC tool. This chapter closely examines the pedagogical viability of using Facebook as a new CMC tool to offer Korean learners the opportunities of intercultural communication between two cultures and also to develop Korean learners' IC in the context of the EFL classroom. In addition, the sixth chapter also presents the empirical findings related to the adoption of a Web 2.0 tool, Facebook, to develop Korean EFL learners' IC in the classroom setting to provide useful and practical information and contribute to current EFL classroom practices. This chapter firstly explores students' perceptions of and

reactions to the use of Facebook (a CMC tool) and the effectiveness of this course for their intercultural learning experiences to reveal a broad picture of the learners' overall perspectives and reactions regarding this course's experiences. And next, it investigates the beneficial and challenging aspects of using Facebook as a new CMC tool to develop learners' IC in this course, and examines how it can improve instructional practices that would be realized in future EFL courses. Lastly, the final chapter evaluates and elaborates on the extent to which the results of this study can answer each of three main research questions that promoted this study and presents additional discussion. In addition, it offers pedagogical implications that this study can inform useful and practical guidelines for teachers and practitioners who are interested in using Facebook in their future practices. This study's limitations are then identified, with suggestions for what is needed in terms of future studies. Finally, this research study is brought to a close through the presentation of this study's conclusion.

## **CHAPTER 2. SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN L2 EDUCATION**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Chapter two and three offer literature review that is designed to provide background to support the basis, design, and rationale for this study as well as create a framework for understanding the current study. Accordingly, these two chapters aim to provide the reader with a clear understanding of the current state of L2 research with regard to IC and the use of computer-mediated language learning environments for promoting L2 learners' IC to determine how IC has been discussed, conceptualized, and implemented in current L2 pedagogy. In particular, as the current study focuses on Facebook as a CMC tool for intercultural learning, the review explores the growing interest in the educational viability and value of Facebook. Furthermore, it offers a theoretical approach—namely, sociocultural theory (SCT)—to conceptualize this study's contributions to learning. It indicates sociocultural theory is appropriate for understanding IC development through the use of Facebook because Facebook is regarded as a promising new online learning environment that promotes various opportunities for social interaction and collaboration, which are the key foundation for development in SCT as well as learners' participation in these new practices might provide the foundation for IC development, which cannot be obtained solely through individual work but requires interaction and collaboration.

Thus, in chapter two, the first part critically examines the relevant research with regard to IC in second/foreign language education while the next part explores sociocultural theory centered on and guiding the direction of this study. The following

chapter three then critically reviews literature related to developing IC through technology in L2 practice as well as emerging Facebook research in second/foreign language education.

## **2.2 Intercultural Competence and Second/Foreign Language Education**

Given the importance of IC is becoming crucial in SL and FL education, this section presents a critical literature review of work on both conceptual and empirical works to see how IC has been discussed, conceptualized and implemented in ESL/EFL. Setting order to have a clear understanding of the current state of research in this field.

### **2.2.1 Intercultural Competence**

Before moving on to a critical literature review, it is essential and meaningful to understand and define the term *intercultural competence* (IC) since there are a number of definitions for this term and still some disagreement among scholars (Lustig & Koester, 2006). Accordingly, for clarification, I would like to provide some of the more common definitions, along with *a model of intercultural competence* (IC) in foreign language teaching, which was adopted in this study.

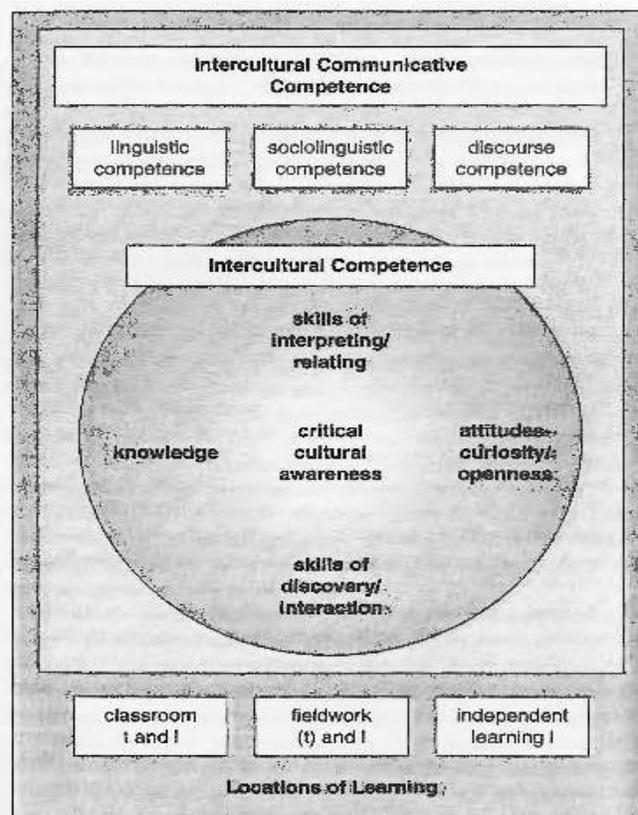
While there is a great deal of discussion and even disagreement regarding the meaning of IC, Deardorff (2008) developed a noteworthy definition of IC that generated the first consensus on the meaning of IC among leading intercultural scholars and experts. This definition is meaningful because there had been no consensus on the definition of IC among experts over 30 years of scholarly work before this study (Deardorff, 2008). According to Deardorff (2008), the definition that received the highest rate of agreement from the top intercultural experts and scholars described IC as “the ability to

communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Deardorff, 2008, p. 33).

In addition, among numerous definitions of IC in a variety of research fields, the studies of Byram and his colleagues on intercultural communicative competence have offered one of the most comprehensive and precise accounts of IC in the context of foreign language teaching (e.g., Byram, 1997; Byram & Fleming, 1998; Byram, Nichols, & Stevens, 2001; cited in Baker, 2011). Their studies introduced the concept of the 'intercultural speaker,' which refers to someone who has "an ability to interact with 'others,' to accept other perspectives and perceptions of the world, to mediate between different perspectives, [and] to be conscious of their evaluations of difference" as a substitute for the native speaker developed in the field of foreign language education (Byram et al., 2001, p. 5). By introducing the notion of the intercultural speaker, the idea of "imitating the native speaker as a basis for teaching linguistic competence" has been challenged and the focus is now on 'knowing how,' which includes "knowing about a country and knowing how to interact with people with different ways of thinking, believing, and behaving" (Byram, 2009, p. 321). Therefore, learners can "see their role not as imitators of native speakers but as social actors engaging with other social actors in a particular kind of communication and interaction which is different from that between native speakers" (Byram, 1997, p. 21).

The model of IC offered by Byram (1997) has been widely cited, used, and also discussed with regard to its implication for educators, students, and education administrators in foreign language teaching (Byram, 2009). There are five key components of the model of IC (see Table 1): 1) knowledge of social groups and their

products and practices in both one's own and others' cultures; 2) intercultural attitudes, such as curiosity, openness, and readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and beliefs about one's own culture; 3) skills of interpreting and relating, which enable one to interpret a document and events from other cultures; and relate those interpretations to one's own culture and experiences, 4) skills of discovery and interaction, which enables new cultural knowledge acquisition, and procedural application of knowledge in real-time communication and interactions; and 5) 'critical cultural awareness,' which is defined as "an ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries" (Byram et al., 2001, p. 7).



**Table 1. A Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence**

This model describes the primary attributes of IC as well intercultural speakers' abilities, such as what they can do and what knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need for successful intercultural interactions (Byram, 2009). In addition, the components of the model serve as representative teaching goals (Byram, 1997) and provide a framework for specifying “‘objectives’ that can be used in planning teaching and assessment.” Thus, this model can aid language teachers in planning their instruction more intentionally “to include intercultural competence in their pedagogical aims”(Byram, 2009, p. 324)—more specifically, “to include objectives, materials, and methods that develop the specific elements of intercultural competence” (Byram, 2009, p. 331). In addition, the model can be used analytically, “to determine the presence or absence of subcompetences, and thence to predict the success or failure of individuals in intercultural interaction” (Byram, 2009, p. 326).

However, the model does not describe the “relations among the subcompetences within intercultural competences,” nor does it address “a didactic ordering of which aspects of which competences should be taught prior to others”(Byram, 2009, p. 325). In addition, the specifications of the intercultural speaker are not exhaustive, and there is “no definition of levels or degrees of ability, knowledge, and attitudes, of stages on the way to perfection” (Byram, 2009, p. 325). In this respect, with regard to using of model for teaching and assessing, the model has limitations and can be considered “a prescriptive model for the guidance of teaching and assessment.” Therefore, the model prescribes “what teachers should attempt to develop in their learners” and “a moral position on evaluation and judgment” (Byram, 2009, p. 325).

## **2.2.2 Intercultural Competence Development in Second/Foreign Language Education**

There has been a noticeable paradigm shift in second (SL) and foreign language (FL) education (e.g., Álvarez, 2007; Pegrum, 2008). Hymes (1972) notion of communicative competence (CC) has been a primary approach for nearly three decades in language teaching and learning (Aguilar, 2009). However, this approach is criticized for its idealized and monolingual native-speaker norms in that it only assumes a monolithic perception of language and culture and fails to reflect the existence of diverse languages and cultures and to meet the need for IC skills (Alptekin, 2002). In response to the need to go beyond mere CC, Byram (1991) and Kramsch (1993) developed the ICC concept, which involves “awareness of different values and behaviors of the others as well as skills to deal with them in a non-judgmental way” (Hismanoglu, 2011, p. 805) and has been taking place since the beginning of the 1990s (Forsman, 2010). In this approach, the focus is on ‘knowing how,’ which means “knowing about a country and knowing how to interact with people with different ways of thinking, believing, and behaving” (Byram, 2009, p. 321). Also, Byram (2000) proposed the concept of the intercultural speaker as an alternative model for language learners—namely, developing learners who have “the ability to interact effectively with people with different cultures other than one’s own” (Byram, 2000, p. 297). From the viewpoint of IC, language learners are encouraged to “see their role not as imitators of native speakers but as social actors engaging with other social actors in a particular kind of communication and interaction which is different from that between native speakers” (Byram, 1997, p. 21) and to “be successful not only in communicating information, but also in developing a

human relationship with people of other languages and cultures” (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002, p. 4). That is, IC has emerged as a major new influential and alternative approach in L2 education. Additionally, Eaton (2010) discussed how the focus of 21<sup>st</sup> global language learning trends is now on “using language and cultural knowledge as a means to communicate and connect to others around the globe” instead of the old traditional, ‘teacher-centered’ approach emphasizing grammar, memorization, and learning from rote (p. 5). In addition, Álvarez (2007) offered cross-cultural approaches that “focus on all aspects of communication across cultures, and in all kinds of situations (e.g. lingua franca encounters; interaction with different ethnic groups)” (p. 127).

As such, IC development is central to SL and FL learners (Chun, 2011). However, for this development to occur, scholars and practitioners need to pay greater attention to the role of culture in L2 education, particularly related to language. It has been argued that “the cultural component of language teaching and learning should be strengthened in order to gain a deeper understanding of other cultures” (“Education in a Multilingual World,” 2003, p. 30). Along these same lines, Kramsch (1993) argued that language and culture are inseparable constructs and cannot be learned individually. Similarly, the 2006 document of ‘the standards for foreign language learning’ argued that FL learning should reflect the fact that language is used in the context of various social activities and is used by culturally diverse people around the globe (ACTFL, 2006). Zoreda and Revilla (2003) further stated that current EFL teaching should “overcome exclusively linguistic goals in order to include the intercultural study of the cultural communities formed by the peoples that speak English,” and they stressed that “not only linguistic but also cultural competence in foreign language study has also been expressed by national, regional, and

international educational policy statements” (p. 3). Wang and Coleman (2009) also mentioned that in many countries, the learning outcomes of foreign language courses now include IC. As such, “the process of ‘intercultural learning’ and its implied goal ‘intercultural competence’” (Grosch & Leenan, 1998; cited in O’Dowd, 2003, p. 119) have gained mainstream popularity in current L2 pedagogy.

In order to better understand the ongoing interest in IC in language learning, in the following sections, I would like to review research discussing how IC was conceptualized and promoted in SL and FL context, particularly with the focus on ESL/EFL classroom settings. For this review, the relevant research is divided into two categories: 1) studies that propose conceptual arguments for the importance and implementation of IC in the classrooms and 2) studies that empirically investigate the promotion of IC in the classroom.

#### **2.2.2.1 Conceptual L2 Research on Intercultural Competence**

After the introduction of the new IC approach, there has been a great deal of work outlining the importance of and need for IC in language education (e.g., Aguilar, 2009; Alptekin, 2002; Bennett & Salonen, 2007; Byram, 1997; Byram et al., 2002; Byram et al., 2001; Elorza, 2008; Sellami, 2000). For example, in favor of applying intercultural learning and teaching in the ESL/EFL classroom, Alptekin (2002) criticized the current pedagogic native speaker-based communicative competence model as being utopian, unrealistic, and constraining in relation to English as an international language and stressed that language learners should be equipped with linguistic and cultural behavior in order to communicate effectively with others. Sellami (2000) also doubted the effectiveness of the current situation of cultural teaching in foreign language education

and argued that the goal of cultural teaching should be to develop IC that leads to “empathy, openness, and understanding vis-à-vis the target culture and its people” (p. 2). In line with this, Bennett and Salonen (2007) emphasized the growing global focus on developing interculturally competent students and Baker (2011) argues that the use of English should consider the global context and “the concept of intercultural competence in relation to foreign language studies and applied linguistics needs to be expanded to meet the realities of English used as a global lingua Franca” (p. 198). As such, the importance of IC in language learning is emphasized in the fields of SL and FL education (Chun, 2011).

Among numerous works, the most famous scholar of IC in language learning is Byram, who also developed the IC approach. He and his colleagues have made significant contributions in the area of IC in foreign language education. For example, Byram’s (1997) work defined and gave a detailed account of IC and introduced a model of IC that has been widely cited, employed in empirical research, and discussed with regard to its implication in foreign language teaching (Byram, 2009). In addition to establishing a theoretical framework, Byram’s (1997) work offered teaching goals and objectives and provided a framework for planning teaching and assessments based on the IC model, which can be a practical guide for L2 pedagogy.

In addition, in order to advance theoretical discussions, Byram et al.’s (2001) book provided studies on how IC can be realized inside and outside of the classroom to share IC practice by describing and reflecting on teachers’ attempts to implement IC. As Byram et al. (2001) described, instead of presenting successful examples of IC practice that can be copied, they provided a forum for reflection on the experience and practice of

learning and teaching and intended to inspire and provide support for those developing lessons in the IC field. While Byram et al.'s (2001) work introduced a variety of practical approaches, it remains at the introductory level, showing examples and sharing experiences. That is, Byram et al.'s (2001) work provided practical examples and an introduction for teachers but failed to generate a successful and effective model to inform general intercultural teaching and learning.

In addition, Byram et al.'s (2002) work gave clear answers to frequently asked questions from L2 teachers with regard to developing IC in language education, ranging from the definition of concept to teaching materials and methods, assessment approaches, and ways to overcome teachers' own stereotypes and misconceptions as well as deal with learners. This work provides useful information for L2 practitioners to prepare and design their own classroom, but it is preliminary and does not provide specific approaches or skills on how to develop IC.

While these two works provide introductory practical guidance for developing the intercultural dimension in language teaching, there is still lack of effective and successful teaching methods and approaches implement IC in L2 practice. For example, It is noted that Byram's (1997) model "lacks detail on how to operationalize the objectives in classroom[s]" (Liddicoat, 2004; cited in Wang & Coleman, 2009, p. 115) and does not describe the "relations among the sub-competencies within intercultural competences" nor the "didactic ordering of which aspects of which competences should be taught prior to others" (Byram, 2009, p. 325). Thus, it is rather 'a prescriptive model' that describes "what teachers should attempt to develop in their learners" and should be used as a guide for teaching and assessment (Byram, 2009, p. 325). In addition, objectives offered in

Byram (1997) are criticized as ambitious and unattainable. In particular, the objectives for ‘real-time interactions’ is unachievable in the U.S. context because U.S. students have fewer opportunities to have extensive contact with speakers of target languages outside of the European context (Schulz, 2007). In addition, according to Schulz (2007), Byram’s model has “no agreement on how culture should be defined operationally in the context of the foreign language curriculum in terms of concrete instructional objectives” (p. 9). All of these assertions signify that there is a severe lack of information on how IC can actually be implemented in the classroom and that there is an urgent need in current pedagogy for explicit and applicable IC objectives and concepts.

I now turn to research that empirically investigates the promotion of IC in the ESL/ EFL classroom in the current literature.

#### **2.2.2.2 Empirical Examination of Intercultural Competence in the ESL/EFL**

##### **Classroom**

As noted, the ongoing and growing interest in IC has generated a great deal of literature on the topic of the promotion of IC (e.g., Alptekin, 2002; Bennett & Salonen, 2007; Byram, 1997, 2009; Göbel & Helmke, 2010; Sellami, 2000). In addition, a considerable amount of literature includes suggestions for IC-related instructional goals or objectives, as well as types of conceptualizations to promote IC in the classroom (Byram, 1989, 1997; Göbel & Helmke, 2010; Göbel & Hesse, 2004; Sehlaoui, 2010). In terms of the promoting IC, Byram (1989) suggested three crucial elements in cultural learning: 1) “to raise awareness of one’s identity and of the existence of difference,” 2) “to enhance understanding of self and others,” and 3) “to foster appreciation of ‘otherness’”. With regard to the goals of instruction, Göbel & Hesse (2004) presented

“knowledge about other cultures, openness and empathy toward other cultures, critical involvement with intercultural topics, the readiness to put one’s own convictions into perspective, and the ability to deal with people from different cultures” (cited in Göbel & Helmke, 2010, p. 1572). Göbel & Helmke (2010) also argued that in order to have good intercultural instruction in the language classroom, teachers must use authentic tasks to encourage “the promotion of reflection about cultural perspectives” (p. 1573). In turn, this reflection enables learners to construe cultural differences between their own and others’ cultures, mediates between different perspectives, and provides a platform for the construction of a worldview, while avoiding stereotypical conceptions (Göbel & Helmke, 2010). Sehlaouiv (2010) suggested that language teachers should not “provide students with bits of information but rather help them attain the necessary skills that will enable them to make sense out of the cultural information that they themselves will discover”(p. 52). In addition, Shermann (2009) suggested that intercultural instruction in classroom settings should be “engaging and personally relevant for students, nurturing a deeper understanding of contents” (cited in Göbel & Helmke, 2010, p. 1572).

In explaining current intercultural pedagogy, Müller-Jacquier (2004) presented four different classroom approaches for intercultural learning: 1) the contact situation approach, in which “students have direct contact with the other culture”; 2) the cognitive approach, in which “cognitive insights about the other culture (e.g. cultural values, cultural practices) and their behavioral implications”; 3) the virtual contrast approach, in which “a virtual interaction between own and target culture is presented in order to enable students to evaluate this (and the target culture itself) from different cultural perspectives”; and 4) the linguistic awareness approach, in which “cultural differences

are taught by discussing linguistic differences in class” (cited in Göbel & Helmke, 2010, p. 1572).

While there are numerous intercultural learning goals, objectives and teaching concepts to inform IC in practice, Göbel and Helmke (2010) noted that research lacks a “homogeneous definition of intercultural ESL/EFL teaching” and “a convincing link between general intercultural learning goals and those concerned with specific cultures,” while claiming there is “no clearly discernible teaching concept common” (p. 1572). In addition, researchers have given less descriptive and practical attention on assessment and teaching methods. That is, current literature has primarily focused on conceptual arguments for the importance of IC in the classroom and the description of intercultural teaching goals/objectives, and concepts. Considerably less attention has been devoted to the important matter of how IC may be integrated as a feature of classroom activity. That said, a number of studies, but a few have been undertaken to examine how IC might be promoted through classroom instruction. A review of this literature suggests two broad trends: pedagogies that employ written reflections and simulations to promote student thinking about cultural issues and pedagogies that make use of internet technology to expand the traditional boundaries of the language classroom and bring learners into ‘virtual’ contact with other speakers and users of the language.

In Liaw’s (2006) study, fostering EFL student’s IC “via reading articles on topics of their own culture and communicating their own culture and communicating their responses with speakers of another culture” was suggested to offer opportunities for EFL students “to use their own societal and cultural practices” as the focus for EFL learning (p. 49). Helm’s (2009) study examined students’ learning diaries to examine the possible

benefits of IC. In the field of intercultural learning, learner diaries have been used as “a way of structuring their [students] learning” and have been reported “to help learners to develop critical thinking and metacognitive skills which enable them to become more autonomous learners” (Benson, 2001; cited in Helm, 2009, p. 93). This study showed that learner diaries are useful to adopt because they can “bring some less visible aspects of intercultural competence to light, particularly, when learners are asked to reflect on certain issues and to report their reactions to an intercultural exchange” (Helm, 2009, p. 101). In addition, Murray and Bollinger’s (2001) study offered various communicative activities such as e-mail exchanges, interviews with the guest speakers, and internet searches to learn about other countries, designed to enhance cross-cultural awareness. The study included Japanese university students whose language levels ranged from beginner to intermediate. The authors report that learners indicated they felt the activities were helpful in facilitating the development of cross-cultural awareness. In addition, the studies by Johnson (1995) and Jung and Levintin (2002) suggested the use of simulation in SL/FL classroom for intercultural learning. Jung and Levintin (2002) described using courtroom simulations in ESL classroom and concluded that simulations are a valuable and stimulating tool that may “enable students to integrate language and communication skills with the knowledge that they had gained concerning cultural aspects”(p. 367). Johnson (1995) also reported on a simulation used in an intercultural communication course that was designed “to create an unfamiliar and uncomfortable atmosphere, culturally, for the students, similar to what one would experience were he or she in a foreign environment” (p. 59). This study showed that simulation can “help students recognize themselves as cultural beings whose cultural beliefs would influence the

learning process of their own students” and indicated that the viability of simulation in intercultural learning (Johnson, 1995, p. 59).

I now turn to the line of research that investigates the use of technology as a vehicle for enabling students to have intercultural experiences that would have been either unlikely or impossible in the past. The literature here is quite recent but quickly growing (e.g., Borau et al., 2009; Chun, 2011; Elola & Oskoz, 2008; Helm, 2009; Schuetze, 2008; Wang & Coleman, 2009; Wilcox, 2009), and I seek only to identify emerging trends, as a full review is presented in detail in the following chapter 3 in this paper.

Schuetze (2008, p. 660) notes that “the development of an increasing number of second language courses that use information technology to modify the learning environment” has been found to help in delivering cultural lessons. That is, “many real opportunities to integrate intercultural learning into the language curriculum” are possible through the emergence of technology (Helm, 2009, p. 91). For example, emails, and videoconferencing have been adopted for IC development in the classroom (Elola & Oskoz, 2008). In addition, video-based approaches were found to promote the development of IC in SL and FL classrooms in the studies of Göbel and Helmke (2010) and Wilcox (2009). Notably, the most frequently adopted technological method for IC development was telecollaboration. A great deal of studies have focused on the use of telecollaboration (e.g., Chun, 2011; Helm, 2009; Schneider & Von der Emde, 2006; Ware & Kramsch, 2005), which is “an approach to intercultural learning that used Internet technology as a tool to facilitate intercultural communication between classes of learners in different countries” (Helm, 2009, p. 91). Recently, with the introduction of web 2.0

technology, several studies have explored how the use of Web 2.0 tools, such as blogs, podcasting, and Twitter, affects the way students view intercultural communication and how the development of IC is facilitated through such tools (e.g., Borau et al., 2009; Elola & Oskoz, 2008; Lee, 2009).

In summary, a great deal of research has focused on discussing the importance of IC in language learning and on describing goals, objectives, and concepts for intercultural teaching and learning (e.g., Alptekin, 2002; Bennett & Salonen, 2007; Byram, 1997, 2009; Göbel & Helmke, 2010; Sellami, 2000). However, although various approaches to teaching have been suggested, no consensus exists in terms of effective teaching methods for intercultural learning in the classroom; consistent and coherent definitions, goals/objectives, and concepts of intercultural teaching are also lacking (Göbel & Helmke, 2010). In addition, the issue of IC in language classrooms has been discussed in the research literature for some time, relatively few empirical studies document how classroom teachers have gone about promoting IC in their classrooms. That is, educators are still far from understanding how to develop IC given the large gap in the current literature on the practical application of intercultural teaching and learning in the classroom. Therefore, a critical need exists for an inquiry on how IC can be realized and put into practice in the classroom as well as for the generation of generally applicable and validated teaching methods and strategies, achievable goals/objectives, and concepts of intercultural teaching. It is one thing for a researcher to report a collaboration with a teacher that explored the potential use of technology or some other pedagogical innovation, but quite another to consider the extent to which these ideas are affecting actual classroom practice when no researcher is present. Thus, a gap appears to exist in

the literature between innovations proposed to promote learner IC and the adoption and adaptation of these proposals by classroom teachers to fit their own contexts.

### **2.3 Sociocultural Theory**

This section offers a brief overview of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which was employed as a theoretical framework for this study on intercultural learning within the CMC context to understand how participation in Facebook activities promoted the development of new abilities—a popular learning design used today (Hall, 2007).

Sociocultural theory (SCT) is a theory of development of higher mental functions that emerged most directly from the research of Russian psychologist Vygotsky and his colleagues (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006b). Its current conceptualization primarily stems from the work of Vygotsky (1986) and later theoreticians, such as Wertsch (1991, 1998) (de Valenzuela, 2002). It is important to understand that SCT is grounded in a dialectic approach to the relationship between “human consciousness and mental development” (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008, p. 6). Research on the SCT focuses on the relationship between human mental functioning and cultural, historical, and institutional settings (Wertsch, 1996, p. 56; cited in Lantolf & Thorne, 2006b). As such, it has offered numerous implications for teaching, schooling, and education (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988).

According to SCT, mental functioning develops “from external social interaction to internal psychological activity” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006a, p. 209). In other words, cognitive development results from “social and interpersonal activity becoming the foundation for intrapersonal functioning, and that this process involves internalization” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006a, p. 207). It is important to understand that cognitive development cannot be separated from its social context and is always “*socially mediated*”

(Karpov, 2005; cited in Bodrova & Leong, 2007, p. 9). Thus, human mental functioning is “fundamentally a mediated process” by social practices and cultural artifacts (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006a, p. 197). Psychological tools—what are often referred to as artifacts—fulfill a mediational function, which includes “various kinds of human cultural constructions: numbers, charts, figures, art, music, and the most powerful and pervasive artifact of all, language” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006b, p. 26). The primary means of mediation are “language use, organization, and structure” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006a, p. 197). Vygotsky’s own empirical work exclusively focused on children’s “developing the capacity to mediate their thinking through the appropriation of cultural tools, including of course, language” (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008, p. 2).

In addition to mediation, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is one of the most central concepts in SCT. ZPD is “a way of conceptualizing the relationship between learning and development” (Bodrova & Leong, 2007, p. 40). Vygotsky (1978) used the ZPD as a metaphorical zone to explain “a distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p.86). According to Vygotsky (1987), “what the child is able to do in collaboration today he will be able to do independently tomorrow” (p. 211). The ZPD can be used to “determine the child’s developmental level because it reveals (a) skills on the edge of emergence, and (b) the limits of the child’s development at this specific time” (Bodrova & Leong, 2007, p. 43). The ZPD is “not static but shifts” as the learners attain a higher level of thinking and knowledge; thus, development involves “a sequence of constantly changing zones” (Bodrova & Leong, 2007, p. 41).

The ZPD is not only “a model of the developmental process”; it can also be a “conceptual tool that educators can use to understand aspects of students’ emerging capacities that are in early stages of maturation” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006a, p. 207). The ZPD has three important implications for learning and teaching: (1) “how to assist a child in performing a task”; (2) “how to assess children”; (3) and “how to determine what is developmentally appropriate” (Bodrova & Leong, 2007, p. 44). For example, with reference to assisting performance, it is much broader than the expert–novice interaction in which one person has more knowledge than the other, extending to all socially shared activities (Bodrova & Leong, 2007, p. 44).

Vygotsky believed that a child can start performing on a higher level of the ZPD through any type of social interaction: with peers as equals, with imaginary partners, or with children at other developmental levels (Newman & Holzman, 1993; cited in Bodrova & Leong, 2007, p. 44). In addition, ZPD-oriented assessment provides a nuanced determination of both developmentally achieved and develop–mental potential (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006a, p. 206). We can have a more flexible and more accurate way of assessment by including what children can do with different levels of assistance rather than limiting assessment only to what children can do independently. This technique, often called “dynamic assessment,” has great potential for improving and expanding authentic classroom assessment (Bodrova & Leong, 2007, p. 44). In terms of what is developmentally appropriate, Vygotsky emphasized that the child should practice what he can do independently while simultaneously being exposed to things at higher levels of the ZPD; both levels are developmentally appropriate (Bodrova & Leong, 2007, p. 45). Vygotsky argued that the most effective teaching is aimed at the higher level of a child’s

ZPD (Bodrova & Leong, 2007, p. 45). Teachers should provide activities just beyond what the child can do on his own but that are still within what the child can do with assistance (Bodrova & Leong, 2007, p. 45).

It is important to note that, in SCT, cognitive development is possible through social interactions within the social and material environments (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006a) and is “influenced by present and past social interactions” (Karpov, 2005; cited in Bodrova & Leong, 2007, p. 9). Vygotsky (1978) concluded that “human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them” (p. 88). Specifically speaking, “developmental processes take place through participation in cultural, linguistic, and historically formed settings such as family life and peer group interaction, and in institutional contexts like schooling” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006a, p. 198). Therefore, sociocultural accounts of learning are based on the premise that humans are situated in social and cultural practices and that their participation in these practices provides the fundamental mechanism for learning (Sutherland, Lindström, & Lahn, 2009). In other words, cognitive growth or competencies develop through participation in social practices and social interactions (Sutherland et al., 2009).

Individuals can also internalize knowledge through the use of psychological tools—namely, the societal and cultural products that learners can access by being actively engaged in their communities’ practices (Sutherland et al., 2009). When it comes to the effect that schooling has on cognitive development, “the activity of participation in schooling involve[s], at least in part, learning through participation in socio-culturally and institutionally organized practices” and “learning collaboratively with others,

particularly in instructional settings, precedes and shapes development”—one of Vygotsky’s major findings (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006a, p. 207). Although learning does not always directly lead to development, “intentionally designed learning environments (e.g., instructed L2 settings) can stimulate qualitative developmental changes” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006a, p. 207).

SCT has been frequently adopted and discussed in the current literature on L2 education. In particular, the sociocultural perspective has been used to inform telecollaborative intercultural learning research (e.g., Lee, 2009) as well as several studies related to the use of Facebook (SNSs) (cf. Sykes et al., 2008; Teclehaimanot & Hickman, 2011; Thorne & Reinhardt, 2008; Thorne & Smith, 2011), which the current study explored, have been conducted, informed, and guided by SCT. From a sociocultural perspective, learning is “not just an individual matter, but...develops within social environment” (Hall, 2007, p. 96); thus, social interactions and collaboration play an important role in the learning processes (Lee, 2011b). In relation to the CMC context, the use of SNSs is promising in that it promotes boundless opportunities for learners to connect with more knowledgeable others within their ZPD (Ferdig, 2007) as well as actively participate, interact, and collaborate in new web-based social environment offered by social network technology. Learners can use “a system of symbols (e.g., language) and tools (e.g., computer) to build a system of linguistic constructs in cooperation with other speakers to perform a task” (Lee, 2009, p. 427).

In this respect, SCT has much to offer the current study, which explored the educational role of Facebook in Korean EFL learners’ IC development as Facebook is viewed as an emerging social tool that promotes interactive communication and

collaborative environments. Learners' participation in these new practices and social interactions might provide the foundation for intercultural learning. Accordingly, SCT serves a central framework to inform, direct, and develop the current study. This study adopted a sociocultural approach to explore Korean EFL learners' development of IC to mediate their thinking through the appropriation of cultural tools, language, and computer by actively participating in activities and collaborating with their peers and native speakers (i.e., more knowledgeable others) within their ZPD, guided by a teacher in the new virtual online social environment offered by Facebook.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented an extensive and critical literature review on both conceptual and empirical research on IC, with specific a focus on ESL/EFL classroom settings as well as brief description of central theoretical framework of this study, Sociocultural Theory.

The review has demonstrated that the importance of IC in language learning has been actively and widely discussed, and it is well recognized that developing learners' IC is a major goal in L2 instruction. From the critical examination of current research, despite discussions on developing learners' IC that evolved in the 1990s, a severe lack of and a high demand for a practical understanding and information (i.e., skills, knowledge, and approaches) that can inform actual L2 classroom pedagogy are evident. Indeed, topics related to IC teaching methods and instructional skills and strategies have been studied less frequently. In addition, no agreement has emerged among scholars on teaching approaches, methods, and tools for effective and successful IC development. It is surprising that, although the importance of IC in L2 research has been discussed for

more than a decade, the majority of literature seems to focus on conceptual discussions without driving toward building a strong, realistic, and achievable foundation for successful implementation. Remarkably, few empirical studies investigate how IC has been put into practice and realized in the classroom, including how and what kind of teaching methods and strategies can be employed to promote learners' IC. It seems that this lack of a solid and practical foundation to inform actual implication may have led to the current limited empirical research on this topic. In this respect, it is worth noting that advances in technology are starting to play a critical role in intercultural learning, such as by providing technological teaching tools (e.g., CMC tools) for integration into L2 instruction. This development implies that a technological approach might be one solution to the current need for practical guidance for language teachers and practitioners in real L2 classrooms.

Accordingly, this study started from the recognition of the importance and value of IC in the ESL/EFL classroom and the critical lack of studies dealing with practical applications and using empirical research to assist pedagogical practice for the promotion of IC, as discussed in the literature review. In addition, current literature has increasingly focused on the use of technology to inform intercultural teaching and learning (e.g., telecollaboration) and on expanding empirical research on technology use, such as adopting CMC tools to develop learners' IC, which will be explored in the following chapter. Therefore, this study took a step toward filling this gap in the need for practical examination of research while adopting the most recent methodology for IC development in the current literature by investigating how the development of IC is informed by the implementation of technological tools (e.g. Facebook) in an actual EFL classroom in

Korea. It aimed to yield beneficial information to contribute to pedagogical practice and develop more effective and efficient intercultural teaching and learning in the classroom.

In addition, this chapter has also provided background information in terms of sociocultural theory (SCT), the theoretical framework of this study, by discussing its main concepts of this theory. As SCT emphasizes that learning occurs in social practice and through social interaction, not learners' own individual performance (Hall, 2007), it has much to inform and guide the current study, which sees Facebook use as a promising new online learning environment that promotes various opportunities for social interaction and collaboration in new web-based social environment afforded by technology. Particularly, SCT can be an appropriate theoretical framework for investigating IC in the L2 classroom. IC is the "ability to relate to and communicate with people who speak a different language and live in a different cultural context" (Byram, 1997, p. 1). It requires L2 learners to be "empathy, openness, and understanding vis-à-vis the target culture and its people" with a wide range of perspectives (Sellami, 2000, p. 2). Alptekin (2002) argued that developing IC in English-language teaching should "encompass local and international contexts as settings of language use, involve native-nonnative and nonnative-nonnative discourse participants" (p. 57). It signifies that IC development takes place in the relation with other people and culture; thus, it cannot be obtained solely through individual work but interaction with otherness and collaboration play an important role in the process of IC development. In this respect, SCT can be a good theoretical framework to understand the learners' participation, interaction, and collaboration with native speakers of English to perform a task through Facebook would lead to the development of IC. In sum, SCT was adopted to serve a theoretical framework

in current study to explore the educational role of Facebook in Korean EFL learners' IC development as Facebook is viewed as an emerging social tool that promotes interactive communication and collaborative environments as well as learners' participation in these new practices and social interactions might provide the foundation for IC development.

## **CHAPTER 3. DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS THROUGH THE USE OF COMPUTER TECHNOLOGIES**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter examines the empirical work on the use of technology in the development of IC in L2 education. It is necessary to investigate what effective CMC tools are currently available in educational settings and how to implement CMC into L2 education. Thus, the first part of this chapter reviews L2 studies that have used CMC tools for intercultural learning and have explored the effects of CMC in terms of developing IC. As the current L2 literature provides insights into the need for empirical research on technology use, such as adopting CMC tools—particularly Web 2.0 tools—to develop learners' IC in the L2 classroom setting, the next part in this chapter explores the growing interest in the educational viability and value of Facebook, the most famous Web 2.0 tool and offer a better sense of situating this study, which concerns potential pedagogical uses of Facebook for IC development.

### **3.2 Developing Intercultural Competence through Technology in L2 Practice**

In the past five years, there has been a prominent and emerging phenomenon in the IC studies—namely, that technology provides a range of tools (i.e., emails, telecollaboration, blogs, podcast, Twitter, and etc.) to promote L2 learners' development of IC (e.g., Borau et al., 2009; Chun, 2011; Elola & Oskoz, 2008; Helm, 2009; Schuetze, 2008; Wang & Coleman, 2009; Wilcox, 2009).

Information and communication technology (ICT) has “developed to the extent that it is now easy to provide students with international interaction in teaching and learning” (Göbel & Helmke, 2010; cited in Davis & Cho, 2005, p. 14) because ICT “allows people to communicate with each other across the globe in real time through the Internet” (Eaton, 2010, p. 5). Since the “World Wide Web emerged in the mid-1990’s, online communication has expanded to international settings and the Web has been seen as an extension of language culture and society” (Warschauer, 2001, p. 14).

Technological tools have moved from Web 1.0 (e.g., emails, discussion boards, content management systems, or learning management systems (LMS)) toward the current Web 2.0 (e.g., social networking sites, blogs, wikis, video-sharing sites, hosted services, web applications) (Godwin-Jones, 2003). In addition, the use of computer-mediated-communication (CMC) to support language learning emerged in 1990s, and in recent years “the benefits of CMC for intercultural learning have become increasingly obvious” (Eaton, 2010, p. 147).

There has been a very innovative and promising change in that “only a decade ago, intensive intercultural exposure and interaction was available only through experience abroad” (Stickler & Emke, 2011, p. 147). Thus, with the help of technology, it is now possible for “many real opportunities to integrate intercultural learning into the language curriculum” (Helm, 2009, p. 91), the role of Internet technologies for intercultural learning and exchange is now widely recognized (Stickler & Emke, 2011, p. 147), and there is a noticeable increase in the use of CMC tools to modify the learning environment for cultural lessons in L2 courses (Schuetze, 2008). As such, the effectiveness of CMC

tools for intercultural learning as well as language learning has gained increased importance in recent L2 research.

In the following, it offers the review of studies that empirically investigated the use of various technological CMC tools (e.g., email, chat, web-based message boards, blogs, Twitter, and podcasting) for intercultural learning as well as looked for pedagogical practice for the IC development in this online environment.

### **3.3 The Use of CMC tools (or ICT) for Intercultural Teaching and Learning**

L2 research on CMC has shown that learners benefit from online intercultural exchanges and develop IC through telecollaboration (Lee, 2009). As such, a great deal of studies have focused on telecollaboration (e.g., Chun, 2011; Helm, 2009; Schneider & Von der Emde, 2006; Ware & Kramsch, 2005), which is an approach using “Internet technology as a tool to facilitate intercultural communication between classes of learners in different countries” (Helm, 2009, p. 91). Telecollaboration “link[s] foreign and second language learners in institutionalized settings in different countries to engage in cost-effective exchanges” (Liaw & Bunn-Le Master, 2010, p. 22) to promote the development of i) linguistic competence and ii) intercultural competence (Belz, 2003). Early telecollaboration research mainly focused on the development of “autonomy and language fluency through online interaction,” and only limited attention has been paid to intercultural learning (Kern, 2002; cited in O'Dowd, 2007, p. 145). However, the need for intercultural learning has increased more than ever before, and the research on telecollaboration to develop learners' IC is growing. It has exploited various online communication tools and uses a wide range of activities (O'Dowd, 2007).

Accordingly, the following sections review L2 studies that empirically examined IC development with the use of various technological applications in detail ranging from Web 1.0 technology such as emails, chat rooms, discussion boards, and videoconferencing to recent Web 2.0 technology, such as social networking sites, blogs, Twitter, and podcasts to examine what types of CMC tools have been adopted and to suggest what should be done to help learners develop IC.

### **3.3.1 Web 1.0 Technology**

#### ***Email***

The most frequently used online communication tool found in the literature is email, which emerged as a leading tool for intercultural learning in the Web 1.0 generation. According to Levy (2007), the asynchronous nature of email provides important opportunities for “reflection and representation of cultural understandings” in that learners are given “the time to consider features of their own cultural background and those of their partner, and the time to think about how best to represent their own understanding of the C1” (p. 116). Email-based research for intercultural learning has received much attention in the CMC literature (O'Dowd, 2003), and its beneficial potential for developing learners IC has been noted (e.g., Belz, 2003; O'Dowd, 2003).

For example, O'Dowd (2003) study explored a year's worth of intercultural email exchanges between students in two university language classes in Spain and Britain. In this project, learners could comprehend the significant link between language and culture “both through activities which led them to recognize the differing semantic connotations of words in different cultures and also through the need for them to deal with the various communicative styles and socio-pragmatic rules in intercultural communication”

(O'Dowd, 2003, p. 137). Importantly, this study identified the key factors that successfully enable learners to develop IC in virtual exchanges: “the ability of the students to build up a personal relationship with their partners via e-mail, their sensitivity to their partners' needs and communicative style, and their capacity to produce engaging, in-depth correspondence” as well as to find “a receptive audience for the expressions of their own cultural identity” (O'Dowd, 2003, p. 139). The results of this study showed that most learners successfully develop IC through participation in email discussions, while some learners fail to overcome stereotypes and negative attitudes about their partners' cultures (O'Dowd, 2003). Similarly, Belz's (2003) work presented a three-year (2000-2002) case study of the development of IC in a German-American email exchange program in college-level FL classes. By providing a linguistically grounded analysis of IC development as well as analyzing five curricular objectives and learner behaviors based on Byram's (1997) model of IC, the authors revealed the email exchange project had a positive effect. In addition, Murray and Bollinger (2001) study explored the use of three different activities—email exchange with target language speakers, student-generated interviews with guest speaker who experienced another target culture, and a mini-video ethnography project focusing on the cross-cultural experiences of others—to facilitate Japanese university students' development of cross-cultural awareness. This study showed that students' responses to these activities were positive and that the activities were successful in enhancing learners' intercultural experiences and awareness and suggested its effectiveness and possible integration into language class curriculum.

### *Discussion Boards*

The use of asynchronous web-based discussion boards for online intercultural exchange to promote IC has been studied as much as email-based research (e.g., Liaw & Bunn-Le Master, 2010; Schuetze, 2008; Ware & Kramersch, 2005). For example, Ware and Kramersch's (2005) work explored a classroom-based asynchronous telecollaborative project that used discussion boards as an intercultural exchange tool between German-language learners in the United States and English-language learners in Germany. The students in the study were required to post messages on discussion boards at least two times each week for three weeks. Interestingly, this study presented the challenges of web-based teaching, which usually remain invisible in intercultural communication. It detailed one instance of intercultural misunderstanding and miscommunication that occurred between two learners in the study and used it as an important learning opportunity for both students and teachers. This study suggested the teachers' role in technology-mediated learning contexts is "not so much to prevent miscommunication from happening, but to help the students learn from the experience" (Ware & Kramersch, 2005, p. 190).

Schuetze's (2008) study also used a discussion board in WebCT created by Dreamweaver for intercultural exchange carried out on an online L2 course that was set up for German-language students in Canada and English-language students in Germany. Learners were required to write a least five messages for each topic. The results indicated that "students who asked wh-questions, shared personal experiences, gave examples, and found material that was not provided in the course" had great success (Schuetze, 2008, p. 660) and offered an understanding of the dynamics of online exchanges between second

language learners. In addition, Liaw and Bunn-Le Master's (2010) study used a project website, CANDLE, as an environment for intercultural learning and examined if and how collaborative behaviors and online intercultural learning took place between EFL students in Taiwan and pre-service education students in the United States. Participants were told to write online forum entries on CANDLE after reading two articles and were also required to write an end-of-project report. The study focused on "the linguistic features of the discourse used by the participants, as well as the patterns and types of interactions between intercultural interlocutors" (Liaw & Bunn-Le Master, 2010, p. 21). The findings showed that "the lexical-grammatical features of the intercultural discourse of the participants" were identified, and "the use of pronouns, social words, affective words and cognitive words showed that positive rapport between partners grew progressively" (Liaw & Bunn-Le Master, 2010, p. 36). In addition, they found that participants' IC increased with the help of online communication when they showed "interest in each other's culture and went on to describe[e] their own culture with detailed descriptions about their friends, family and school lives" (Liaw & Bunn-Le Master, 2010, p. 36).

The above discussion on email and web-based discussion boards indicates that the use of asynchronous CMC tools to afford IC is primary method preferred in current practice. The popularity of these tools might be due to the fact that learners do not have to be online at the same time as there are often "difficulties in finding a common time for both groups of participants to be online" (Liaw & Bunn-Le Master, 2010, p. 26). However, the use of synchronous tool, such as chat, for intercultural exchange has been also adopted in a few studies (e.g., Tudini, 2007)

Researchers have found that synchronous connections via chat “relies on short, spontaneous responses promoting active culture learning” (Toyoda & Harrison, 2002; see also Tudini, 2003; cited in Levy, 2007, p. 116) and “add[s] connectivity with real international audiences by providing motivation and an incentive for students to practice the target language” (Tomas, 2011, p. 37). Tudini’s (2007) study used the a synchronous chat tool for intercultural exchanges and investigated 27 university learners of Italian and 118 native Italian speakers at the University of South Australia to explore “whether NS [native speaker] chat rooms provide opportunities for learner[s] to practice intercultural (content and pragmatic) negotiation strategies” (p. 585). The findings showed positive evidence of IC development in this research context and identified “(a) self-initiated negotiations moves (Shehadeh, 2001), such as questions concerning the target culture, and (b) indicators of skills of discovery and interaction.” The latter is a component in Byram’s (1997) model of IC (Tudini, 2007, p. 577), which demonstrates the potential of using chat for intercultural exchanges in future research.

### ***The Combination of Tools (Asynchronous + Synchronous)***

Instead of depending solely on either asynchronous or synchronous tools, several studies have employed both tools to assist learners’ development of IC (e.g., Belz & Müller-Hartmann, 2003; Chun, 2011; Kramsch & Thorne, 2002). For example, Kramsch and Thorne’s (2002) study employed synchronous chat and asynchronous email communication between French learners of English in France and American learners of French in the United States. The authors found different discourse styles between the two groups and suggested this approach’s potential for overcoming the inherent challenge in intercultural interaction. Belz and Müller-Hartmann’s (2003) study also used both

asynchronous email and synchronous chat for German and American participants in two separate university courses to discuss topics from assigned readings of parallel text. It examined the influences of “social, cultural, and institutional affordances and constrains” on the agency of online teachers and, “various aspects of schools and schooling impact the negotiation, execution, and management of a German-American virtual course” were examined (p. 71). In addition, Chun’s (2011) work adopted asynchronous forum discussions and synchronous chat to explore “how online exchanges can play a role in second language learners’ development of pragmatic competence and ICC” (p. 392) in an intercultural exchange between students learning German in an American university and students studying English at a German university. It discussed how both types of learners employed different discourse styles and showed a clash of expectations. In terms of their effectiveness on IC, the author found that there was “ample evidence of many students’ emerging ICC (e.g., they showed curiosity, suspended disbelief about the other’s culture, and reflected on their own culture), and the types of speech acts” (Chun, 2011, p. 417). O’Dowd’s (2007) study also used various combinations of communication technologies, including asynchronous email and web-based message boards as well as synchronous video conferencing in order to engage learners in online exchanges. This study conducted three qualitative studies in university-level EFL classes in Germany and the United States between 2001 and 2003 to investigate the effectiveness of telecollaboration on IC development as well as skills and knowledge that would be needed for both students and teachers for successful online learning. The findings showed that telecollaboration can be a powerful tool for IC development in terms of providing different types of knowledge, such as partners’ subjective and personalized natures, and developing cultural awareness

due to dialogues involving explicit comparisons of the two cultures and a direct exchange of reactions. In addition, the author argued that both teachers and students were explicitly prepared for the activity but suggested that learners “receive explicit guidance and training in various aspects of intercultural telecollaboration.” Thus, it called upon researchers and practitioners to pay attention to the important role of the teacher in telecollaborative exchanges (O'Dowd, 2007, p. 148).

In the following section, I move on to discuss research investigating the use of recent Web 2.0 technology, including emerging and expanding technological tools, for intercultural learning and to help learners develop IC.

### **3.3.2 Web 2.0 Technology**

With the advent of Web 2.0 technologies (e.g., wikis, blogs, podcasts, social networking sites), online learning environment have new dimensions (Lee, 2011b). Recently, there has been an ongoing educational shift from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0, focusing on IC as well as language learning and online literacy within the context of telecollaboration (Guth & Helm, 2010). In the current literature, there are a few studies, but not many, seeking to integrate recent Web 2.0 technologies in intercultural learning.

#### ***Blogs***

Blogs are increasingly being implemented in L2 instruction in various ways ranging from developing reading and writing skills to intercultural learning depending on educators' pedagogical goals (Lee, 2011b). Blogs are “interactive in nature, providing an online audience” (Elola & Oskoz, 2008, p. 460) and have been found to foster learner autonomy (Lee, 2010) as well as “increase students' participation and motivation because

they are intended not only for a sole instructor but rather for a broad audience” (Lee, 2011b, p. 88). New and different from email or forum discussions, learners can post comments and opinions on blogs more easily. They can “see all pertinent comments by simply scrolling down the screen” and can “upload pictures and customize the layout of the blog to their liking, making it a much more personalized tool” (Elola & Oskoz, 2008, p. 460). Among other Web 2.0 approaches to intercultural learning, the use of blogs as an intercultural communication tool has been increasingly adopted to “foster cross-cultural communication and awareness” (Lee, 2011b, p. 90) (e.g., Elola & Oskoz, 2008; Lee, 2009, 2011b). For example, Lee (2011b) work investigated how “asynchronous computer-mediated communication (CMC) via blogs and face-to-face (FTF) interaction through interview[s]” fosters the development of learner autonomy and IC (p. 91). In this study, 16 American undergraduate students participated to develop their IC over the course of a one-semester study abroad program. Three types of blogs (i.e., personal blogs, a class blog, and a project blog) were created for discussion and debate on cross-cultural issues offered freely by the students or assigned by teachers. The results showed promising benefits of blogs for intercultural learning as well as for autonomous learning as they enable students to work independently as well as collaboratively and “to reflect upon cross-cultural issues.” The author did suggest, however, that “well-designed tasks, effective metacognitive and cognitive skills, and the accessibility to Internet” are needed to maximize the effectiveness of blogs (Lee, 2011b, p. 87). Elola and Oskoz’s (2008) work also used blogs and explored “how blog interactions enhanced students’ intercultural competence through study abroad and at home interchange” between students in Spain and the United States over the course of a semester (p. 472). The result

showed that blog interactions had a positive impact on both group of students' IC based on Byram's (2000) guideline in terms of i) awareness of their own and the target culture, ii) interest in knowing other people's ways of life, iii) changed perspective about certain aspects of the target culture, and iv) resolved misunderstandings and ways to acquire new knowledge.

### ***Blogs and Podcasts***

Lee's (2009) study also used blogs as an intercultural exchange tool along with another increasingly popular Web 2.0 tool—podcasts—for a Spanish-American telecollaborative project. A podcast is “an online audio file delivered via RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feed” that allows learners “to automatically receive available web-based audio files” and “to listen to authentic recordings on a personal computer, as well as to record and publish their own talks” (Lee, 2009, p. 427). This study explored “how students collaboratively created blogs and podcasts using task-based activities and how blogs and podcasts facilitated cross-cultural exchanges” (Lee, 2009, p. 425). The results indicated that the combination of blogs and podcasts enhanced learners' cross-cultural understanding and awareness and that the effective use of task-based instruction is important. Lee (2009) further suggested that building “interpersonal relationships with cross-cultural partners” as well as “making personal commitment to online contributions” are significant for successful intercultural exchanges (p. 425).

### ***Twitter***

Twitter is a social network site in which “the members of a community share their current activity by answering the question ‘What are you doing?’” and this type of social interaction is called ‘microblogging’ (Borau et al., 2009, p. 79). Twitter enables users to

post and receive short messages through various mediums, including its website, mobile phones, instant messengers, and desktop clients within an assigned community (Borau et al., 2009). Researchers have found Twitter to have advantages over traditional discussion boards in terms of accessibility ease and of the minimal amount of time needed to create, follow, and comment on a thread (Borau et al., 2009). While the potential of Twitter for intercultural learning and language learning has been postulated (Borau et al., 2009), few empirical studies have been done employing Twitter in L2 context.

Borau et al.'s (2009) work is the first study that empirically examined the usefulness of Twitter's microblogging as an intercultural exchange tool with native speakers in L2 instruction. This study was carried out in an EFL classroom at the college in China for seven weeks in 2007, and almost 5,580 updates by 90 students were analyzed. The results showed that intercultural interactions in Twitter "create a sense of cultural awareness and acquiring cultural competence in addition to English skills" (Borau et al., 2009, p. 82). In addition to the major finding that Twitter is a suitable tool "to train communicative and culture competence anytime anywhere without face-to-face interaction" (Borau et al., 2009, p. 86), this study indicated that learners engaged in virtual learning communities had an increased sense of belonging, which led to a positive motivational influence.

This existing empirical research is valuable in understanding the use of CMC tools for intercultural learning in that it has generated informative findings and implications. For example, much of this work has demonstrated the effectiveness of CMC tools in telecollaboration for developing learners' IC. It has shown that learners not only increase their linguistic competence but also gain cultural awareness (e.g., Belz, 2003;

Lee, 2009; O'Dowd, 2007) and reported successful IC development (Belz, 2003; Elola & Oskoz, 2008; Kramsch & Thorne, 2002; Murray & Bollinger, 2001; O'Dowd, 2003, 2007; Schuetze, 2008). However, while the literature in this area often tends to focus exclusively on the positive results of research, not all the telecollaborative studies revealed success in developing IC. For instance, studies done by Ware and Kramsch (2005), Belz (2003), and Belz and Müller-Hartmann (2003) indicated that the use of technology led to misunderstandings, miscommunication, reinforcement of cultural stereotypes, and even a loss of interest in communication among several students during intercultural communication. As for the reasons behind this unsuccessful intercultural communication, it has been noted that different cultural communication styles and online behaviors can lead to breakdowns in communication (Elola & Oskoz, 2008; Kramsch & Thorne, 2002). According to Elola and Oskoz (2008), “the difference between successful and unsuccessful intercultural communicative pairs lay in the openness of students to resolving misunderstandings and to becoming critical of their own cultural practices” (p. 457).

With diverse focuses, Lee (2011) studied the use of CMC tools for intercultural learning and their impact on learner autonomy; Tudini (2007) examined the influence of learner negotiation strategies, such as questions concerning target cultures in intercultural learning; O'Dowd (2003) identified key factors of online intercultural exchanges (email) for successful IC development; Belz (2003) and Liaw and Bunn-Le Master (2010) undertook linguistically grounded analyses of intercultural discourse leading to IC development; and Belz and Müller-Hartmann (2003) studied “the influence of

institutional and social factors on the outcomes of exchanges” in Belz and Müller-Hartmann (2003, p. 145; cited in O'Dowd, 2007).

Importantly, much of this research emphasized the role of teachers in the use of CMC tools for IC development in L2 instruction (e.g., Lee, 2009; O'Dowd, 2003, 2007; Ware & Kramersch, 2005). The common belief of intercultural learning is that “contact between cultures automatically leads to intercultural learning and to the development of positive attitudes towards the target culture” (O'Dowd, 2003, p. 118). However, this assumption has been criticized in many studies (Kitade, 2012), and it also applies to virtual intercultural contact (Richter, 1995, cited in O'Dowd, 2003). Scholars have agreed, however, that “contact and interaction with native speakers facilitates intercultural education,” but it does not guarantee that successful IC development comes naturally to learners (Lomicka, 2006; O'Dowd, 2003; cited in Elola & Oskoz, 2008, p. 457). For this reason, current research has shown the importance of teachers' role in CMC when it comes to making online intercultural learning environments more effective and helpful to help learners truly benefit from telecollaborative intercultural learning opportunities (e.g., O'Dowd, 2007; Stickler & Emke, 2011; Ware & Kramersch, 2005). For example, Ware and Kramersch's (2005) telecollaborative project using email between German and American students suggested that teachers should play a major role in helping learners take an intercultural stance, such as “develop[ing] a decentered perspective that goes beyond comprehending the surface meaning of words to discovering the logic of their interlocutors' utterances” (p. 203). In addition, O'Dowd's (2007) study examined the effectiveness of virtual intercultural contact on IC development using a combination of tools, such as email, web-based message boards, and video conferencing, and revealed

that the success of intercultural exchange “depends on their appropriate integration into the language classroom and that it is necessary to reassess the role of the teacher in telecollaborative exchange” (p. 144). This research suggested that students should receive explicit teacher guidance and training to develop intercultural awareness and various skills, such as “the ability to give insightful descriptions about their own culture and also to develop their ability to analyze and understand the cultural content which they receive in their online interaction” (O’Dowd, 2007, p. 149). In addition, instead of being a mere facilitator, teachers should take on different active roles, such as an ‘organizer,’ ‘intercultural partner,’ ‘model and coach,’ and ‘source and resource,’ in the exchange process (O’Dowd, 2007). It further offered implications for teacher training, including i) teachers need to know “how to engage members of the target culture and how to analyse the content of their interaction” and the different techniques “to develop their own guidelines for training their learners”; ii) teachers need to be aware of practical issues to resolve “many different types of practical problems and intercultural misunderstandings”; and iii) teachers need to be aware of “how to make suitable choices of online tools in order to suit their aims and their students’ particular learning context” (O’Dowd, 2007, p. 151). Lee’s (2009) study also emphasized teachers’ role, stating that it is essential for teachers to provide learners sufficient training to make them comfortable with new CMC tools and to “find an effective means of providing their students with acquisition-rich interaction through cross-cultural communication” (p. 440).

In addition to the importance of teachers’ role in intercultural learning in computer-mediated online environments, researchers have found that well-designed tasks (e.g., Lee, 2009) and a choice of CMC tools (e.g., Chun, 2011; O’Dowd, 2007) are also

critical and essential for success in developing learners' IC as well as enhancing computer-mediated learning opportunities in a meaningful and productive way. With regard to the choice of tools, scholars have noted that each CMC tool has "unique technical features and pedagogical values" (Lee, 2009, p. 440) and is "not neutral media in that each fosters a different kind of syntactic and pragmatic style" (Thorne, 2003; cited in Chun, 2011, p. 415). For example, asynchronous entries often contain "longer, syntactically more complex statements" but often lack "true interaction," while synchronous entries are "short, reactive, and less formal" (Chun, 2011, p. 415). In addition, O'Dowd (2007) study suggested that developing IC through telecollaboration can be best supported "when a combination of different online tools is used" by carrying out different functions and working on different aspects of IC (p. 148). Therefore, the appropriate choice of CMC tools depends on the intercultural learning aims, and well-designed task approaches are critical and significant for successful intercultural learning.

In summary, from the review on empirical works, much of the work has explored the possible pedagogical practice for IC development in this online environment using various CMC tools (e.g., email, chat, web-based message boards, blogs, Twitter, and podcasting). So far much of research has focused on the use of Web 1.0 tool but recently, there has been an ongoing educational shift from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0, focusing on IC (Guth & Helm, 2010). A number of studies have revealed positive intercultural learning experiences in telecollaboration, although some negative outcomes have been documented in certain cases. As for practical information, not only the importance of teachers' role, but also well-designed tasks and the careful choice of CMC tools are

frequently suggested for successful intercultural learning in the computer-mediated learning environment.

### **3.4 Emerging Research on Facebook use as an Online Environment for Teaching and Learning**

As noted above, existing L2 research on IC in the CMC context indicates that the majority of studies have adopted Web 1.0 technology (e.g., email, chat, and web-based discussion boards), whereas little research has been conducted using Web 2.0 tools (e.g., blogs, podcasts, and Twitter) for intercultural learning. That is, there are a few studies, but not many, seeking to integrate recent Web 2.0 technologies in intercultural learning in the current literature. Among Web 2.0 tools, Facebook is currently the most popular social networking site with millions of users, including students of all ages. Facebook is also considered the most popular platform for online social networking among university students (Kabilan et al., 2010). Recently, Facebook has emerged as a new online learning environment and has attracted the attention of many researchers, teachers, and practitioners. Even though Facebook was not created with educational purposes in mind (Dalsgaard, 2008), given its significant role in student life, there are ongoing discussions over the potential of this site to support student learning, and more and more educators are embracing this idea (e.g., Blankenship, 2011; Davis, 2010; Eberhardt, 2007; Griffith & Liyanage, 2008; Grosseck, Bran, & Tiru, 2011; Kitsis, 2008; Muñoz & Towner, 2009; Schwartz, 2010; Selwyn, 2007a, 2007b). To gain a sense of the growing interest in the educational viability and value of Facebook and its possibility for intercultural learning, in this section, I offer a research literature review on the topic on applications of

Facebook in formal learning environment. I first review the general features of Facebook and then move on to examine the current literature on Facebook in education.

### **3.4.1 An Overview of Facebook**

Facebook is the world's largest social network and currently connects more than 750 million active users (Facebook, 2011). Facebook was developed in 2004 by former Harvard University student Mark Zuckerberg and was initially an exclusive network for Ivy League college students. It was, of course, phenomenally successful, quickly expanding beyond these parameters and continuing to grow ever since (Bosch, 2009). It is reported that the majority of Facebook users are between 18 and 24 years old and that this user group is now the fastest growing at 74% per year ("Digitalbuzz," 2011).

Facebook offers an incredibly powerful online environment where anyone can have a voice, share almost anything they want, and connect and interact with each other.

#### ***Key Features of Facebook***

In large part, Facebook owes its success to several distinguishing features. Facebook enables users to create a personal *profile* space; add other users as *friends*; send *messages*; upload *content*, such as photos and videos; and make *connections* to other people (Eberhardt, 2007; Miller & Jensen, 2007; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010; Selwyn, 2009). These connections (or 'friends') are the core functionality of the social network site (Joinson, 2008). Another key feature of Facebook is the *wall*, a comment section in each user's profile where both the user and visitors (or 'friends') can leave messages and others can respond (Eberhardt, 2007; Miller & Jensen, 2007). In fact, the wall has become the main communication tool for social interactions among Facebook users.

Another unique and core feature of Facebook is its *news feed*, the first page that “displays all the profile information that has been updated by a user’s Friends” and is “automatically generated for all users every time they sign in” (Miller & Jensen, 2007, p. 19). Thus, users can browse and read all their friends’ recent updates on the first page they encounter when they log into Facebook (Eberhardt, 2007). This feature saves time and effort for users because they do not have to visit all of their friends’ profiles to see their recent activity. Additionally, in their personal profiles on Facebook, users can “include items such as relationship status, political views, contact information, personal interests, favorite books or movies, educational background, academic coursework, and many other types of data,” thus allowing them to determine how they wish to portray themselves to and for others (Eberhardt, 2007, p. 19).

Facebook also offers many other interesting applications. For example, users can form or join a ‘group’ in which users can share similar interests and topics, and instructors or students can create ‘courses’ with a link to a particular course at any institution to promote interaction and information sharing (Blattner & Fiori, 2009). Users can also install and join “third-party applications based on the Facebook platform, such as games, polls and quizzes or even create pages for different events” (Grosbeck et al., 2011, p. 2).

In the following, I review the literature with regard to Facebook use in formal learning context.

### **3.4.2 Research on Potential Educational Applications and Benefits of Facebook Use in a Formal Educational Setting**

As for conceptual arguments in favor of formally applying Facebook in the classroom, there has been a good deal of recent work outlining the benefits of using Facebook for learners (e.g., Blankenship, 2011; Davis, 2010; Eberhardt, 2007; Griffith & Liyanage, 2008; Kitsis, 2008; Muñoz & Towner, 2009; Schwartz, 2010). For example, Schwartz (2010) argues Facebook is worth considering as a new classroom commons by indicating “Facebook truly is an extension of the classroom in which all kinds of connection take place, some routine and some substantial” (p. 41). Adding to the advantageous features of Facebook use, Blankenship (2011) describes how Facebook inspires new creativity in the way subjects are taught and the possibility of “greater engagement, greater interest, [and] students taking more control and responsibility for their education” (p.40). In addition, Griffith and Liyanage (2008) explore the positive educational viability of Facebook by reviewing and comparing two social networking sites (i.e., Facebook and MySpace) to explore their benefits and limitations in relation to teaching and learning. A compelling article by Kitsis (2008) also supports the integration of Facebook into the classroom by suggesting a new direction for homework assignments—namely, creating engaging electronic homework assignments using the advantageous features of Facebook. She suggested that homework assignments on Facebook could encourage student dialog, offer collective learning opportunities, promote giving and receiving feedback from increasingly broader audiences, and enable quick and interactive responses among students and instructors.

In line with this, second and foreign language education has recently begun actively embracing the idea of using Facebook in formal educational settings. Since Facebook is the largest multilingual social networking site on the Internet ("Digitalbuzz," 2011) with an active users of hundred million, available in 70 languages, and 70% of its users are outside of the United States (Facebook, 2011), it has attracted many L2 researchers' and educators' attention in terms of the potential of Facebook use in L2 pedagogy (e.g., Blattner & Fiori, 2009; McBride, 2009; Reinhardt & Zander, 2011; Stevenson & Liu, 2010). Accordingly, L2 educators and researchers have started to focus on using Facebook in formal instructional contexts (e.g., Blattner & Fiori, 2009; Kabilan et al., 2010; Reinhardt & Zander, 2011). For example, Blattner and Fiori (2009) examined the possibilities and promises of Facebook use in L2 classrooms and highlighted the fact that Facebook offers the place for authentic language interactions and constructive educational experiences. As such, Facebook can enable sociopragmatic awareness—an aspect of language acquisition that can enhance individuals' sense of belonging and encourages learners' motivation and improved performance in language classes (Rovai, 2002, cited in Blattner & Fiori, 2009). In addition, Kabilan et al. (2010) and Reinhardt and Zander (2011) conducted empirical examinations to explore the use of Facebook in L2 learning. Specifically, Kabilan et al. (2010) investigated university students' Facebook usage and suggest Facebook can be a useful and meaningful learning environment to support L2 learning. In addition, they state how Facebook use enables students "to learn new words, build confidence, increase their motivation and positive attitude toward learning English" (p.185) by engaging in meaningful language-based activities. Reinhardt and Zander (2011) also conducted research on intermediate-level

learners at the American Intensive English Program (IEP) to investigate the impact of focused SNS instruction and SNS use, including Facebook. The results showed that SNS instruction helps learners develop awareness for using Facebook or other SNSs as a form of literacy practice and suggest potential for L2 learning in terms of students' development of transcultural, plurilingual, and technology-mediated identities. As such, Facebook is currently considered a promising platform for language learning, and many scholars have suggested its use in the language classroom.

While several empirical studies have been conducted to explore the possibility of pedagogical Facebook practice, there has been little research intentionally designed with explicit pedagogical goals in mind. In addition, there has been no research to explore Facebook use in intercultural learning yet. In a relation to Facebook use for IC development, researchers have noted the potential of informal Facebook use for enhancing cross-cultural understanding and awareness, which can further develop IC (cf. Eberhardt, 2007; Lee, 2009; Sykes et al., 2008). For example, Eberhardt (2007) describes how SNSs can offer students opportunities to learn about themselves, others, and relationships by taking on and interpreting different roles within their networks and cultivating tolerance and respect for diversity. Lee (2009) also indicates that SNS users can enhance their cross-cultural understanding by “establishing interpersonal relationships with cross-cultural partners” and having “rich interaction[s] through cross cultural communication” (p. 440).

Thus far, this discussion has reviewed the use of Facebook in formal educational contexts, demonstrating that Facebook can be more than just a social networking tool for students given the limitless potential for educational use. In the L2 education context,

research is increasingly examining the pedagogical possibilities and viability of Facebook in L2 learning. Facebook can be perceived as a possible place for learning linguistic and cultural knowledge, resulting in L2 learners' intercultural and linguistic competence (cf. Lee, 2009; Sykes et al., 2008). Although Facebook may offer great promise for L2 education, research offering practical information on what aspects of L2 learning can be developed with Facebook and how they can be implemented in a classroom setting is severely lacking. Thus far, few empirical studies have examined Facebook use in the L2 classroom. The current stage of Facebook research is just starting to shed light on L2 learning and has been in the process of building theoretical and practical bases and evidence to support the adoption of Facebook in classroom settings, yet more work needs to be done in this area. Notably, no attempt has been made to develop learners' IC through the use of Facebook, which is increasingly viewed as the main goal of L2 education. With regard to IC development, studies by Lee (2009) and Sykes et al. (2008) have noted that SNS use assists L2 learners' development of intercultural communicative competence, which is "defined as openness to difference and a capacity to contingently and dynamically interact with members of other speech communities and cultures" (Sykes et al., 2008, p. 533) by enabling "interpersonal relationships with cross-cultural partners and enhancing their cross-cultural understanding and awareness through rich communication" (Lee, 2009, p. 440). Accordingly, as Facebook promotes social interactions, offers interactive and collaborative learning environments (Teclehaimanot & Hickman, 2011), and encourages cross-cultural communication (Lee, 2009), it holds great promise for IC development. Thus, the current study on the educational value of

Facebook in informing intercultural teaching and learning in L2 instruction might lead to significant and meaningful outcomes for L2 pedagogy.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

This chapter reviewed the literature on expanding empirical research using various technological applications to develop learners' IC, ranging from Web 1.0 technology to recent Web 2.0 technology. It has clearly demonstrated that advances in technology play a critical role in intercultural learning in terms of enabling online intercultural interactions and communication across the world without time and space constraints as well as modifying learning environments, such as providing technological teaching tools (e.g., CMC tools) for integration into L2 instruction. The amount of empirical research exploring the effectiveness of technological application in supporting intercultural teaching and learning in L2 practice has significantly increased, and possible positive outcomes have been highlighted in terms of the adoption of CMC tools for IC development. Recently, Web 2.0 tools have emerged to inform IC development. Yet Facebook, the most popular Web 2.0 tool, has never been researched to study IC development in L2 research within the CMC context. Therefore, it also reviewed emerging Facebook research, exploring its educational possibilities in order to support and inform the current study, which examined its effectiveness in developing learners' IC. Facebook offers boundless pedagogical viabilities, and research to develop both theoretical and empirical foundations for the implementation of new Web 2.0 tools like Facebook into classrooms is needed. In particular, as of yet, no effort has been made to promote learners' IC, which is the main goal of today's L2 education, through the use of Facebook in formal educational settings; meanwhile, the informal use of Facebook has

been found to play a role in enhancing students' cross-cultural understanding and awareness as well as cultivating their tolerance and respect for diversity. In this sense, given the lack of empirically research on the use of Facebook to develop learners' IC, combined with the increasing focus on the use of technological CMC tools to develop learners' IC, the current study on the effectiveness of Facebook use on the development of IC in the classroom made significant contributions to improve current pedagogy. Therefore, my study not only expanded the existing research and provided further insights into the use of CMC tools in support of intercultural learning, but also informed pedagogical practice and developed more effective and efficient intercultural teaching and learning in the classroom.

## CHAPTER 4. METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Introduction

Web-based learning has created boundless opportunities for students to increase collaboration and sharing using an abundance of applications developed for such purposes (Bosch, 2009). Facebook is one of several Web 2.0 tools that is regarded as having potential applications for teaching and learning. Very little data exist, however, on using Facebook, particularly for intercultural learning, in current L2 research. Accordingly, the present study focused on the social networking site Facebook within the context of a South Korean university. Specific reference was made to possible applications of using Facebook to enhance learners' IC.

This study followed in the footsteps of Elola and Oskoz (2008) and Liaw (2006), which employed Byram's (1997) ICC model and Byram's (2000) assessment guidelines as an intercultural framework. Byram's (1997) ICC model is used exclusively in the majority of empirical research for intercultural learning in the context of online telecollaborative projects (cf. Belz, 2003; Elola & Oskoz, 2008; Forsman, 2010; Liaw, 2006; Liaw & Bunn-Le Master, 2010; O'Dowd, 2003). This model offers a conceptual and comprehensive approach that presents the main components of IC, namely, skills, attitudes, knowledge, and critical awareness. The approach describes how to deal with these components to develop learners' IC and "suggests ways in which the exchanges can be analyzed and assessed" (Elola & Oskoz, 2008, p. 455). In addition, Byram's (2000) assessment guidelines have been used as a tool in several empirical research studies (cf. Elola & Oskoz, 2008; Liaw, 2006; Liaw & Bunn-Le Master, 2010) to examine how learners develop IC. Byram's (1997) ICC model and Byram's (2000) assessment

guidelines, therefore, were central components of the current research.

In addition, the present study took a qualitative approach to inquiry, which studies concepts in specific settings in an effort "...to make sense of or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005 as cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 36). Specifically, this study employed a virtual ethnography approach and used qualitative interviews as primary methods to collect data. These approaches followed the research of Bosch (2009), who adopted virtual ethnography, which is "a form of online ethnography in which the methods of a traditional ethnography can be meaningfully transferred to the Internet," to explore the possible benefits of using Facebook for teaching and learning (Bosch, 2009, p. 188). In addition, a post-course survey was administered.

This chapter describes in detail the methodology that was used in this qualitative study, including the research questions, the concept of virtual ethnography, the specific methods employed, data collection, data analysis, and validity measures. This information elucidates the process of implementing this study and how this study was conducted.

## **4.2 Research Questions**

The present investigation encompassed two main aims: (1) explore the educational possibilities of using Facebook to promote IC among Korean EFL students and (2) offer practical guidance of Facebook as a new pedagogical tool can be implemented to develop IC in the classroom setting.

The guiding questions the present study sought to answer, therefore, were as

follows:

RQ1. In what ways or to what extent does using Facebook as a CMC tool between students in Korea and the U.S promote Korean EFL learners' development of IC?

RQ2. How do learners view the effectiveness of using Facebook (a CMC tool) for intercultural learning?

RQ3. How can the instructional practices of using Facebook for developing learners' IC be approached and realized in an actual EFL classroom?

### **4.3 Virtual Ethnography**

The present research was designed around a virtual ethnography approach, which identifies key markers for exploring data collection. Hine (2000) introduced the methodology of virtual ethnography; indeed, as the term implies, virtual ethnography is “the practice of ethnography, but in a virtual or online setting – in other words, on the Internet” as the site of the research (Bosch, 2009, p. 187).

As a qualitative approach, ethnographic research “describes and interprets the shared and learned patterns of values, behaviors, beliefs, and language of a culture-sharing groups” (Harris, 1968 as cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 69). In other words, it aims to explain the meaning of behaviors and interactions among members under ordinary or particular circumstances that implicate a cultural process such as a certain group, community, institution, or situation as a whole (Firat & Kabakci Yurdakul, 2011). As such, ethnography can take place “anywhere, anytime, and of virtually anyone or any process, as long as human social behavior is involved” (Walcott, 2008, p. 73). Creswell (2007) noted that as a process, ethnographic research involves “participant observation,

in which the researcher is immersed in the day-to-day lives of the people” (p. 68) and interviews with the group participants who can describe or explain their everyday experiences. Thus, the major tools for ethnographic studies are in-depth interviews and observing study participants on a near-constant basis (Firat & Kabakci Yurdakul, 2011).

In many of today’s spaces—offices, classrooms, homes, and social environments—technologies have offered “new sites of convergence, new tools for expression” and newly situated social interaction and social behaviors (Paech, 2009, p. 195). Our technologically-mediated social environment and social behaviors present unique challenges for researchers and request new calls for methods of conducting studies in CMC environments (Paech, 2009). Accordingly, “virtual” ethnography has emerged as a new qualitative research methodology by adopting the traditional features of ethnography (Firat & Kabakci Yurdakul, 2011).

Hine (2000), who offered the most comprehensive methodological framework for implementing virtual ethnography (Evans, 2010), argued that the Internet can be considered a site for social interaction, a set of diverse social contexts, and a separate cultural sphere. Indeed, it embodies “a place, cyberspace, where culture is formed and reformed” (Hine, 2000, p. 9). In addition, CMCs provide a rich and complex form of social experience and interaction (Hine, 2000) and form a community in their own right (Rheingold, 1993). Rheingold used the term “virtual community” to indicate “the level of commitment and connection experienced by users” (Hine, 2000, p. 17). That is, not only is CMC seen to provide a site for interaction and a distinct virtual community as a separate space, but also meaningful social relations existed in “this new territory for the formation of behavioral and cultural practice” (Hine, 2000, p. 115), so that it becomes

ethnographically available. Researchers can enter cyberspace, therefore, to investigate the site of research by the process of adopting ethnography in the virtual community or online environment.

As described above, virtual ethnography studies “the shared meaning of the behavior, the language, and the interaction” (Creswell, 2007, p. 69), as traditional ethnography does, but it does so in a virtual or online environment, which leads to different means of collecting data using various computer-based methods (Evans, 2010). As Hine (2000) explained, instead of going to particular field sites, virtual ethnography follows field connections, because “the field is now text on a screen and the group of people involved in the community” in the online environment (Evans, 2010, p. 11). Participant observation is still a key feature of virtual ethnographic studies, which enables researchers to gain firsthand experience of the online culture (Evans, 2010; Firat & Kabakci Yurdakul, 2011). For virtual ethnographic research to be successful, participant observation is fundamental; indeed, the researcher must become a part of online community for an extended period of time (Firat & Kabakci Yurdakul, 2011). In this case, rather than long-term immersion, virtual ethnography is “a process of intermittent engagement” (Evans, 2010, p. 12). That is, it is not necessary for researchers to participate in all the activities but to “be aware of what is going on in a general sense” (Firat & Kabakci Yurdakul, 2011, p. 114). As another important method for collecting data in ethnography, however, the interview and survey can be “supplanted by the collection of pre-existing information that is abundant in online environments such as social networking sites and Internet forums,” because “information can be located and archived from the Internet without it having to be recorded and transcribed” (Evans, 2010,

p. 11). Among current research, several studies have conducted virtual ethnography to explore virtual communities on the web (cf. Bosch, 2009; Firat & Kabakci Yurdakul, 2011). For example, Bosch (2009) used virtual ethnography and qualitative interviews to explore the positive benefits Facebook offers for teaching and learning. Firat and Kabakci Yurdakul's (2011) study also adopted virtual ethnography to explore the three-dimensional virtual world of Second Life. To collect data, it conducted detailed participant observations using video recording, screen capture software, and third-party web metric software programs. The use of computer-based methods enable researchers to record all the things the participant–observer sees, which is not practically possible in a real-world environment (Firat & Kabakci Yurdakul, 2011). In addition, virtual ethnography introduces technical tools for collecting and describing data on the web. For example, V-Tracker can determine “the number of visits, number of unique visitors, average time per visit and avatar details,” and Lifecrawler can determine “Second Life traffic data, including visits, duration and specific activities within a location” (Sherman & Tillies, 2007 as cited in Firat & Kabakci Yurdakul, 2011, p. 115).

The present study adopted virtual ethnography to investigate the potential of Facebook for intercultural learning. With the help of detailed participant observation, it led to an understanding of online intercultural interaction in Facebook. In addition, the ethnographic method of using interviews and a survey was applied to examine intercultural experiences for learners. Section 4.5 explains in further detail the methods used to collect data for this study.

## 4.4 Research Design

### 4.4.1 Investigation Site

The present study was carried out at an intermediate EFL course, Practical English II, at Korea National University of Transportation in Korea in collaboration with Health communication course at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) in the U.S during the fall semester of 2012. Each class met once a week for 15 weeks. Korea National University of Transportation offers several levels of EFL courses, from beginner to advanced, that are common core courses for undergraduate students who are non-native speakers of English. This particular course, the site of this research, aimed to assist learners in becoming competent English language speakers and be equipped with a global mindset in our increasingly globalized world. The course promoted learners' communicative competence and IC. Considering language as a part of culture, the course used various media outlets such as movies based on famous literature (e.g., *Sense and Sensibility*) and adopted the social networking site, Facebook, to promote cultural understanding and IC, a fact made explicit in the syllabus for that course. Facebook offered students the opportunity to reflect on several intercultural topics and put their intercultural experiences into words through interaction with native speakers of English from the U.S. Thus, it was hoped that learners could be able to use what they learned in this course to participate successfully in intercultural communication with the use of English language throughout their experiences in the global world (Course syllabus, Practical English II, 2012). In addition, the health communication course at IUPUI aimed to develop learners' intercultural communication skills and practical skills in designing public health campaigns by analyzing a target audience, South Korea using

Facebook as a CMC tool. Therefore, this course in the U.S. joined to participate in this study to communicate and interact with Korean EFL students to learn cultural backgrounds and create a pamphlet promoting international health campaign.

#### **4.4.2 Participants**

This study mainly focused on understanding IC development of Korean EFL learners. However, as noted, participants for this study were divided into two groups. One group consisted of Korean EFL learners who were taking the EFL course as described above. All of participants in this group were intermediate-level English language learners. The other group included American students who were taking Heath Communication course at IUPUI. These participants were undergraduate students who were native speakers of English and had a background in North American culture. These two groups participated in this research and met and interacted with each other in the online learning environment offered by Facebook. The process for this interaction is elaborated in detail in the following section.

#### **4.4.3 Procedures**

Prior to the course, a researcher set up a “Facebook group” on Facebook under the course title, *Practical English II*, for educational purposes. In this online space, participants in the present study were invited to join and interact with one another. The Facebook page for the purpose of the course was only seen and accessible to participants in this study due to privacy issues. Both the researcher and a partner instructor had discussed and designed online tasks and intercultural topics that were assigned to students through Facebook during the course. Further detail regarding tasks and topic are illustrated below in this section. To facilitate the process and avoid technical difficulties,

the instructor, with the assistance of another researcher prepared a step-by-step handout instructing students how to join and use Facebook. The guide showed students how to register and use Facebook, reviewed the different features and characteristics of Facebook, encouraged students to become familiar with the Facebook platform, and helped them feel confident using the platform on the first course session. In addition, students were informed that the instructor and their classmates would potentially be able to view their own individual Facebook page and were instructed to keep Facebook page for their course purpose private and separate from the rest of their uses of Facebook.

In addition, the present study took the appropriate measures and followed processes to gain approval by IRB due to ethical issues surrounding the research. In reporting on this research, the anonymity of participants was guaranteed, with no specific reference to the content of any specific participant (Bosch, 2009). In addition, informed consent forms were distributed to participants at the beginning of the course to explain the nature of the study.

All the tasks to be undertaken were scheduled for each week based in the course syllabus (see overview of tasks in Appendix I). For the tasks on Facebook, participants were encouraged to use various tools that Facebook offers to write entries such as the “share” image or link on YouTube or other video-sharing Web sites, upload photos, and so on. Students were required to use certain Facebook tools at least once as a way of making sure they know how to use them. For the weekly-based task, participants were asked to write more than one entry per assigned topic, as well as more than two responses to other participants’ entries on Facebook in order to facilitate students’ interaction. This amounted to a total of a minimum of three entries every week, each of which was graded.

Students were encouraged to write more entries than those assigned; for example, they posted entries related to personal interests, class assignments, or any subjects related to intercultural topics. In this study, the total of 439 postings and 813 comments were found to indicate students' active interaction.

### ***Topics and Tasks of Facebook***

All the tasks were carefully designed to allow successful intercultural interaction to occur by taking into consideration Chapelle's (2003) framework for technology-based tasks and Byram's (1997) model of ICC. Because the current study adopted Byram's (1997) model of ICC as a central framework, the goals of tasks relate to developing components of IC (e.g., knowledge, attitudes, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness). As noted in the literature review, this model's components serve to specify teaching goals and objectives (Byram, 1997) that can help language teachers plan their instruction more intentionally; more specifically, "to include objectives, materials, and methods that develop the specific elements of intercultural competence" (Byram, 2009, p. 331). Topics and tasks, therefore, were chosen carefully to address the above-noted five dimensions of Byram's (1997) model of IC. All the tasks, their relevant topics for intercultural exchange and learning on Facebook and the aims of each task are summarized in detail in Appendix I.

Based on the characteristics of the tasks, the course was divided into three phases. In phase I (weeks 3-7), the tasks were designed mainly for discussion. Participants read entries posted by a researcher on Facebook and discussed the intercultural topics and issues with other participants on Facebook with the use of various tools and function that Facebook offers. In phase II (weeks 9-11), students were divided into three small groups,

and each group took a turn choosing an appropriate intercultural topic for discussion, which was posted on Facebook. The tasks during phase II were not only allow students to explore, analyze, and reflect on intercultural topics on their own, but also provided opportunities for learners to choose various topics based on their own interests. In phase III (week 13), students was assigned the task of conducting the ethnographic interview with their partners in the U.S., an approach that has been used frequently to develop learners' development of IC (e.g., Lee, 2009, 2011b; O'Dowd, 2007). For example, Lee's (2011b) study showed that ethnographic interviews with native speakers in telecollaboration projects supported learners' IC development. The ethnographic interview is regarded as "an effective means for students to develop their ICC" (Belz, 2007 as cited in Lee, 2009, p. 431), as it fosters "real-world interaction in which an insider perspective is revealed in order to better understand cross-cultural differences" (Lee, 2011b, p. 90) and promotes "learners' openness and curiosity toward the target culture and raises cross-cultural awareness" (Bateman, 2002 as cited in Lee, 2011b, p. 90). Thus, this ethnographic interview task was assigned to students in Phase III. For this task, students were grouped with their native-speaking partners and prepared interview questions in a group. They then conducted the interview with their partners by posting questions on Facebook; in this case, students were also encouraged to use various Facebook tools (video links, images, and etc.). This gave students opportunities to reflect on their intercultural experiences and interests with their partners in the U.S.

Throughout the tasks designed for phases I, II, and III, students could be involved actively in the online learning environment for IC development by interacting and collaborating with other participants.

#### **4.4.4 The Researcher's Role**

One of the defining characteristics of qualitative research is the role of the researcher. It was thus critical to clearly define my roles as a researcher in this study.

##### ***Participant–Observer***

Participant observation is a key tool in this virtual ethnographic study. The major role of the researcher in the present study was to act as a participant-observer. In collecting data, the researcher is the main instrument because he or she decides what to observe in the setting and what to collect as data (Merriam, 2002). As a participant–observer, the researcher consciously observed the online setting of the research, its participants, various acts, and events. A more detailed description of participant observation in this research is elaborated in the Section 4.5, Data collection.

##### ***Organizer***

In computer-mediated online environments, researchers have found that well-designed tasks (e.g., Lee, 2009) and an appropriate choice of CMC tools (e.g., Chun, 2011; O'Dowd, 2007) are essential for success in developing learners' IC and enhancing computer-mediated learning opportunities in a meaningful and productive way. In this regard, the researcher in the present study acted as an organizer. As such, I have chosen Facebook as a CMC tool based on the present study's aims and the great promise and possibilities Facebook offers for developing IC. In addition, in a response to the importance of promoting learners' "ability to give insightful descriptions about their own culture and also to develop their ability to analyze and understand the cultural content which they receive in their online interaction" for developing IC (O'Dowd, 2007, p. 149),

all the tasks were designed to promote the learners' abilities for successful intercultural learning to occur. As such, the design considers Chapelle's (2003) framework for technology-based tasks and components and the objectives of Byram's (1997) model of ICC.

### ***Trainer***

The common belief surrounding intercultural learning that "contact between cultures automatically leads to intercultural learning and to the development of positive attitudes towards the target culture" (O'Dowd, 2003, p. 118) has been criticized in many studies (Kitade, 2012). The literature, therefore, has shown the importance of the teachers' role in CMC when it comes to making online intercultural learning environments more effective and helpful so that learners truly benefit from telecollaborative intercultural learning opportunities (e.g., O'Dowd, 2007; Stickler & Emke, 2011; Ware & Kramsch, 2005). Lee's (2009) study emphasized the teachers' role stating that it is essential for teachers to provide learners with sufficient training to make them comfortable with new CMC tools and to "find an effective means of providing their students with acquisition-rich interaction through cross-cultural communication" (p. 440). In this regard, the researcher in the present study took on the role as a trainer to provide students with a detailed introduction to use Facebook itself and for intercultural exchange. This was achieved through a handout and a presentation related to using Facebook on the Web to help students become familiar with using Facebook. This task took place during the first class of the course (see week 1, Appendix I).

## **4.5 Data Collection**

Data collection was conducted over one semester beginning in September 2012, during the 15 weeks of the course. To collect data, the current research incorporated primarily virtual ethnography and qualitative content analysis of student Facebook profiles as well as comments, updates, postings, links, images, and etc. The researcher took the virtual ethnographic approach by becoming immersed in the day-to-day, online interactions of learners and obtained textual and visual data through students' Facebook profiles along with detailed ethnographic notes gained from participant observation. In addition, qualitative interviews and a post-course survey were conducted with the learners. Further details regarding data collecting procedures and data sources are provided in the following sections.

### **4.5.1 Procedures**

#### ***Participant Observations***

During the first phase of data collection, virtual ethnography was adopted to engage in participant observation. Two approaches, “systematic and exhaustive participation as well as immersive involvement in the online community” are critical factors for virtual ethnography (Hine, 2000 as cited in Hemmi, Bayne, & Land, 2009, p. 20). In particular, in-depth participant observation is vitally important for successful virtual ethnography research (Firat & Kabakci Yurdakul, 2011).

Accordingly, participant observation was undertaken to gain insight into the online setting Facebook offers and the online interaction among participants. Detailed observation forms as used in Firat and Kabakci Yurdakul's (2011) study of using virtual

ethnography related to the virtual world of Second life was used to assist in gathering data. The researcher observed online interaction and kept detailed observation notes, rather than becoming overly involved (Firat & Kabakci Yurdakul, 2011).

Regarding the objects of participant observation, as Bosch (2009) explained, “participation on social network sites leaves online ‘traces’ (Boyd, 2007), which reveal user’s attitudes, social relationships and affiliations in offline spaces,” and text in the online setting provides “the discursive space for the presentation of self to others” (p. 187). Accordingly, because the research site was “text” on Facebook and participants were involved in this online community of Facebook (Evans, 2010), the main data was drawn from “sources such as texts, images, or emoticons” (Evans, 2010, p. 12), which as such became the main objects of observation.

The present research engaged in detailed participant observation, with the schedule established for each week during the course. To record online observations, the main instruments were ethnographic notes along with detailed observation forms and screen capture software. As Firat and Kabakci Yurdakul (2011) explained, detailed observation forms transform “observation notes into descriptive indexes and indexes of researcher’s comments,” which enables the data to be “transcribed and made ready for detailed analysis” (p. 113). In addition, using screen capture software recorded relevant text, activities, and interactions on Facebook; indeed, such data couldn’t be captured in a real-world physical environment.

### ***Qualitative Interviews***

In the second phase of the research, in-depth, semi-structured, qualitative interviews, another primary source of data in the present study, were conducted to obtain

another level of detailed qualitative data from both the instructor and Korean EFL students. Qualitative research interviews seek “to describe the meanings of central themes in the life world of the subjects” (Mack, Woodson, Macqueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005, p. 16). Interviews are particularly useful for capturing the story behind a participant’s experiences, allowing the interviewer to pursue in-depth information around the topic (Kvale, 1996 as cited in Valenzuela & Shrivastava, n.d.). Through interviewing, researchers can begin to understand the topics based on learners’ explanations, gaining insight that the researchers cannot see through observation (Glesne, 2006).

Accordingly, the present study conducted the qualitative, semi-structured interviews to gain a better understanding of the online learning environment of Facebook for developing IC based on participants sharing their experiences, perceptions, opinions, and attitudes. Like screen captures, it was not possible to obtain such data through participant observation.

The interviews took place at the end of semester and were face-to-face interviews with the instructor and participants respectively. The interviews were scheduled at “convenient, available, appropriate locations” and times (Glesne, 2006, p. 86). Before the interview, the formal consent forms regarding interviews were distributed to the interviewees. The researcher explained the purpose of the interview and addressed the terms of confidentiality, the interview format, and the general length of the interview. Each interview lasted approximately 1 hour. After the consent forms were signed and all relevant information regarding the interview was shared, including the fact that the interview would be audio-recorded, the interview took place.

Two different sets of interview questions were prepared for the instructor and students, respectively (see interview questions in Appendix II). The questions were semi-structured, which enabled the researchers “to obtain consistency in the data in terms of relevancy to...research concerns” (Hemmi et al., 2009, p. 21) and to collect information about the students’ and instructors’ experiences. Interview questions for students fell into four main categories: (1) background information, (2) intercultural competence, (3) perspective on using Facebook and its effectiveness for intercultural learning, and (4) practical information. Interview questions for the instructor were designed to collect the instructor’s experiences and reflections on instructional practice of using Facebook, including perceptions and opinions concerning the actualization of using Facebook in delivering instructional material.

### *Post-course survey*

In the final phase of the present research, a survey was conducted to collect data at the end of the semester. In this case, a survey was used as a qualitative tool in that it aimed to explore students’ perceptions and attitudes in relation to using Facebook for intercultural learning. A qualitative survey aims to determine “the diversity” and establish “the meaningful variation (relevant dimensions and values)” of some topic of interest within that population, whereas a quantitative survey attempts to describe “numerical distributions of variables,” such as “frequencies, means or other parameters” in the population (Jansen, 2010, para 5-6).

The survey method is commonly adopted in Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) research (Levy & Stockwell, 2006). Noteworthy is that surveys in recent CALL research have focused primarily on “student perceptions and attitudes in

relation to the matter at hand” (Levy & Stockwell, 2006, p. 145). As such, several empirical studies related to developing IC within the CMC context have employed a survey as a part of the data collection to examine the participants’ perceptions on Web 2.0 tools and the research project itself (cf. Lee, 2009, 2011b; Su, 2010).

Accordingly, the present study employed the survey method following the research of Lee (2009), who studied how blogs and podcasting facilitated intercultural exchanges and used survey results to record the students’ reaction to the project, as well as Lee (2011b), who used survey results to record students’ perceptions on blog use. The survey in this study also aimed to evaluate Korean EFL students’ perceptions and reactions toward using Facebook and its effectiveness on their intercultural learning experience.

The survey was designed using SurveyMonkey ([www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)), a free online survey generator. The survey consisted of 15 statements using a 5-point Likert scale anchored by 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree* to elicit students’ perceptions (Lee, 2009) (see survey questions in Appendix III).

The survey was distributed to Korean students at the end of the semester by posting a link to the survey on Facebook. The results of the survey provided a more complete picture of the effectiveness of using Facebook for this course.

#### **4.6 Data Analysis**

Data to be analyzed for the present study was drawn from textual and visual data obtained through Facebook profiles; ethnographic notes from participant observation; audio-recorded, post-semester interviews with the instructor and students; and the post-

course survey results.

Data analysis is the process of evaluating the data as a way to make sense of the information collected (Stake, 1995). Creswell (2007) explained the process of data analysis as follows:

*Data analysis in qualitative research consists of preparing and organizing the data (i.e. text data as in transcripts, or image data as in photographs) for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion (p. 148).*

Accordingly, for the data analysis, all the ethnographic notes and information from Facebook profiles were examined closely and organized into transcripts and image files. All of the audio-recorded interviews were transcribed. In addition, the survey results that were generated using SurveyMonkey were captured as an image file. After the data was prepared, the researcher read all the data entirely several times, became immersed in the details, and tried to get a sense of the information available (Creswell, 2007). Thereafter, qualitative analytic coding was conducted using two methods, open coding and focused coding, as suggested by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995). In open coding, the researcher identified and formulated emerging ideas and themes or issues throughout the data. In focused coding, the primary method used for this study, the researcher determined core themes and sorted the data accordingly. The data was broken down further into subthemes to support the major ideas, along with analytic comments. In this case, three different areas of focus related to the core themes were suggested depending on the purposes of study: (1) learners' IC development, (2) students'

perceptions and attitudes, and (3) practical issues to inform current practice.

To assess learners' development of IC, data was analyzed by applying Byram's (2000) assessment guidelines. This research followed Elola and Oskoz's (2008) study, which used Byram's (2000) assessment guidelines to assess students' IC development in the context of using blogs as a CMC tool (see Appendix IV, and V). The assessment criteria included: (1) interest in other people's way of life, (2) knowledge about another country and culture, (3) knowledge about the intercultural communication process, (4) the ability to cope with living in a different culture, and (5) the ability to change one's perspective. All the data was content analyzed and coded based on these assessment criteria to understand the effect of this online learning environment as they related to the various categories of Byram's (1997) model of IC.

In addition, the survey results of the mean score and standard deviation were analyzed to understand the students' perceptions and attitudes toward using Facebook and the effectiveness of this course for their intercultural learning experience. In this case, analyzing the survey revealed a broad picture of the learners' perspectives. Along with the survey data, the content of other data such as interviews and observations were analyzed and coded to elicit additional information about students' experiences and reactions.

Lastly, to draw practical implications, all of the data (i.e., interviews and observations) was closely analyzed and coded to generate discussions for future practices related to intercultural learning.

## 4.7 Validity

Validity in qualitative research refers to the trustworthiness of the research (Glesne, 2006). Validity is “an attempt to assess the *accuracy* of the findings” (Creswell, 2007, p. 206). Validation is a comprehensive research process rather than verification itself in that it is established by ensuring continuously in the process of collecting and analyzing the data from the beginning to the end of the study (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998 as cited in O'Neill, 2008). The present research adopted several validation strategies Creswell (2007) suggested, which qualitative researchers have used frequently to establish validity. These strategies include: (1) prolonged engagement and persistent observation, (2) triangulation, (3) peer review and (4) rich, thick description.

### *Prolonged engagement and persistent observation*

Being engaged and immersed with participants in the research setting for a long period of time lends validity and vitality to research (Fetterman, 1998 as cited in Creswell, 2007). In addition, persistent observation aims to identify “characteristics and elements in the setting that are most relevant to the object being studied and focusing on them in detail” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 304). Through prolonged engagement and persistent observation, researchers can “make decisions about what is salient to the study, relevant to the purpose of the study and of interest for focus” (Creswell, 2007, p. 207). Lincoln and Guba (1985) also noted that “prolonged engagement provides scope, persistent observation provides depth” to a study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 304). Accordingly, the researcher was immersed and engaged deeply with the online setting Facebook offers by investigating for a sufficient time period and gathering an adequate number of detailed observations in order to ensure validity.

### ***Triangulation***

Triangulation is a strategy in which multiple sources of data are collected to establish the validity and reliability of the research (Merriam, 2002 as cited in Meidl, 2009). With triangulation, the researcher can “make use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence” (Creswell, 2007, p. 208). In addition, using multiple data sources “maximize[s] the range of data that might contribute to the researcher’s understanding of the research” (Knafl & Breitmayer, 1991 as cited in Jannetti, 2005, para 21). Because validity increases through the use of multiple sources, data from interviews, survey results, textual and visual data gained from observations, and ethnographic notes were collected to establish the validity and reliability of the educational potential of using Facebook to develop IC. In addition, to avoid using biased data, multiple data resources were examined to gain evidence of themes that emerge frequently throughout the study (O’Neill, 2008).

### ***Peer Review***

Peer review or debriefing offers “an external check of the research process” (Creswell, 2007, p. 208). This technique checks the accuracy of the researcher’s understanding and interpretations of reality to help establish validity and credibility (Meidl, 2009; Merriam, 2002). Thus, peer review was conducted to help ensure this study’s validity. The researcher enlisted the help of two peers who are doctoral students at Pennsylvania State University to review the raw data and help verify that the findings are plausible (Meidl, 2009).

### ***Rich, Thick Description***

Rich, thick description is a strategy “to ensure external validity and provide context for generalizability within qualitative inquiry” (Merriam, 2002 as cited in Meidl, 2009, p. 60). Using detailed description enables “readers to make decisions regarding transferability because the writer describes in detail the participants or setting under study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 209). In other words, readers should be able to “transfer information to other settings and to determine whether the findings can be transferred” (Creswell, 2007, p. 209). Accordingly, to ensure the validity of my research, thick descriptions of observations and verbatim transcripts of interviews were generated (O'Neill, 2008). Furthermore, using the screen capture software to record activities and text on Facebook, using audio recording to record all the interviews, and using the detailed observation form for ethnographic notes during observation, the data was adequately prepared for thick description. Through such rich description, the present study offered key insights into students’ use of Web 2.0 and social networking sites, which may be transferable to other contexts, at least within South Korea.

### **4.8 Chapter Summary**

This chapter provides a detailed overview of the methodology that was employed for the present study. First, the research questions that guided this study toward a qualitative study research design are presented. This chapter then introduces the concept of virtual ethnography, which is an appropriate and relevant approach for this study of the online learning environment offered by Facebook. Next, the research design such as participants, the setting, study procedures, and the researcher’s roles are described to give a detailed and specific picture of the research. In addition, data collection procedures for

participant observation, face-to-face qualitative interviews, and the post-course survey are discussed, followed by procedures for data analysis. Lastly, this chapter has described ways to ensure the validity of this research, which includes prolonged engagement and persistent observation, triangulation, peer review, and rich, thick description. Overall, this chapter elaborates in detail how this study was conducted.

## **CHAPTER 5. DEVELOPMENT OF KOREAN LEARNERS'**

### **INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

Both the current chapter 5 and the following chapter 6 elaborate the findings of a 15-week telecommunicative classroom-based study. The study was designed to explore the effectiveness of using Facebook in developing Korean EFL learners' IC through intercultural communication between Korean EFL students at the Korean National University of Transportation in South Korea and American students at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) in the U.S. during the fall semester of 2012. This study focused only on the Korean participants since it tried to look at how Facebook could create opportunities for Korean EFL learners for their development of IC in order to inform EFL pedagogy.

The aims of this research were to (a) explore the pedagogical viability of the use of Facebook as a new computer-mediated communication (CMC) tool to develop Korean EFL learners' IC and (b) offer practical guidance in Facebook use as a form of computer-mediated language learning environment and a new pedagogical tool in the classroom setting. This chapter focuses on the findings regarding how Korean learners developed IC throughout the course that implemented Facebook as a CMC tool and the next chapter presents the practical findings related to the adoption of a Web 2.0 tool, Facebook, to develop Korean EFL learners' IC in the classroom setting to inform and contribute to current EFL classroom practices.

To generate the findings, as described in chapter 4, the current research undertook several close and detailed examinations of all the data that were obtained by virtual ethnography, which included online interactions of learners and the textual and visual data from students' Facebook entries (the total of 439 postings and 813 comments), as well as detailed ethnographic notes, qualitative interviews, and a post-course survey with the learners. Importantly, qualitative content analysis and analytic coding of all the data were carried out to identify and formulate emerging ideas and themes. The discovered main ideas and themes were further sorted according to the main purposes of the study: (1) learners' IC development through Facebook use in the classroom, (2) students' perceptions and attitudes, and (3) practical issues associated with using Facebook, a Web 2.0 tool, to inform current practice.

In this chapter, the findings that emerged in this study with regard to how Korean EFL learners developed IC in this course are elucidated with detailed analytic discussion.

## **5.2 Intercultural Competence Development**

For assessment of the development of Korean EFL learners' IC (or lack thereof), as described in chapter 4, the qualitative data of this study, including intercultural communication entries on Facebook and interviews with Korean EFL students, were content-analyzed and coded within the framework of Byram's (1997) ICC model and Byram's (2000) assessment guidelines (consistent with Elola and Oskoz (2008) and Liaw (2006) studies). Accordingly, the formulated themes and issues emerging from the data were identified with the assessment criteria presented in Byram's (2000) guidelines for assessment of intercultural experiences. The intent was to understand the effect of this Facebook online learning environment on developing learners' IC as related to the

various categories of Byram's (1997) model of IC, which help learners become 'intercultural speakers' (Elola & Oskoz, 2008). Byram's (2000) assessment criteria include (a) interest in other people's way of life, (b) knowledge about another country and culture, (c) knowledge of the intercultural communication process, (d) the ability to cope with living in a different culture, and (e) the ability to change one's perspective. The following sections examine the Korean EFL learners' experiences using Facebook in the course in light of Byram's (2000) categories for the purpose of considering how these experiences may have contributed to any IC development in the course.

### **5.2.1 Interest in Other People's Way of Life (Attitude)**

The first factor for assessing learners' IC development is the most fundamental component of IC, *intercultural attitude*. Attitude refers to "curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other culture and belief about one's own" (Byram, 1997, p. 57). For this attitudinal perspective category, Byram (2000) suggested two distinct subcategories to observe how the *attitude* component of IC can be developed and assessed based on the perspective of Korean learners' interest in other people's way of life. The two subcategories are (a) interest in other people's experience of daily life, particularly those things not usually presented to outsiders through the media, and (b) interest in the daily experience of a variety of social groups within a society, not only the dominant culture. Furthermore, even though Byram's (2000) guidelines presented only two subcategories as assessment criteria for the learners' attitude factor in the IC model, since more meaningful and significant themes related to this category emerged to show what Korean learners obtained in this study, those additional identified themes belonging to this attitudinal category are elaborated in this section, including (c) interest in others'

perspective on learners' own culture and (d) interest in being more involved in others' culture and people. Each subcategory is detailed with data and analytic explanations in what follows.

***i) Interest in other people's experience of daily life, particularly those things not usually presented to outsiders through the media***

As this subcategory indicates, Korean learners displayed their interest in their intercultural communication partners in the U.S. with regard to their various daily life experiences, such as food, clothing, hobbies, sports, online games they play in their free time, and the job market that U.S. college students might face. Among all their interests in American's daily life experiences, Korean students mentioned school life in the U.S. most frequently. One student showed his interest in American students' high school life in the following comment:

*Student #1: "I want to know about their high school life. In the movies, they go to proms ... while we just study for the entrance exam during high school. They seem like they are enjoying their lives. They go to school on their skateboard. They live the life they pursue and they seem different from us. We go to college based on our exam score. They seem to take into account their interests and aptitudes as priorities."*

This comment comes out during the interview that asked about what still piqued students' interest after this course. As the Korean and American learners were both current students, they were in a stage of life marked by common experiences but they also were able to identify differences between school life in Korea and the U.S. This remark indicates that these differences drove Student #1 to want to learn more about American school culture.

Another of the learners who mentioned their interest in Americans' school life was found to directly ask their interview partner about school life in the U.S., as seen in the following entry on Facebook (see Figure 1):



**Figure 1.** One Korean Learner's Facebook Posting during the Interview Task

As seen in this posting, this Korean student expressed particular interest in American school culture and wanted to know how it differs from his own school culture.

In addition, with regard to interest in daily life experiences, one Korean student wondered if what people see on American TV dramas about relationships between lovers is really what American people do in their daily experiences:

*Student #2: "I asked in the one-on-one interview, but my partner has not answered yet. I enjoy watching American soap operas, and I was very surprised at how many kiss scenes and love scenes they have. I wanted to know if that is the reality in the U.S."*

Student #2's entry on Facebook asking the interview partner about American's love relationships was as follows (see Figure 2):



**Figure 2.** The Student #2’s Facebook Posting during the Interview Task

From looking at both the comment and the Facebook entry, one can see that the student wanted to confirm what he had learned from indirect media (e.g., TV drama) about American people’s daily life, which seemed so different from his own culture. In this case, the differences he discovered resulted in his interest in American people’s way of life and his direct question to his U.S. interview partner, which was one of the tasks in the course. It is interesting to see that the student did not simply accept what he had seen on TV as “true” but instead wanted to verify this with an informant from the target (U.S.) culture. This might suggest an awareness of cultural stereotypes and the distorted images that sometimes emerge from popular media as well as recognition that intercultural communication through Facebook offered opportunities to directly ask questions to U.S. ‘insiders’, thereby obtaining insights that might affirm or overcome cultural stereotypes and mistaken information about American culture and people.

In sum, Korean learners clearly show their interest in American’s various daily life experiences by interacting with their U.S. partners; their interest encompasses from the U.S. partners’ college life, how they got into college, what they do in their free time

and the job market that U.S. college students might face, to love relationships in order to better understand the American people.

***ii) Interest in the daily experience of a variety of social groups within a society, not only the dominant culture***

The second subcategory of Byram's (2000) proposed assessment guidelines is similar to the first in that it also deals with Americans' daily living experiences. However, this second subcategory focuses more specifically on students' efforts to go beyond surface-level facts about America to learn greater details about the dynamics that characterize Americans' perceptions and interpretations of their own experiences. Byram notes that this is essential to fostering openness and acceptance of other cultures and ways of living. The following comments were drawn from the student interviews that asked how the course might be improved. As these comments reveal, students recognized the existence of various social groups in the U.S. and, consequently, that perspectives and values differ across social groups in American society.

*Student #3: "American society is a multicultural and multiracial society, so I wanted to know about various cultures and people within this society, but there wasn't a subject for it. I had hoped we could deal with such subject."*

*Student #4: "The U.S. is very big, and every state seems to have its own distinctive culture. I wish we could learn more about this."*

This recognition of diversity in American society seemed to prompt Korean learners' interest in this diverse cultural aspect of social groups in the U.S. It is important to see that these learners showed particular interest in learning to know more in detail and

in depth within American society.

***iii) Interest in others' perspective on learners' own culture***

In addition to being interested in the daily experiences of others, intercultural speakers need to be “interested in other’s experience or actively [seek] the others’ perspectives and evaluations of phenomenon” (Byram, 2009, p. 324). In this respect, Korean learners frequently showed interest in how their American partners in this intercultural communication think about Korean culture. The following are students’ comments regarding their interest in knowing American people’s perspectives on and knowledge about Korea (drawn from the interviews that asked what could be improved for the course):

Student #5: *“I wish we could have talked about each country’s image. Like when you hear Korea, what comes to your mind? It would have been interesting to talk about that.”*

Student #6: *“I wanted to talk directly about how we think of each other’s country. We didn’t have a chance to talk about those things.”*

Student #7: *“I wanted to know if K-Pop is really popular in the U.S. I assume that when I actually go there they probably will not know ‘Soneosidae’ (Girls’s Generation), and that only a few people will be familiar with Psy. I am curious if they really are crazy about K-Pop.”*

These comments from students reveal that Korean learners wanted to know what their American partners think of their own Korean culture so as to obtain an American’s perspective, which is accordingly the evidence of what Korean learners obtained within

the ‘attitude’ category of IC through this intercultural interaction. Of note, Korean learners were as interested in what their American partners thought of them as they were in knowing about America. This indicates that Korean learners actively seek American people’s perspective and evaluation of their own culture and hope it will be positive, which is a good signal that the learners have an appropriate and desirable attitude, consistent with what successful intercultural speakers should have.

***iv) Interest in being more involved in others’ culture and people***

Other than mere interest in others’ way of life and perspectives, Korean students showed their further interest in being more involved in American culture and people. That is, learners’ interest in actually going to America and immersing themselves in that culture is reflected in the following comments:

*Student #8: “At first, communicating with the American students was awkward, but it was great that we could learn about the differences between Korean and U.S. culture and improve our English writing and communication skills. I wish I could have an opportunity to stay at one of the American student’s places in the U.S. to experience the culture.”*

*Student #9: “I want to visit the United States and learn more about Americans.”*

These comments come out during the interview that asked students to share their overall experiences about the course of intercultural communication with the U.S. partners via Facebook. These comments illustrate that after their intercultural experiences with U.S. partners, Korean learners became interested in experiencing U.S. culture in person and to learn more by visiting America. This signifies that Korean learners want to

take a step further to know others' way of life by wanting to be immersed in that culture. It also suggests that the students were beginning to establish personal relationships with one another. In other words, their interactions became interpersonal and were not limited to merely exchanging information for purposes of carrying out a course assignment. This would seem to be an important step in that they are recognizing the other culture not as an abstract 'thing' but rather as a way of living that is embodied and enacted by real individuals.

In some instances, Korean learners' interest in establishing close relationships with American people was made explicit, as in the following statements during the interviews:

Student #3: *"The American students were talking about their Asian friends on Facebook. They were saying they had a meal together during Thanksgiving. I don't have many friends from Western backgrounds and want to meet some."*

Student #7: *"I feel closer to Americans. I wish we could talk to girls and become friends during the one-on-one interview. Not in a weird way. Be friends. Be friends with a blonde-haired girl. I don't have any friends who are blond. I mean, foreign friends. Before we do the interview, I hope we can become friends first."*

These comments indicate that the experience of intercultural communication with American students resulted in Korean students feeling closer to American people and wanting to make friends with them. It clearly shows their interaction with the U.S partners became interpersonal. It implies that this intercultural experience let Korean learners develop a more positive attitude toward American culture and people; they became more interested in immersion in other cultures and wanted close and personal

relationships with American people.

In summary, as for assessment of the IC component, *attitude*, Korean learners clearly showed their interest in other people's way of life, as Byram's (2000) assessment guidelines suggest, in terms of their being (a) interested in other people's experience of daily life, particularly those things not usually presented to outsiders through the media and (b) interested in the daily experience of a variety of social groups within a society, not only the dominant culture. Additionally, Korean students revealed their further interest in other people's way of life in terms of being (c) interested in others' perspective on the learners' own culture and (d) interested in being more involved in others' culture and people, which are not specified in Byram's (2000) assessment guidelines but emerged as meaningful and significant themes under this category of IC. Therefore, these four distinctive features of Korean learners' interest in other people's way of life support Korean learners' development of the attitudinal aspect of IC through intercultural interaction in this course.

### **5.2.2. Knowledge about another country and culture (knowledge)**

Another critical factor of IC, '*knowledge*,' refers to knowledge "of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction" (Byram, 2009, p. 58). That is, it has two main components: knowledge of social processes and knowledge of illustrations of those process and products (Byram et al., 2002). This means that an intercultural speaker needs to have not only knowledge about his or her own and others' culture, but also knowledge of "how social groups and identities function and what is involved in intercultural interaction" (Byram et al., 2002, p. 7). The assessment of

learners' knowledge component of IC mainly follows two focuses from Byram's (2000) guidelines, which are to (a) know important facts about living in the other cultures and about the country, state, and people and (b) know how to engage in conversation with people of the other culture and maintain a conversation. Additionally, it includes another significant feature, (c) know new important facts about the learners' own culture because knowledge of one's own culture is also critical, as seen in the definition of knowledge in Byram's (1997) IC model above; knowledge of one's own culture also noticeably emerged as a significant and meaningful theme in this study.

***i) To know important facts about living in the other cultures and about the country, state, and people***

The most frequently occurring idea from Korean learners' experiences was that their knowledge of a specific culture—America and its people—has increased. The following comment from the student shows his improved and broadened knowledge of American people and culture:

*Student # 10: "When I was doing the last course task, which was a one-on-one interview, I could see that my partner is a hard worker. Since college, I have hung out a lot just to have fun, but American students seemed to have gained their independence earlier than we did and are working hard for their lives. It made me think about myself, and I thought I should work harder."*

This comment illustrates that the student gained important knowledge of his U.S. partners' daily life, such as that he lives a life more independently and busy in terms of managing working and studying in their college life, which differs from student's own life. It is important to note that this knowledge is not of the kind easily acquired from

external sources, such as textbooks that might be used in English courses in Korea. It is also the sort of information that, as seen in earlier comments, the students realized they could not necessarily obtain reliably from media portrayals of American life. Rather, through this course, students obtained real-life knowledge regarding their American partners' lived experiences.

In addition, it is important and meaningful to point out that Korean learners' advancement in knowledge of American culture and people was made through their American partners' own explanation and correction through intercultural interaction. This is seen in students' comments, as follows:

*Student #11: "What I saw on Facebook was very different from what I knew about the American culture. American students pointed out that the knowledge that I had about the U.S. was wrong and gave me an explanation of their culture. It was very helpful and I became more knowledgeable."*

*Student #5: "In the movies, I saw people rubbing their cheeks against each other to greet each other. I thought that was American culture, but some students said it is not. That was interesting to know."*

*Student #12: "I remember the subject was about marriage. I said to an American student that Americans tend to think of marriage and divorce too easily. In the American movies, this issue didn't seem like a big problem. Americans seemed very happy even after a divorce. Because they seemed so happy, I thought Americans don't think of this issue very seriously. But the American students replied saying they think it is a serious issue too. I realized that we both had the same opinion about the issue. It was something new and interesting."*

These Korean learners' comments illustrate that they could get to know more about American culture and people because their U.S. intercultural partners explained various points directly by relating their stories and experiences and by correcting what the Korean learners misunderstood. To illustrate this kind of interaction on Facebook, below is one posting showing that some Korean learners received cultural information about the U.S. through several U.S. partners' own explanations and by adding information directly to what the student wrote, which concerned the importance of listening to one's family's opinion on marriage decisions in Eastern culture (see Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** One Korean Learner's Facebook Posting on the Topic of Marriage

As seen in this posting of Figure 3, the Korean student pointed out people in Eastern cultures are more likely to be swayed by family opinions when it comes to marriage than people in the Western. In a response to the posting, three American students added some informative details regarding Western ways of thinking, common approaches to this kind of situation, and motives behind different behaviors. As Korean learners' comments in interviews and the Facebook posting above elaborate, Korean learners can increase their knowledge of American culture and people through their American partners' own (directly to the point) explanations and corrections. This finding shows the crucial benefit of the course in that Korean learners had the opportunity to obtain authentic, accurate, and reliable knowledge through communicating with their intercultural partners.

Furthermore, one of the main components of *knowledge, knowledge of illustrations of social process and products*, examined in this subsection includes “knowledge about how other people are likely to perceive you, as well as some knowledge about other people” (Byram et al., 2002, p. 8). In this respect, Korean learners revealed their development of knowledge about how American people are likely to perceive Korean culture and Korean people, as seen in the following comment:

*Student #3: “I learned about the American culture and its people in this course. I also gained more knowledge of how people from another culture think about our culture and people.”*

As evidence to support this comments, the following is one of American partners' postings that allowed Korean learners to see what American people think of Asia or Korea (see Figure 4):

facebook Search for people, places and things

Here's my post for this week:  
The image for "Handling of Problems" seems to show that in Eastern culture, problems are avoided instead of dealt with directly. Wouldn't this present a constant problem? How would the problem ever be solved if people avoid it instead of dealing with it and moving forward? Is it a "don't rock the boat" mentality?

Like · Comment · Follow Post · September 18, 2012 at 10:12am near Indianapolis, IN

4 people like this. Seen by 50

agree with your opinion, The images show East culture's feature. But i don't think that East people avoid the problem. In my experience, East people usually solve the problem indirectly.  
September 18, 2012 at 12:40pm · Like

I'm sure that east people are not avoid the problem. May so, East country would not develop by present. I think you may misunderstand East people... i think east-people explore the problem-this is indirect way, and then deal with it.  
September 19, 2012 at 3:42am · Edited · Like

East people are dealing with the problem after considering deeply. so you could consider that we avoid it  
September 22, 2012 at 9:15pm via mobile · Like

East people didn't avoid the problems. We handle the problems more carefulness so we can draw the good results  
September 23, 2012 at 6:30am · Like

East people don't avoid any problem. That's difference of personality  
September 23, 2012 at 6:46am via mobile · Like

I think that the stereotype of 'Handling of Problems' comes from the character of Eastern people. They want to be kind and focus on manners very much. Then, They often seem to be shy and timid and look like they avoid problems as I guess.  
September 23, 2012 at 7:15am · Like

Yesterday the Eastern are dealt with indirectly. But today the Eastern are dealing with directly too, I think.  
September 23, 2012 at 7:42am via mobile · Like

I think avoiding the problem is a useful trait. For example, instead of going to war, some people may be able to express their ideas well and negotiate the optimal solution for both parties instead of viewing something as a problem needing immediate solution. (quoting Mr. Boris Berezovsky, a Russian oligarch who avoided and survived many conflicts during and after the Russian Perestroika times)  
September 23, 2012 at 12:36pm · Like

Write a comment...

**Figure 4.** One American Learner's Facebook Posting on the Topic of Cultural Differences between East and West culture.

In this posting, the American student noticed cultural differences about handling problems and pointed out the possible problem of rather indirect way of handling

problems in Eastern cultures; this drew the attention of Korea students and resulted in many responses to explain and correct what the American student had mentioned. This posting and the discussion that ensued is one example that revealed to Korean learners how at least some Americans perceive their (Korean) culture. Accordingly, through their experience of intercultural interaction, Korean learners gained knowledge of how American people perceive Korean culture and specifically, Korean people's certain behavior.

Most important, the remarkable development of Korean learners with regard to the *knowledge* factor of IC is Korean learners' apparent release of stereotypes, prejudice, and misconceptions about American culture and American people after this intercultural interaction. The following comments illustrate students' responses to their experience of releasing stereotypes, prejudice, and misconceptions of American people and culture:

*Student #13: "When you think of Western culture, you think of a very freewheeling and undisciplined lifestyle. But when we were talking about Lady Gaga, some American students insisted that they would like to have the concert prescreened. And when we talked about parenting, there were many conservative people as well as the open-minded. These conversations helped me learn about new sides of American culture and it was very interesting."*

This comment came out during the interview in which learners shared their overall experiences in the course and what they had most benefited from. This student's remark shows that after a few key discussions (e.g., the famous pop singer, Lady Gaga, who represents issues that are controversial to many Asians; different parenting styles between the two cultures), the Korean learner became to realize that American people also had a

conservative side to them and found out that some American students think the same way as Korean people do. Since this course offered learners many chances to see many American peoples' opinions and thinking on certain topics, Korean learners could obtain new knowledge and perspectives on American people and culture by getting rid of and correcting his prejudices, and stereotypes about American culture and American people throughout this course.

In some instances, insights such as these helped Korean learners to reevaluate certain prejudices and misconceptions about American people, as revealed in this remark from Student #7:

*Student #7: "It is often thought that Western culture is superior to Eastern culture. I thought Americans think of their culture as the most superior culture and think down on our culture and call it irrational. But the truth was that they acknowledge their issues and envy parts of our culture."*

This comment illustrates that what the Korean learner viewed on American people such as arrogant and rude has changed after actually communicating with them and observing their behavior during the course. It highlights that an opportunity that the learner could have to interact and communicate with the U.S. people on diverse intercultural topics throughout the course helped learners remove negative stereotypes and misconceptions about American people. Thus, it is important to note that all the students' comments clearly show that Korean learners increased accurate and true knowledge at the same time they reduced the chances of miscommunication and misunderstanding by removing and correcting what learners misunderstood about American culture and people. This might enhance their positive attitude toward American people and culture because what they

had known before this course was mainly negative aspects of American people (e.g., arrogant, disordered).

However, while the majority of findings in this study showed that most Korean learners overcame negative stereotypes, prejudices, and misconceptions about American culture and people, one student reinforced a negative stereotype of American people, which is seen in the following comment from the learner:

*Student #15: "When I saw some particular Americans not writing any replies on the Korean students' postings, I thought it was because we are Asians. I felt discriminated against and it seemed like it was because we were foreigners."*

This comment illustrates that this Korean student noticed certain behavior of some American partners on Facebook who were not responding to Korean learners' entries. This experience caused him to have a negative attitude toward them and reinforced what he heard about American people's discrimination toward Asian people even though he saw other American partners' good behavior.

In addition, a few learners also gained misinformation about American people's way of communication, as seen in the following comments:

*Student #8: "It seemed like they don't get offended even when I speak bluntly about my feelings and thoughts."*

*Student #10: "When I get a chance to go to the U.S., I will try not to be intimidated and bluntly express my opinions."*

These comments show that what these Korean learners try to do to American people when they communicate with them is not appropriate and can be misunderstood

by American people as rude behavior. They misinterpreted what they learned in this course about different communication styles between the two cultures (e.g., direct vs. indirect way of talking), so gained incorrect knowledge about it. This finding supports the notion that learners' mere contact and interaction with other cultures and people doesn't necessarily and automatically lead to successful intercultural learning experiences and the development of IC, as discussed in O'Dowd (2003). In addition, it signifies the important role of teachers in intercultural communication as other studies have noticed as well (e.g., Lee, 2009; O'Dowd, 2003, 2007; Ware & Kramsch, 2005). When it comes to teachers' role in intercultural interaction, this study adds new information to the literature in that it reveals that teachers should examine whether the knowledge learners acquire and understand about other cultures and people through intercultural interaction is correct; teachers need to provide feedback about what learners obtain after intercultural interactions. More detail about teachers' role in the use of a CMC tool for IC development is discussed in chapter 7.

To sum up, what Korean learners gained with regard to the knowledge component of IC in terms of understanding important facts about living in other cultures and the country, state, and people is summarized as follows: (a) knowledge of a specific culture, America and its people, (b) knowledge of how American people perceive Korean culture and people, and (c) Korean learners' apparent release of stereotypes, prejudices, and misconceptions about American culture and people; thus, they developed increased accurate and true knowledge about America after this intercultural interaction. However, while Korean learners' positive development of *knowledge* in this subsection category has been prominent and noticeable, there were a few cases in which a student reinforced

negative stereotypes or obtained incorrect knowledge about American culture and people as well. This finding is significant in showing the critical importance of teacher's role in this type of the course, a topic I will have more to say about later.

***ii) To know how to engage in conversation with people of the other culture and maintain a conversation***

The second focus is on the development of Korean learners' *knowledge of the general processes of societal and individual interaction*, which can be assessed by observing that learners can know how to engage in conversation with American people and maintain a conversation with them, as Byram (2000) suggested. In this respect, several students revealed that they got to know a better way to engage in conversation with American people for successful communication or, at least, to avoid discomfort and miscommunication, as seen in the following:

*Student #3: "I learned the difference in the way we communicate, direct communication and indirect communication. In Korean culture, we tend to talk indirectly, thinking that talking bluntly isn't very friendly. However, in the Western culture they tend to talk more directly, and I thought it might be a little hurtful to a person listening. But at the same time, I learned that talking directly can be more effective when you are trying to express your opinion."*

*Student # 12: "In our culture, we tend to express our feelings indirectly, but I think we should speak rather directly when speaking to Americans."*

These comments elaborate that Korean learners understood the difference between communication styles of the two cultures (e.g., direct vs. indirect) by

participating in this course; the topic regarding communication differences between the East and West indicated that they would try to be rather direct to convey their opinion clearly when they communicate with American people in the future. This finding shows that Korean learners came to know how they should communicate with American people to be effectively engaged in conversation. However, as I point out later on, there were also some misunderstandings that arose out of the topic regarding communication differences between the east and west. Some Korean learners misinterpreted the meaning of ‘direct’ way of communication and tried to apply this misinformed knowledge into real-world communication, which might seem very rude to American people; thus, it might lead to miscommunication and misunderstanding. It further suggests the importance of feedback and stresses the role of teacher in this type of the course.

In addition, some Korean learners came to know what to avoid successfully communicating with American people, as illustrated in the following:

*Student # 13: “Korean boys would swear at a person by pointing their finger [extending the middle finger], just as a joke. It is usually nothing serious. But when we visit the U.S., we should be careful. We learned about the communicational gestures, and I learned that it is a very serious insult.”*

*Student # 16: “In Korean culture, we try not to have eye contact with the other person. In American culture, they said it would be rude to not make eye contact. I thought I should be aware of these differences when I go to the U.S. to act properly.”*

In relation to the above comments, a Facebook posting of American student in which meaningful interaction on this issue of cultural differences with regard to eye contact is seen in the following (see Figure 5):



The image shows a screenshot of a Facebook post from a user named 'Seung'. The post is titled 'week 11 post:' and discusses cultural differences in eye contact. The post text reads: 'There are many differences in eastern and western culture. One that strikes to mind that can have an effect in the business world is that in western culture we are very direct especially in making direct eye contact when speaking. However I have noticed in other cultures, they are sometimes much less likely to make eye contact with the other person. This can lead a person from the western culture feeling distrusted or uncomfortable. However in other cultures they may consider direct eye contact as disrespectful and impolite. Having a greater awareness about these cultural differences can improve communication between Eastern culture and Western culture.' The post was made on November 12, 2012, at 3:03pm and has been seen by 47 people. Below the post are six comments from other users, all of whom have liked the post. The comments discuss the cultural differences in eye contact, with some noting that direct eye contact is considered impolite in Korea and that it is a must in the USA, especially during job interviews.

facebook   Search for people, places and things  Seung

 week 11 post:

There are many differences in eastern and western culture. One that strikes to mind that can have an effect in the business world is that in western culture we are very direct especially in making direct eye contact when speaking. However I have noticed in other cultures, they are sometimes much less likely to make eye contact with the other person. This can lead a person from the western culture feeling distrusted or uncomfortable. However in other cultures they may consider direct eye contact as disrespectful and impolite. Having a greater awareness about these cultural differences can improve communication between Eastern culture and Western culture.

Unlike · Comment · Follow Post · November 12, 2012 at 3:03pm

 like this.  Seen by 47

 Yes, it is true. In korea, sometimes, making direct eye is considered impolite behavior. Especially, when adults scold to children, children must do not eye contact to their parents.  
November 13, 2012 at 11:41pm via mobile · Like

 In korea, eye contact sometimes mean "i disagree or fight you " so, different culture person think very impolite. Understanding other culture is important thing..  
November 14, 2012 at 5:38pm via mobile · Like

 that is right. that is answer that we see other culture!  
through this comucation, i think we could more understand other culture.  
November 15, 2012 at 5:34am · Like

 It's true. In Korea, eye contact is thought 'impolite'. So many Korean don't contact eye directly. I want that eye contact is thought good expression not impolite.  
November 15, 2012 at 8:36pm · Like

 Indeed, making an eye contact is a must in USA especially when you are having a job interview.  
November 15, 2012 at 9:26pm · Like

 Eye contact is a common difference between cultures. Some cultures glare like they are trying to look inside of you while other cultures keep eye contact to a minimum.  
November 15, 2012 at 10:59am · Like



**Figure 5.** One American learner's Facebook posting on the Topic of Communication Skills Differences

As seen in the Facebook interaction above, the American student explained that making no eye contact with American people might make feel them distrusted and uncomfortable, which brought many Korean students' attention. That is, Korean learners obtained the knowledge of cultural differences about eye contact and how this difference might cause misunderstanding and miscommunication by reading their U.S. partner's informative posting. In addition, some Korean learners' responses to this posting also showed their intention to adjust their way of eye contact to be more direct to avoid the causes of miscommunication and misunderstanding since they came to recognize its negative potential.

All the students' comments and one example of Facebook interaction above revealed that learners realize that certain behaviors of Korean people might cause misunderstanding and miscommunication when they are engaged in conversation with American people. By recognizing this, they can try to avoid those behaviors, such as no eye contact and using the f-word for fun, when they communicate with American people.

In sum, Korean learners demonstrated their development of *knowledge of the general processes of societal and individual interaction* since they came to understand how to engage in conversation with American people and maintain a conversation with them; they suggested that a direct way of talking would be an effective way to engage in conversation with American people and that not establishing eye contact or using the f-word for fun should be avoided so as to minimize misunderstandings and miscommunication.

***iii) To know new important facts about the learners' own culture and people***

In addition to gaining knowledge of American culture and people as well as the general process of interaction, there was a noticeable increase in knowledge about the Korean learners' own culture through this intercultural interaction. One student's comment shows that he learned a new perspective on Korean culture:

*Student #17: "In regard to Korea's culture, I realized that our culture is not as conservative as I thought. I realized this when we were talking about Lady Gaga. Some American students thought there needs to be a prescreening process for Lady Gaga's concerts. Some disagreed with this opinion, but I thought all American students would say they don't want prescreening. And I thought all Korean students would want the prescreening process, but the result was different, and it was quite surprising and interesting to find this out."*

This student revealed his surprise in his comment that what he thought about his culture and people evolved into something different from his previous knowledge and expectations, which resulted in an eye-opening moment for him to notice this new perspective on his culture.

In addition, several students mentioned that they increased their knowledge of their own culture by participating in this intercultural interaction, as follows:

*Student #11: “When you are speaking to Americans, you have to have some knowledge of your own culture, so I researched Korean culture extensively and became more knowledgeable about it.”*

*Student #13: “We had to explain our culture in our perspectives, and as I explained it to others, I got to know more about our culture.”*

These comments reveal that Korean learners tried to search and learn their own culture so as to convey accurate knowledge to American intercultural partners participating in this intercultural communication on Facebook. Thus, the very act of explaining learners’ own culture to American people resulted in increasing learners’ knowledge of their own culture. It is important to note that the way Korean learners acted as representatives of their nation toward American people and felt responsibility to convey accurate knowledge of Korean culture and people caused them to enhance their knowledge of Korean culture as well.

In summary, Korean learners’ development of *knowledge* has been the most frequent, significant, and noticeable phenomenon among various components of IC throughout the study. Korean learners showed their increased knowledge with regard to (a) important facts about living in the American culture and about the country, state, and people, (b) how to engage in conversation with people of the American culture and maintain a conversation with them, and (c) new important facts about the learners’ own culture and people; thus, they built their knowledge about their own and American culture for intercultural communication through intercultural interaction on Facebook, as

described in Byram's (2000) assessment guidelines. Therefore, Korean learners acquired what intercultural speakers need to know, such as knowledge of one's own and others' cultures as well as an effective way of interaction with others, by understanding that "other cultures have parallel but different modes of interaction" (Elola & Oskoz, 2008, p. 456).

### **5.2.3 Knowledge of the intercultural communication process**

This criterion suggested in Byram's (2000) guidelines attempts to assess learners' skills that are needed for successful intercultural communication, which are just as significant as the IC components of *attitude* and *knowledge*. Since it is impossible for students to obtain all the knowledge they need about others' culture because teachers cannot predict the experiences that learners might encounter in real interactions (Byram et al., 2002), it is important for students to acquire skills that help them constantly develop what is needed to become intercultural speakers. Those skills are "recogniz[ing] and resolv[ing] misunderstandings, discover[ing] new knowledge, and apply[ing] that knowledge to new circumstances," called *skills of interpreting and relating*, and *skills of discovery and interaction*, other crucial components of IC (Elola & Oskoz, 2008, p. 456). To assess these skills, Byram (2000) presented two subcategories, (a) knowing how to resolve misunderstandings which arise from people's lack of awareness of the viewpoint of another culture, which falls under *skills of interpreting and relating* in Byram's (1997) model of IC, and (b) knowing how to discover new information and new aspects of the other culture for oneself, which belongs to *skills of discovery and interaction*. The skill that specifically focuses on application of discovered knowledge in new circumstances,

which is another subcategory of *skills of discovery and interaction*, will be assessed in section 5.2.4 as Byram's (2000) assessment guidelines are separated.

***i) To know how to resolve misunderstandings which arise from people's lack of awareness of the viewpoint of another culture (skills of interpreting and relating)***

In this subsection, Korean learners' development of '*skills of interpreting and relating*,' which refers to "the ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one's own" (Byram, 1997, p. 52), will be assessed. '*Skills of interpreting and relating*' involve a comparison of two or more cultures, including one's own, and seeing how each might look different by assuming the different perspective so that learners eventually may figure out "how people might misunderstand what is said or written or done by someone with a different social identity" (Byram et al., 2002, p. 8). By using this skill, intercultural speakers can recognize causes of misunderstandings and know how to resolve them (Byram et al., 2002).

The following comments, which are drawn from the interview that asked what students have learned during the course, show that Korean students came to recognize the differences in various cultural aspects by comparing the two cultures in this course:

*Student #18: "The most interesting thing was the difference in parenting. In Korea, physical punishment is accepted by most of the people, but in American culture, it was not quite acceptable. It was interesting to learn that difference, and that difference made me learn more about it."*

*Student #6: "About marriage. We are more conservative and think we should get married only once. We think living together before marriage is a very difficult*

*thing to do, but the American students seemed more open about this and think more flexibly when it comes to these issues. I learned these differences.”*

*Student #19: “I was able to learn about the differences between the Eastern and Western culture. Every week we had images and various subjects, such as parenting, to talk about, and I knew that there were differences between the two cultures, but it became clearer to me, talking about these subjects.”*

As these students’ comments demonstrate, they had many chances to compare and contrast the two cultures in this course where various intercultural topics for discussion were promoted, and they figured out various cultural differences between the two cultures and confirmed what they already had known about cultural differences between the two cultures.

It is important to see that giving learners many chances of discussion on diverse intercultural topics automatically led learners to focus on how two different groups from the two cultures (Korea vs. the U.S.) discussed differently from each other’s own perspectives. Thus, the learners recognized the unfamiliar aspect of Americans’ behavior and thinking and further related it to how it differs from their own culture. It further became the basis of decentering the learners’ own culture and seeing it differently as well as looking at others’ culture differently. It helps learners eventually figure out how these two different cultural groups might misunderstand each other and what should be needed to resolve unnecessary misunderstanding to successfully communicate with each other.

Importantly, the following comment from the Korean student reveals student’s changed way of looking at his own culture by comparing the two cultures of Korea and the U.S. as the evidence of decentering of learner’s own culture:

*Student # 20: "I thought our culture might look too rigid to the American students. Koreans don't approve of living together before marriage, but Americans think it is more reasonable to live together before marriage to see what kind of person your lover is. Because of these differences, I thought they might think we are too rigid."*

As seen in the comment above, the student came to see his own culture from the perspective of American people and to find some cultural aspect of Korea that the learner thought naturally might be regarded differently or even judged negatively by American people since noticeable differences were found by comparing and relating the two cultures. That is, it shows that the learner can raise awareness of what in his culture might cause misunderstandings and further miscommunication by comparing and relating it to the learner's own culture. It can be a lesson for the learner to know that awareness or skills to see cultural facts from one another's perspective is necessary to avoid misunderstandings and miscommunication since they realized even their own culture might be misunderstood from taking others' perspective.

Furthermore, some learners came to know the different underlying values of the two cultures, collectivism/Confucianism vs. individualism, which might cause cultural differences and come into play when people from the two cultures are communicating, which is seen in the following comment and Facebook postings (See Student #21's comment, and Figure 6):

*Student # 21: "If you see the big picture, Korean culture can be explained with Confucianism, and American culture with individualism. Talking about these differences, I realized that it is natural to be so different."*



**Figure 6.** One Korean Learner's Facebook Posting on the Topic of Communication Skills Differences



**Figure 7.** One Korean Learners' Facebook posting on Cultural Differences between East and West

Both the comment and Facebook postings (see Figure 6 and 7) from Korean learners signify that the students realized what is underneath when communication between people of these two cultures, Korea and the U.S, takes place, which are two

values, collectivism/Confucianism vs. individualism. This finding is meaningful to note that with this recognition, these students will be able to understand why cultural differences occur and how different underlying values of each culture affect people's behaviors, thinking, and their way of communicating. This understanding can make students not only be more tolerant of others, but also anticipate possible causes of misunderstanding and miscommunication and how to resolve them when engaging in intercultural interaction.

In sum, Korean learners developed *skills of interpreting and relating* by participating in this course that provided them with many chances to compare the two different cultures. Learners became aware of the existence of various cultural differences by comparing and relating them to their own culture, learned to change their way of looking at their own culture by taking the perspective of others, and came to understand that the two different underlying values that each culture holds might explain cultural differences and the causes of misunderstanding and miscommunication. Therefore, they can recognize the causes of misunderstanding and miscommunication that might arise between the two cultures and know how to resolve them, for which the *skills of interpreting and relating* are intended. In addition, this finding suggests the importance of giving learners many opportunities of comparison and contrasts about two cultures to develop their *skills of interpreting and relating* and supports the carefully designed task for discussion to facilitate this development as used in this study.

***ii) To know how to discover new information and new aspects of the other culture for oneself (skills of discovery and interaction)***

In this subsection, Korean learners' development of one of the *skills of discovery and interaction*, the "ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices" (Byram, 1997, p. 52), will be assessed by only focusing on learners' ability to know how to discover new information and new aspects of the other culture for oneself, such as using a range of questioning techniques. The other skills of interaction will be assessed separately in detail in section 5.2.4

In terms of the skills involved in the discovery of new knowledge, many student comments show that they tried to find new information about the other culture by searching the Internet to participate in intercultural interaction for the course:

*Student #4: "When the subject was 'communicational differences,' I searched on Naver (Korean search engine) to find out what the differences are, and I also tried to find images that explain the given subject. They were all helpful to me."*

*Student #5: "We can share various data we found on the Internet with the share function on Facebook. When I found a good article that fit the given subject, such as in Korea Herald (Korea's English news magazine), I posted it on Facebook."*

*Student #11: "I searched Lady Gaga and watched the music videos on YouTube. I only knew her name and hadn't had a chance to really learn about her before."*

*Student #1: "I used Google for my Internet search. I found many stories, including a story about a Chinese person telling her experience, which was translated into English. I found writings that people wrote to reference my postings."*

All of these comments show that by employing various ways to search the Internet, such

as using search engines (e.g., Google, Naver), visiting YouTube, and looking at the Korean Herald (Korea's Newspaper written in English), Korean learners actively sought new information to contextualize and help them better appreciate points raised during interaction with their American partners.

Furthermore, learners acquired new knowledge by directly asking their American intercultural partners, as seen in the following comments:

*Student # 7: "I asked my American partner about their eating habits. They said when they go on a diet, they usually eat salad, and this was something similar to our culture."*

This comment comes out during the interview that asked how they made an effort to expand their knowledge and understand American culture and people. Student #7's statement reveals recognition of the American partners as a potential source of new information about American culture. Student #7 was by no means alone in this, as asking questions directly to their U.S. partners was frequently observed in Korean learners' Facebook activities. Consider, for example, the following Facebook posting (see Figure 8):

facebook  Search for people, places and things  Seu 

 Differences between Korea and the United States  
I think that marriage is most important matter in human's entire life.  
In Korea, divorce is seen as negative. So, Koreans tend to think marriage carefully.  
In the West, I do not know how you think about the divorce.  
Whatever marriage is important in life, and should be carefully determined.  
how do you think of my opinion???

Like · Comment · Follow Post · October 7, 2012 at 11:36am

Seen by 49

 totally agree with you! I think it is sometimes too rushed here and not taken as seriously as it should be, and some marriages are results of the women becoming pregnant and not because they were planning on marriage prior to the child. I agree, it needs to be thought out and taken seriously, to avoid divorce and getting remarried.  
October 7, 2012 at 9:12pm · Like ·  1

 I do agree with you that marriage should be seen as by far one of the most important matters in a human's life! Unfortunately, in the United States divorce is starting to be viewed as a 'norm' instead of something negative. It is becoming so prevalent in our culture that it is no surprise if a couple gets a divorce... It's an 'easy way out' unfortunately.  
October 7, 2012 at 9:22pm · Like ·  1

 I agree that marriage is an important milestone in a person's life, and should not be considered lightly. Marriage should be a lifelong commitment, and is not always thought of in that way in the West. People change overtime, and the person you might have loved when you first married them may not be your love 20 years later. However, if you vow to commit your life to that relationship, than the passionate feelings you may or may not be felling toward your spouse should not be grounds for separation. To me, loving someone goes beyond just passionate feelings. To love someone is to respect that person. To love someone is to put that person's feelings before your own feelings, not above or below them. To love someone than, is to stand on equal ground as partners in a relationship.  
October 7, 2012 at 9:54pm via mobile · Like ·  2

 Thank you for answering my post.  
October 8, 2012 at 9:01am · Like

 i also agree that marriage is an important events in human life.  
October 8, 2012 at 10:58am · Like

 It is really sad in the US because divorce is no longer seen as negative, but it has become a normal part of our culture. Some people even have parties to celebrate their divorce!  
October 9, 2012 at 12:56pm · Like

 when I worked at Disney World, we would have guests wearing "I'm Celebrating!" buttons for their divorces. It became a running joke among the cast members.  
October 9, 2012 at 4:55pm · Like

 Write a comment...

**Figure 8.** One Korean learners' Facebook on the Topic of Marriage

As shown above in Figure 8, the Korean student directly asked the question regarding how U.S. people think of divorce and got new information about it by American students directly responding with their various explanations. Both the interview comment and the Facebook entry (see Figure 8) signify that learners gained new knowledge through direct interaction with American people by asking questions and participating in the course on Facebook. This finding is important and meaningful in that since the ability to discover new information and new aspects of the other culture is most likely to be developed in an immersion context, such as learners' study-abroad experiences, where students can investigate what is unfamiliar in their new environment for themselves and look for explanations directly from those who live in that environment (Byram et al., 2002). Accordingly, this study's results suggest that intercultural interaction on Facebook provides a new online environment in which this similar discovery process might take place in the foreign language classroom context. That is, it is important and inspiring to see that intercultural communication on Facebook creates and presents the possibility that learners in foreign language classrooms can acquire the same skills of knowing how to discover new information and new aspects of the other culture for themselves, which was the main benefit of the study-abroad context.

In summary, in terms of assessing two major skills for the intercultural communication process, first, Korean learners seem to develop *skills of interpreting and relating* by demonstrating their ability to recognize what causes misunderstandings and miscommunication between two cultures and to know how to resolve them by using skills of comparing and decentering of their own culture. Second, Korean learners advanced their knowledge about the other culture for themselves by not only searching

on the Internet, but also by directly asking their American intercultural partners, which supports Korean learners' ability to acquire new knowledge of other cultures, a part of *skills of discovery and interaction*. The development of the skill of learners' knowing how to discover new information is particularly significant in that it is less frequently developed in foreign language classrooms but rather developed in the study-abroad context (Byram et al., 2002), so intercultural interaction on Facebook in this course provided new possibilities for the foreign language classroom in that Korean learners developed skills of discovering new information about other cultures.

#### **5.2.4 Ability to cope with living in a different culture**

This assessment criterion focuses on learners' "ability to operate knowledge, attitudes, and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction," which belongs to *skills of discovery and interaction* (Byram, 1997, p. 52). That is, it tries to exclusively examine learners' application ability. As for the assessment, it notes the ability of Korean learners' to cope with a range of reactions they may experience when living in a different culture, in this case, American culture, following Byram's (2000) assessment guidelines. The findings are detailed below.

#### ***To be able to cope with a range of reactions one experiences when living in a different culture***

With regard to learners' capability to deal with various daily experiences in the U.S. by applying discovered knowledge, attitudes, and skills in the new and different American culture, several Korean learners showed their intention and capability to apply what they learned through the intercultural interaction when they come to live in American culture. The following reveals that several Korean learners want to apply what

they learned about the way American people talk to their real-time communication and interaction with them:

*Student # 9: “We are used to saying ‘no thanks’ to questions like ‘would you like to do something?’ or ‘do you need something?’ We usually don’t tell the other person what we want even when there is something that we want. That is courtesy in Korea, so the person who offers to help must ask multiple times. This is our culture, and there is no such thing in the American culture. We act and think very differently. These differences will be hard to adjust to. When we speak to Americans, I think we should speak more bluntly.”*

*Student #12: “In our culture, we tend to express our feelings indirectly, but I think we should speak rather directly when speaking to Americans.”*

These comments also appear in section 5.2.2, *Knowledge of about another country and culture*, to show that Korean learners obtained the knowledge of how to engage in conversation with people of the other culture. Both comments were made during the interviews that asked students about what they learned in the course. This section, relying on the same data, focuses on learners’ ability and intention to try to apply the knowledge they gained about the way to engage in conversation with American people to the situation where they are in the U.S. in future real-time communication. The comments from students show their intention to try to operate with what they know about communication style differences and their perception of the effective way to talk to American people (directly) to successfully communicate with them. It is important to note that intercultural interaction in the course didn’t end up giving mere information about American culture to Korean learners; it created opportunities for the learners to

practice communicating with members of another culture.

In addition, several learners want to apply the knowledge to avoid situations that might cause trouble or misunderstandings when communicating with American people in real face-to-face interactions, as seen in the following comments:

*Student #16: “In Korean culture, we try not to have eye contact with the other person when greeting. In American culture, they said it would be rude to not make eye contact. I thought I should be aware of these differences when I go to the U.S. to act properly.”*

*#Student 13: “Korean boys would swear at a person by pointing their finger [extending their middle finger], just as a joke. It is usually nothing serious. But when we visit the U.S., we should be careful. We learned about communicational gestures, and I learned that it is a very serious insult.”*

Again, some of these comments appeared in section 5.2.2., *Knowledge about another country and cultures*, as supporting learners’ gains in knowledge for intercultural communication. These comments also show that Korean learners try to apply the knowledge they learned, in this case, some Koreans’ behaviors might be misunderstood from the Americans’ perspective; thus, these behaviors should be avoided when they are in the U.S. and communicating with American people in real face-to-face interactions. That is, by applying what learners absorbed in this intercultural experience, Korean learners can avoid problematic situations they might encounter when living in a different culture, America. It also signifies that Korean learners didn’t simply accept the cultural knowledge they learned in the course but took this opportunity to expand their knowledge and apply it to real-life intercultural communication.

However, despite those students' positive responses about their capability to apply what they learned in this course, a few students doubted their ability to use what they learned in real-time circumstances in the U.S. Those students' comments are shown below:

*Student #22: "For this Facebook course, we learned through only written words, so I am not sure how it would be when I get a chance to really speak to American people."*

*Student #23: "My concern is that when I actually have a chance to talk, I won't be able to do what I did on Facebook interaction because I still have trouble speaking in English."*

These comments were in response to the topic of how students might engage with Americans in the future. They reveal that the Korean learners see the interaction they had on Facebook as somewhat different from real-time communication and interaction because it is communication only through writing rather than speaking in person; accordingly, they show their lack of confidence in their ability to apply what they learned in real face-to-face interactions with American people and to deal with various experiences. This revealed some limitations of Facebook use for IC development in foreign language classrooms in terms of *skills of discovery and interaction* because this type of intercultural interaction still differs from real interaction that takes place and learners can recognize this difference. Accordingly, it implies that to enhance learners' ability to cope with living in a different culture, which is their application ability, teachers and language practitioners need to take this into account and more carefully design the course for IC development so as to strengthen the weak points and be more effective as

an intercultural learning experience.

In summary, when it comes to assessing Korean learners' ability to cope with living in a different culture that requires learners' ability to employ knowledge, attitudes, and skills in real circumstance, two conflicting findings were noticed in this study. That is, some Korean learners seem to develop this ability because they showed their intention to try to apply what they learned in this intercultural learning experience, such as changing their way of talking to a direct way and adjusting their behaviors to avoid misunderstandings and communication breakdowns, to successfully and effectively communicate with American people as well as to deal with various situations they might experience when living in America. However, other Korean learners denied the development of their ability to employ what they learned in real-time circumstances in the U.S. by recognizing that their intercultural interaction on Facebook differed from real face-to-face interaction in the U.S. and showing their lack of confidence. This finding suggests the need for improvement of the course to overcome this conflicting result in learners' application ability and to make this course more effective and practical.

### **5.2.5 Ability to change perspective (critical cultural perspective)**

As Byram (2009) argued, it is inescapable that no matter how open-minded, curious, tolerant, and knowledgeable of other cultures and people, if people face others' beliefs, values, and behaviors that conflict with their own that are deeply embedded, they might feel negative reactions and reject the others. In this regard, intercultural speakers need critical cultural awareness of their own and other cultures, the critical component of Byram's (1997) model of IC. This is not for the purpose of changing learners' own deeply rooted values and thoughts, but to make learners aware and conscious of their own

beliefs and values when evaluating others (Byram et al., 2002). Thus, learners can avoid negative responses to otherness and develop respect for differences with *critical cultural awareness*. Accordingly, assessing Korean learners' IC development of this component involved whether Korean learners can "realize that other cultures can be understood by seeing things from a different point of view and by looking at one's own culture from their perspective," as Byram's (2000) assessment guidelines suggested. The findings that fell under this category are discussed below.

***To realize that other cultures can be understood by seeing things from a different point of view and by looking at one's own culture from their perspective***

When it comes to the ability to change perspectives, several students mentioned during the interview that they came to understand American culture by seeing it from a different point of view, not one that is just based on Korean values and perspectives, as seen in the following:

*Student # 13: "As I mentioned before, I had negative thoughts about the differences between the two countries. But as I talked to them, I realized that we are both human beings and became more understanding. Now I try not to criticize American culture based on Korean culture and, instead, I try to accept the differences and make an effort to understand them."*

*Student #5: "I came to think that our way of thinking and culture is not the only way, and Americans and others are also understandable and reasonable."*

*Student # 15: "I came to understand that we had been taught by teachers and parents differently. I was raised in Korea and think a certain way, and they were raised in another country and educated differently, so it is natural that we are*

*different. My views on them have changed after realizing that they are actually different from what I thought, in regard to American people and culture.”*

All of these comments showed that Korean learners' way of thinking about American people and culture has changed because they realized these differences could be understood by seeing the other culture differently and not judging it only by the learners' own beliefs and values. It is important to see that intercultural communication in the course that includes the task of discussion on various intercultural topics and the interview task enabled learners to be aware of the existence of each other's own cultural views and perspectives and each of which has own justification and reasons to hold those beliefs. This awareness would promote learners' understanding the differences and making changes of their behaviors and thinking when they're evaluating of others.

Similarly, one Korean student directly revealed his thought that each culture can be understood by taking each other's perspective by writing the expression, 'put yourself in others' shoes' in his entry on Facebook when he discussed the topic of different communication style between Korea and the U.S., as seen below (see Figure 9):



**Figure 9.** One Korean Learner’s Facebook Posting on the Topic of Communication Skills Differences

This posting clearly shows that the student recognized the need to see things differently, not only based on Korean values and perspectives, to understand each other’s culture, and vice versa. Both students’ comments and Facebook entry above reveal that the way they used to see things from their own cultural value and perspective was changed to understand American culture and people by looking at them differently and by judging them not only based on their own cultural values; they recognized the importance of seeing differences critically in communication and evaluation of others. In addition, after intercultural interaction with U.S. partners where Korean students had opportunities to hear Americans’ own stories and experiences in person, Korean students understood that American people hold different values and perspectives from the learners’ own, which are formulated through different personal and cultural backgrounds, as seen in one of student’s comments above; thus, with this recognition, Korean learners could evaluate these differences in a way to respect and understand others. It seems, accordingly, that

Korean learners enhanced their understanding of others and differences by changing their views to see things differently and critically.

In line with this, the noticeable thing in Korean learners' behavior to point out in this study is that they developed a critical view of their own culture through this intercultural experience. The following are students' comments from the interview showing that learners' changed their way of looking at their own culture:

*Student # 7: "I have lived my whole life in Korea among mostly Korean people, and I've written many thoughts about our own culture on Facebook. This opportunity gave me a new view on our own culture and had me think about our culture a lot."*

*Student # 19: "I now compare our culture to theirs and see their culture in a different way. For example, when I think about school discipline, we were often spanked by our school teachers. But when I asked the American students they said they were never spanked by their teachers. I thought to myself, they probably think of this aspect of our culture negatively."*

These comments signify that Korean learners came to see their own culture from the American perspective, which led them to see familiar things as unfamiliar. It is important to note that this course gave Korean learners the opportunity to think that what is familiar to them and the things they take granted can be seen differently, even negatively, from Americans' perspective. This implies that the intercultural experience widened Korean learners' perspective in that each other's culture can be seen differently by taking a different perspective; even their own culture can be seen differently by taking another's perspective. It was awakening for Korean learners to experience this awareness

and consciousness and it led them to develop their *critical cultural awareness* to better understand the other culture and people and eventually effectively communicate with them.

However, while there is positive evidence that Korean learners developed their *critical cultural awareness* through this intercultural learning experience, some students had negative responses in terms of their ability to change their perspective, as reflected in the following comments:

*Student # 24: "I think I am the same. I think and feel the same way about Korean culture. I don't think this one course will change the way I think about something. It is hard to see things in a foreigner's shoes. It is hard to think that way. I accept the fact that they think in a different way, but I don't think I see things differently."*

*Student # 25: "I knew from the beginning that we were different, so I don't think my behavior or the way I think has changed."*

These comments from students illustrate their reluctance to change their views and perspectives on their culture, such as seeing it anew by taking others' perspective, and also their negative response toward their ability to see others from a different point of view. These comments highlight that the ability to change perspective, which makes learners be explicit and aware of their own values and behaviors in any evaluative responses to others (Byram et al., 2002), is a somewhat compelling, sensitive, and time-consuming process for some students in that approaching what they have taken for granted their whole life in a different way might be accompanied by negative responses. This finding implies that just this single course cannot easily change the way Korean learners look at their culture or other cultures.

In summary, conflicting results were found for the assessment of *critical cultural awareness*. Some Korean learners demonstrated the ability to change perspective; that is, they understood American people and culture by looking at them differently and tried to see their own culture from Americans' perspective, which is evidence of developing a *critical cultural awareness* of their own and others' culture. On the other hand, a few students did not think that this short experience of intercultural communication in the course could influence or change their way of thinking or their behavior. This shows that development of learners' *critical cultural awareness* in the IC model cannot be easily accomplished with this kind of single course. Thus, the course should be improved to be more effective in developing learners' critical cultural awareness through more careful attention and time allocation.

### **5.3 Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter assessed Korean EFL learners' IC development through intercultural communication between Korean EFL students and their U.S. partners via the use of Facebook as a CMC tool during the course. Viewing through the prism of the component features of Byram's (1997) model of IC and his (2000) assessment criteria, student activity in the course as well as their prompted reflections during the interviews offer compelling evidence that insights were gained that could indeed be characterized as IC. Specifically, the findings reviewed in this chapter relate to the Korean students' (a) interest in other people's way of life, (b) knowledge about another country and culture, (c) knowledge of the intercultural communication process, (d) ability to cope with living in a different culture, and (e) ability to change one's perspective. Therefore, the results of this study appear to support the view that Facebook offers new possibilities for the

development of learners' IC. However, it is important to note that the findings were not uniformly so positive. Specifically, there were also instances in which Korean learners' experiences using Facebook in the course reinforced negative stereotypes and provided them with incorrect knowledge. Moreover, it was also found that some learners experienced difficulty in revising their perceptions of American culture in light of new information and that some had problems implementing what they had learned in real-time circumstances. This suggests that there should be some improvements to this course to make it more effective, helpful, and practical. Improvements are necessary to address the need for teachers' feedback on learners' intercultural learning experiences, to include more activities to enhance learners' application ability, and to offer a follow-up course or additional lessons within this course to promote learners' critical cultural awareness. More discussion of learners' development of IC in this course and more details of suggestions for course improvement will be elaborated in chapter 7.

## **CHAPTER 6. IMPLEMENTING FACEBOOK AS A CMC TOOL FOR INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter aims to provide empirical findings of the adoption of the Web 2.0 tool, Facebook, for developing Korean learners' IC in a classroom setting to provide useful and practical information and contribute to current EFL classroom practices. In order to elaborate on the findings to fulfill this purpose, this chapter first examines the survey results and interview data to explore students' perceptions of and reactions to the use of Facebook (a CMC tool) and the effectiveness of this course for their intercultural learning experiences. Second, the chapter offers an analysis of Facebook entries and interview data to understand how the use of Facebook in the course created potential intercultural learning experiences as well as difficulties Facebook use in the classroom might have when adopted for this purpose; that is, the discussion considers both beneficial and challenging aspects of using Facebook as a new CMC tool to develop learners' IC, with an eye toward how its use in this course can provide a basis for future EFL classroom practice.

### **6.2 Learners' Perceptions of and Reaction to Using Facebook as a CMC Tool and Their Intercultural Learning Experiences**

To understand learners' perceptions of and reactions to the use of Facebook as a CMC tool for intercultural communication and the effectiveness of this course for their IC development, the post-course survey result, in conjunction with interview data, was utilized and analyzed to report the findings. These findings reveal a broad picture of the

learners' overall perspectives and reactions regarding this course's experiences. The survey result of this study is shown in Table 2 below.

Statements of the Survey	Mean	SD
1. I enjoyed communicating with people from the U.S. using Facebook.	3.8	0.66
2. Using Facebook was a motivational tool for me to learn about American culture and people.	3.83	0.87
3. I felt comfortable sharing my ideas and interacting with my peers and native-speaking partners using Facebook.	4.07	0.69
4. I found Facebook assignments stimulating and meaningful.	3.57	0.73
5. By regularly writing on Facebook, I was able to understand cross-cultural issues.	3.7	0.75
6. By regularly writing on Facebook, I was able to analyze cross-cultural issues	3.73	0.87
7. By regularly writing on Facebook, I was able to generate cross-cultural issues.	3.8	0.81
8. Reading others' posts helped me gain diverse cultural perspectives.	3.8	0.76
9. Reading others' posts helped me reflect further about my own beliefs.	3.7	0.75
10. Discussions on Facebook enhanced my understanding of the target culture.	3.73	0.69
11. I gained intercultural knowledge by working with my peers and native speakers using Facebook.	3.7	0.7
12. I gained communication skills by working with my peers and native speakers using Facebook.	3.7	0.88
13. After talking to my Facebook partner, I learned differences exist between people from the U.S. and people from Korea.	3.73	0.83
14. Using Facebook was an effective way to communicate with others online and to engage actively in discussion.	4	0.69
15. Overall, this was a positive experience for me.	4	0.69

**Table 2. Korean Learners' Views on and Perceptions of Facebook Use and Their Intercultural Learning Experiences**

As can be seen above, the post-course survey consists of 15 statements and it used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to elicit different viewpoints. The mean score and standard deviation displayed in each section of

Table 2 indicate the students' overall perceptions of and reactions to Facebook use in the course and their intercultural learning experiences.

Overall, students reacted positively to the online intercultural exchanges and learning through Facebook, and were satisfied with the outcomes (see statement 15,  $M=4$ ). This interpretation is further corroborated by statements made during the interviews, where students expressed that they found the experience rewarding, worthwhile, and fun. Consider, for example, the following:

*Student #2: "It was interesting to talk to foreigners through Facebook, and it was fun to write about various subjects and share opinions with the foreigners."*

*Student #14: "It was nice to be able to talk to Americans living in the U.S. It is usually hard to get a chance to talk to them. It was a new and good experience for me. It made me think about our own culture as well as the American culture."*

*Student #8: "The benefit of Facebook is ... it is hard for us to get a chance to communicate with foreigners. The only way to achieve this would be to invite a foreign professor or make friends with people from other countries, perhaps those who come to Korea to study. So it is great that Facebook plays the role of a bridge between Koreans and foreigners."*

Each of these comments illustrates the survey finding of learners' overall positive reaction to their intercultural learning experiences, as they indicate the Korean students' interpretation of their experience as fun and rewarding. Students #14 and #8 make specific reference to how Facebook enabled them to communicate with people in the U.S.

The following Korean learners' comments from the interview further demonstrate how much students enjoyed the intercultural communication with their U.S. partners through Facebook. This enjoyment is also evident in statement 2 of the survey result: "I enjoyed communicating with people from the U.S. using Facebook" ( $M=3.8$ ).

*Student # 20: "Writing in English didn't feel like homework; it felt like a fun activity, so it was fun to do. For the interview task, my partner, Hannah Richardson, was very participating. She even approached me first; it was great. I was really excited. I told my partner to watch a Korean music video. She watched it right away and left me a reply about it. It was fun and interesting work."*

*Student #7: "It was fun to communicate with American people through Facebook. It was much more enjoyable than learning about them only through books and other indirect media in the past. Communicating with them about their thoughts and way of thinking was a great opportunity to experience new aspects about them... because they told us their own stories of their lives."*

These comments are noteworthy in that they suggest that the students did not orient to the activity of communicating with their U.S. partners via Facebook as a burdensome 'homework assignment', but rather they felt like they were forming new and meaningful relationships. Student #20 shows his excitement and joy to communicate and have some meaningful interaction with his interview partner, Student #7 explicitly states that communicating with people in the U.S. was a great opportunity to see them share their own stories and experiences of their lives.

According to analysis of the survey, a benefit to Facebook use was that the students themselves perceived it as positively affecting their motivation to learn and

participate in the course (see statement 2,  $M=3.83$ ). Several students also noted this during their interviews:

*Student #4: "If there wasn't this kind of opportunity I would just sit and listen to the lecture, even during a speaking class. But this course provided me with an opportunity to actively communicate through Facebook. And it also gave me a chance to study on my own; it gave me a good motive."*

*Student #19: "I think we have learned English very passively. Our education system makes students very passive. But when we used Facebook in this course, we searched for vocabularies by ourselves because we wanted to say something to the American students. We did our own research into what we wanted to know. For example, if I want to talk about love, I would have to find out what the English word for love is. In this way, we looked up what we wanted to know more about and got actively involved in communication; and not because we had to study for a test. From that perspective, I liked this course."*

These comments show that learners changed their behavior by taking an active role in learning and participating in this course because they recognized the course was actual online interaction with American people via Facebook, which was very different from the old, conventional, and passive way of learning confined to the classroom. Thus, it piqued Korean learners' interest and enhanced their participation and motivation to learn.

For many learners, the advantage of Facebook as a learning medium appears to be that it offers an environment in which they already felt comfortable sharing their ideas and interacting with their U.S. counterparts on Facebook (See statement 3,  $M=4.07$ ). One

student, for example, when asked about how he felt using Facebook as a learning tool, referred to the ease of using Facebook for many learners today:

*Student #6: "Facebook is popular in the U.S. and also in Korea. People from both countries were easily able to use it because they are already familiar with it."*

Moreover, another reason why Korean learners felt comfortable using Facebook to participate in intercultural communication may be that it is not face-to-face, real-time communication but rather is asynchronous, giving learners preparation to participate in on-going communication. The following comments from interviews with students elaborate on this reason.

*Student # 10: "I can't speak fluent English, so communicating on Facebook was better for me, since I had time to translate what I wanted to say from Korean to English. We had an opportunity to develop a thorough understanding of a subject, and we could then ask questions and get answers on Facebook, which I think was great."*

*Student # 6: "If I had to communicate face to face, it would have been beyond my ability. However, this course work allowed me to prepare what I wanted to say. Because it was happening on Facebook, it was manageable."*

*Student #17: "Facebook was great for communicating with the American students. For students like me who don't feel comfortable speaking English, writing is a good way to communicate. Writing usually takes more time, but it is something you can put effort into and do better. Speaking is another story. So I liked that aspect of using Facebook in this course."*

All of these comments revealed that Korean EFL learners felt more comfortable and at ease when interacting and sharing thoughts with Americans on Facebook because all the Each of these students refers to the advantages of interacting through the medium of Facebook over real-time, face-to-face communication. Students #10 and #6 expressed relief at having some preparation time before writing on Facebook, and Student #6 explicitly states that communicating through Facebook is more manageable and easier than face-to-face interaction.

Although it was actual interaction between two cultures, since it was happening in the online learning space created by Facebook, they were able to overcome their lack of language competence and gain confidence in intercultural communication, which is more demanding in face-to-face interaction. This finding suggests that using Facebook for intercultural communication is a very effective, useful, and practical way of intercultural learning, particularly so for learners who are not proficient in English speaking skills and have no experience interacting with other cultures such as the learners in this study, who were on a Korean intermediate level of EFL. A great advantage of Facebook's virtual environment is that it gives learners time to prepare and put out their thoughts in order to interact with their U.S partners for intercultural communication. This makes them feel comfortable and secure, as seen in the above comments.

Furthermore, as a communication tool itself, Korean learners regarded Facebook as an effective platform from which to communicate with others online and to engage actively in discussion (see statement 14,  $M=4$ ). In line with this, many of the students noted that Facebook offers easy access to where intercultural communication took place,

which functioned as an effective communication tool and enabled active participation as seen in the following comments.

*Student # 4: “The main benefit of using Facebook is that... you write on Facebook, and when you get a reply, you receive a notification. That notification function is very convenient. Checking for updates is an easy process, and you can write and reply instantly, so I think Facebook is a very convenient communication tool.”*

*Student #18: “Facebook has a notification function that alerts a user to course tasks and new posts, and replies instantly. I thought this function allows good accessibility.”*

*Student 22: “It [Facebook] is a better communication tool than other Websites such as blogs. We were able to check new posts and replies instantly.”*

All of these comments illustrate that Facebook’s own feature of immediately notifying people when they have new updates or responses to their own posts is very convenient, innovative, and useful as for an effective and interactive communication tool. Since it is easy to know what is happening when they participate in intercultural communication, it enables learners to become more actively involved in such intercultural interaction. In particular, in terms of accessibility, students frequently pointed out that Facebook can be used together with a smartphone, which made their communication even more effective, efficient, and easy to access. This is clear from the following comments.

*Student #15: “The fact that we could connect to Facebook with our smartphones was very beneficial. We could check the replies and posts instantly. It was a lot better than other social networking tools.*

*Student #6: “The benefit of Facebook is that you can check for updates with your smartphone whenever and wherever you want.”*

*Student # 19 “I would sign in to do homework and write something. When I received a reply to my post, I would be notified on my smartphone, so I would sign in to check the reply. I signed in frequently to check for posts via my phone.”*

All of these comments indicate that Facebook can be easily accessed with students’ smartphones and students were frequently using Facebook to communicate via their own smartphones. Indeed, to recall the discussion from Chapter 3, Facebook not only has the advantage of connectivity to smartphones, but also offers a notification service that announces new updates or responses to its users, which is not possible with other communication tools such as blogs, discussion boards, etc. With Facebook’s accessibility and interactive communication capability, Korean learners were able to communicate effectively with others online and to engage actively in the course. Thus, Korean learners considered Facebook as a very effective and efficient tool for communication.

In addition, with regard to learners’ perceptions of and reactions to their intercultural learning experiences in this course, survey statements 5 to 10 were used to elicit students’ responses (see Table 2). The survey results show that Korean learners evaluated what they had learned in the course positively in terms of IC development, which is also matched by the findings in Chapter 5. In brief, most of the Korean learners positively recognized that differences exist between the two cultures; they gained

intercultural knowledge and communication skills by working with peers and native speakers; they understood, analyzed, and generated cross-cultural issues. Finally, they obtained diverse cultural perspectives, which led them to reflect further on their own beliefs and enhanced their understanding of the target culture. For example, consider the following comment from Student #19, which also appeared in Chapter 5:

*Student #19: "I was able to learn about the differences between the Eastern and Western culture. Every week we had images and various subjects, such as parenting, to talk about, and I knew that there were differences between the two cultures, but it became clearer to me, talking about these subjects."*

This student shows he recognized that differences exist between the two cultures due to the course where there were many chances of discussion about various subjects. Thus, it supports the survey result of the statement 13, *'After talking to my Facebook partner, I learned differences exist between people from the U.S. and people from Korea (M=3.73).'* in that this course helped Korean learners to learn various cultural differences between two cultures. In addition, as the survey result of statement 11, *'I gained intercultural knowledge by working with my peers and native speakers using Facebook (M=3.7).'* shows, Korean learners positively consider that they obtained intercultural knowledge through communicating with their U.S. people and peers. This is also corroborated in the following comments from two other students in the course:

*Student #11: "The assignments helped a lot. To talk about this kind of subject, we need to be familiar with each other's culture, so we did some research. And when we actually communicated with each other and posted things on Facebook, I*

*could see the knowledge that I gained from researching their culture was true, and it really helped me learn about their culture.”*

*Student #7: “I gained more knowledge about American culture and people. I was able to reconfirm the knowledge I already had and gain new knowledge through the postings from the U.S. partners on Facebook.”*

These comments clearly indicate that students increased their cultural knowledge about American culture and people throughout the course. Student #1 pointed out that he did some research to participate in discussion with his U.S. intercultural partners and this is the one way that he gained knowledge while Student #7 indicated that reading the postings from the U.S. partners on Facebook was the one source that he could increase his knowledge. In addition, the survey result for statement 12, *‘I gained communication skills by working with my peers and native speakers using Facebook (M=3.7),’* also indicates that most of Korean learners considered their communication skills were enhanced by communicating with their U.S. partners and peers. The following statement of the Student #3, also appeared in the Chapter 4, is found to support this survey result:

*Student #3: “I learned the difference in the way we communicate, direct communication and indirect communication. In Korean culture, we tend to talk indirectly, thinking that talking bluntly isn’t very friendly. However, in the Western culture they tend to talk more directly, and I thought it might be a little hurtful to a person listening. But at the same time, I learned that talking directly can be more effective when you are trying to express your opinion.”*

Student # 3 shows he came to understand the difference between communication styles of the two cultures (e.g., direct vs. indirect) by participating in this course and he would talk

directly to convey his opinion effectively when he communicate with American people in the future. As this student's comment shows, Korean learners think they came to know how they should communicate with American people to be effectively engaged in conversation. Finally, as the survey result of statement 10, '*Discussions on Facebook enhanced my understanding of the target culture (M=3.73)*,' indicates, Korean learners positively valued that their intercultural learning experiences by participating in discussion on Facebook with the U.S people helped promote understanding of American culture. The following is the one part of student #6:

*Student #6: "In regard to the cultural aspect, we would think foreigners are more open-minded than we are, but it seems like there are many conservative people as well as open-minded people. I learned that there are various cultural views within the U.S., and it was a good opportunity to gain knowledge of both cultures."*

This comment of Student #6 shows that he came to learn diverse cultural perspectives within the U.S. and had chance to overcome some stereotypes of American people by communicating with the U.S. intercultural partners, which led him to enhance understanding of American culture and people. As this comment corroborates, most of Korean learners evaluates their understanding of the target culture has been enhanced through the discussion on Facebook in the course.

In summary, the post-course survey in this study aimed to evaluate Korean EFL students' overall perceptions of and reactions to using Facebook, and the effectiveness of their intercultural learning experiences in order to provide a more complete picture of the effectiveness of using Facebook for this course. The result of the survey, along with the interview data, highlighted that most of students were positive about their intercultural

learning experiences using Facebook in this course, and they enthusiastically shared their positive, fulfilling, and enriching experiences using Facebook as a tool to communicate with people from the U.S. Advantageous aspects of using Facebook were: i) Facebook use increased learners' motivation to learn and participate in the course; ii) Korean learners felt comfortable sharing their ideas and interacting with their U.S. partners by using Facebook because it was user-friendly, easy to access, and helped them overcome their lack of language competence. It also helped them become more confident in a virtual online environment where they could prepare for interaction; iii) since Facebook offers great accessibility and interactive communication capability such as connection to smartphones as well as a service that provides notifications of new updates or responses to its users, Korean learners viewed Facebook as an effective medium through which to communicate with others online and to engage actively in discussions. Lastly, with regard to their intercultural learning experiences, the survey results with the interview data revealed that Korean learners evaluated what they learned in the course positively in respect of IC development, which can be also observed in the findings in Chapter 5.

### **6.3 Benefits and Challenges to Adopting Facebook as a New CMC Tool for Intercultural Communication**

From the qualitative content analysis of data that included intercultural communication entries on Facebook and interviews with Korean EFL students and a teacher, it became clear that the adoption of Facebook as a CMC tool created both benefits and challenges in the course under study. These are discussed here for the purpose of providing 'lessons learned' through this project in hopes that they might contribute to future research and pedagogical efforts involving Facebook in the classroom,

especially as a tool for promoting intercultural teaching and learning suitable for EFL classroom. In this section, the advantages and difficulties of this course that adopted Facebook on implementation will be elaborated.

### **The Beneficial Features of Facebook Use in the Course**

In the previous section, which explored learners' perceptions of and reactions, it was found that Facebook offered significant learning benefits. In addition to these benefits, several critical findings have emerged to show the suitability of using Facebook for this course, and these may be of interest to practitioners considering implementing Facebook for pedagogical purposes.

Firstly, the most beneficial role Facebook played in this course was that it offered learners opportunities to interact and communicate with American people, the speakers of the target culture, by sharing thoughts and opinions about diverse intercultural topics, as other various CMC tools in other research have also offered. Facebook made possible what had previously been impossible in traditional and conventional EFL classrooms in Korea, which was what this study's design aimed for in the first place. Many of the Korean learners described their enriching, fulfilling, and exciting experiences about interacting with American people by discussing various issues and topics in the following comments:

*Student #2: "It was interesting to talk to foreigners through Facebook, and it was fun to write about various subjects and share opinions with them."*

*Student #9: “We don’t usually have a chance to talk to foreigners. This course provided us with a free opportunity to communicate with many foreigners and exchange our thoughts. It was a good and rewarding experience.”*

As seen in these comments, student # 2 shared his fun experience of discussing various topics of discussion and sharing opinions and student # 9 was fond of and appreciated this opportunity of communicating with American people and regarded this experience as rewarding. As such, the strongest benefit of using Facebook in the course was that it enabled a virtual learning environment by connecting two different classrooms in different cultures, and learners had the opportunity of intercultural communication with the target culture – American people – about diverse intercultural issues and topics. This new possibility of using Facebook for learning in the Korean EFL classroom played a crucial role in forming the foundation of developing Korean learners’ IC.

Secondly, another benefit of Facebook use was that it offered a place where Korean learners would practice what they intended to do before they really got into real interaction with American people, which helped learners become more ready and interculturally competent in real intercultural communication. That is, Facebook use in this course offered Korean learners not only opportunities to learn and advance intercultural knowledge, skills, attitudes, and awareness to develop IC, but also to practice what they could do to interact with American people in future real interaction. One student, for example, noted, Student #4: *“I think this course really worked for me to improve my communication skills with American people, after all that writing and conversations practiced on Facebook.”* This signifies that Facebook use in this course functioned not only as an online learning place for developing learners’ IC, but also as a

place to practice utilizing knowledge and the skills they will need in real-life intercultural communication.

Additionally, although using Facebook was intended to develop learners' IC, given the fact that the interaction on Facebook was based on the use of language, English, as a medium for communication, it automatically led to the advancement of the learners' linguistic ability, in particular their writing skills. Many of the Korean learners noted the development of their writing skills in the following comments:

*Student # 10: "The difference is that for American students, English is their first language. Since they are comfortable with English, they wrote a lot. I was surprised at how much they wrote on Facebook. I tried to write as much, but it was hard. The benefit is that because I wrote a lot of stuff in English, my writing skill improved."*

*Student # 17: "When I write in Korean, I am usually very good, but it isn't easy to write in English. I feel frustrated when I have to write in English. I looked up dictionaries and searched for English sentences to reference. Constant writing practice helped me write better."*

These comments reveal that participation in this course means they were required to write posts on Facebook to interact with American people, and this effort of participating in this study resulted in the development of the learners' writing skills. For example, student #10 shows he made lots of efforts to write as much as other American partners did in a posting, which seemed to improve his writing skill and student #17 also indicates his constant writing practice throughout the course such as trying to look up dictionaries and search for well-written English sentences helped to enhance learner's

writing skill. In line with this, several learners also recognized that their practical expression in English improved, as seen in the following comments:

*Student #16: “When I first used Facebook, I felt awkward and didn’t know what to write. But after using it a couple of times I got an idea on how to communicate on Facebook. I was able to use more practical English, whereas before I had learned from books. For example, when they say lol, Korean students would think of league of legend, whereas American students would think of laugh out loud. It was interesting to see the difference.”*

*Student # 3: “They have different emotions and expressions, so it was interesting to learn the practical use of the English language.”*

*Student #9: “I realized that I don’t have too much stress on grammar. Colloquial English is a little different. It was nice to be able to practice colloquial English.”*

As seen in these comments, learners could learn various practical expressions such as a frequently used acronym, lol (laughing out loud) among Americans, and colloquial way of talking. That is, it showed that the use of Facebook in this course encouraged learners to develop linguistic competence such as writing skills and the practical expression of English.

Lastly, as a CMC tool, Facebook has various strong points that are distinguished from other communication tools such as blogs, discussion boards, instant messenger, and so on. As seen in the previous section, Facebook offers great accessibility and interaction capability by providing notifications of new updates and responses and through its connectivity to smartphones. Besides these benefits, many students expressed enthusiasm

for Facebook's 'Share' and 'Like,' functions, which the learners used frequently in their Facebook interactions during the course. Facebook's 'Share' function allows Korean learners to easily share the contents of various media such as newspapers, articles, and YouTube with their American partners and peers because many Web sites offer the service of sending the link of their contents directly to Facebook users' posts.

Alternatively, users can link the content directly themselves by just leaving the address of the Web site's content page on their Facebook posting. When the American students and peers click the link that Korean learners left on Facebook to share the contents with them, it brings them to that Web site, so all of the students can read the contents together and gain information about them. The following posting shows an example of how Korean learners used the 'Share' function to share information related to that week's topic for discussion with their U.S partners and peers (see Figure 10).



**Figure 10.** One Korean learners' Facebook Posting on the Topic of Communication Skills Differences

As you can see in the post, the Korean learner included a useful and informative article called ‘Different Meanings of Silence between Eastern and Western Culture’ to share with their intercultural partners and peers. It shows that the ‘*Share*’ function on Facebook made intercultural interaction more enriching, effective, and informative. In addition, the function of ‘*Like*,’ particularly the way it was used in this course, was a way of showing that participants read others’ posts and were able to record a minimum gesture of agreement with what others wrote in their posts, which made participants feel they were actually communicating, gaining recognition, and even feeling good. In addition to the ‘*Share*’ and ‘*Like*’ functions, various tools Facebook offers were also utilized in this course. These included the survey tool, ‘*Ask questions*,’ to elicit participants’ thoughts and opinions, and the ‘*Add photos/video*’ function to use and share various visual data. The following shows an example of using the survey tool on Facebook during the course to elicit students’ overall opinions with regard to that week’s discussion topic, marriage (see Figure 11).



**Figure 11.** Two Facebook Postings that Use the Survey Tool

As seen above in Figure 11, with the survey tool, users easily and simply can see what other participants thought about some particular issues.

More importantly, what makes Facebook a more convenient, comfortable, and effective communication tool is that every post the study participants wrote was arranged in chronological order on one page so the participants could read or at least skim over all

the entries without much effort just by scrolling down the screen. However, at the same time, as I point out later on in the next section, the advantageous feature of the arrangement of postings in chronological order in one page creates some difficulties in managing the entries such as there is no functions of finding old entries for users and a teacher's give important notices effectively to students.

In addition, if a post contained new comments, that post was updated as a new one and appeared at the top of the page, so students could continue to join the discussion that had been initiated without the need to search every post to join the new discussion. These Facebook features are optimized for communicating with various people at one time. In these aspects, Facebook facilitates a very innovative, convenient, interactive, and effective way of communicating with people, unmatched by any other CMC tool. In addition, this course that used Facebook benefited most with these features to make many learners participate in the course discussion at one time effectively and conveniently, which might increase learners' participation.

In line with this, Facebook is also a convenient and effective tool for individual communication. Users can select a certain person to talk to on Facebook by writing that person's name in their Facebook entries. Then, an indicator function automatically notifies the person who has been selected as the target and gives him/her the opportunity to participate in the communication. The next post is an example of Korean learners using this function in their entries to communicate with a certain American partner for an interview (see Figure 12).

facebook Search for people, places and things Seung

Hi Jessica McQueen! Daewon Jin and I will interview about social status of train operator(Engine Man) in American society. Since we are majoring about train operation, we really know about American railroad situation. We do not want to know something professional but just your opinion and your neighbors, and relatives' thinking.  
Thank you!

Like · Comment · Follow Post · November 29, 2012 at 9:42am

Jangsik Cho likes this. Seen by 45

Jessica McQueen Well personally, I've only been on a train a few times. As you probably know, it isn't one of our most prevalent form of transportation, but it's definitely one of our most innovative and timeless means. Here in the US, we really rely heavily on individual means of transportation. It seems like we all have some place to be so public transportation is suffering.  
November 29, 2012 at 10:31am · Like

Jessica McQueen My aunt uses trains often though. There is a direct line from Indiana to Chicago, and she uses it all the time to visit her sister. She is more tradition when it comes to life so she enjoys the thrill of using such an older mode of getting from place to place.  
November 29, 2012 at 10:32am · Like

Jangsik Cho Oh.. so you guys just use your own car to go somewhere? I heard some of U.S cities have subway. Does your city have subway? In korea, subway is pretty useful public transportation. Since too many people are living in small city( like our capital, seoul), we prefer to use subway. Because subway do not have traffic jam. And it is kind of cheaper than other public transportation.  
November 29, 2012 at 12:06pm via mobile · Like · 1

Jessica McQueen Yes, unfortunately Indiana does not have a subway. We always use our individual car to take us wherever we need to go. My boyfriend and I live together and we each have a car of our own that we use to go to and from work..I really wish we had a means of public transportation, but we don't. Some of the main cities like New York, Chicago, San Francisco, etc....they have subways. Do you each have your own cars? We have to be 16 to have a drivers' license. Do you have a certain age as well?  
November 30, 2012 at 9:33pm · Like

Jessica McQueen Train Operation seems like a popular education in your culture. It is not here in America. That's really interesting!  
November 30, 2012 at 9:35pm · Like

Jangsik Cho We should be 18 to get drivers' license. Some of 20s in korea have their own car but most of them dont.

**Figure 12.** One Korea Learner's Facebook Posting During the Interview Task

As the Facebook posts above show, the name of the American partner in the entry turned blue, which means the indicator function was activated so the American student received a notice that someone had initiated a conversation. The two students were then able to communicate with each other easily. This function of assigning a certain person is very effective and convenient to use because it opens an individual and personal channel

of communication. It signifies that Facebook makes it easier and simpler to communicate, not only with various people at one time, but also with individuals.

In sum, Facebook offers various useful functions that can be used for effective communication. These include sharing various sources (‘*Share*’) as well as using visual data (‘*Add photos and video*’) with ease. Facebook also provides a means of showing agreement with minimal effort, just by clicking on the ‘*Like*’ button. A survey tool (‘*Ask questions*’) elicits participants’ thoughts and opinions and has beneficial features that enable communication not only with various people at one time but also individually. Facebook’s other attractions include its great accessibility and interaction capability in which members are notified of new updates and responses, and its ability to connect to smartphones.

In considering the beneficial aspects of this course, recognition must be given to the various benefits Facebook provided for this course. For example, Facebook gave learners opportunities of online intercultural communication with American people, the target culture. This opportunity offered an online learning place that was the basis for developing learners’ IC. It also offered a place for learners to practice knowledge and the skills they would need in real-life intercultural communication. In addition, it developed learners’ linguistic competence, writing skills, and practical expression of English. As the previous section noted, Facebook use increased learners’ motivation to learn and participate in the course. It was an effective way to communicate with others online and to engage actively in discussions with its great accessibility and interactive communication capability. It also made intercultural communication comfortable. Furthermore, Facebook offers its unique, innovative, and helpful functions for effective

communication such as the *'Share'* feature to share various sources on the Web; *the 'Like'* feature to show a gesture of agreement with minimal effort; and the *'Add photos/video'* feature to utilize visual data with ease. *'Ask questions,'* is a survey tool used to elicit participants' thoughts and opinions, and has interactive and comfortable features that enable communication not only with various people at one time but also individually. Therefore, with all its distinctive, innovative, and advantageous new features, which are distinguished from other communication tools, the use of Facebook in this course made Korean learners' intercultural learning experiences more effective, enriching, rewarding, interactive, and meaningful.

### ***Difficulties of Facebook Use in the Course***

While various beneficial features of the adoption of Facebook for intercultural learning course were discussed in the previous section, there were also some challenging aspects of using Facebook in the course, which will be elaborated in detail in this section.

One of the disadvantages of this course many Korean students noted while interacting with their U.S partners on a weekly basis was that many of the responses leaned toward certain posts, not to everybody's. One student, for example, said, Student #2: *"When I was using Facebook, I realized some posts had more replies than others. Of course, this might be because some posts were good for discussion, but I was hoping all the posts had more replies. Some posts didn't have any replies. It might be possible that Americans had trouble translating my posts, so they didn't leave a reply. It was somewhat disappointing."* This comment illustrates that the student felt a sense of frustration when he saw active interaction was not happening on all students' posts, and thus the requirement of leaving more than two comments every week was not enough.

Some students were sad they didn't get active replies from their U.S. peers. Student #14: *"I wrote many replies on American students' posts, but didn't get as many replies from them as they got from me. When that happened I was a little sad and disappointed,"* said one student.

All of these comments show that even though most of the participants were involved in the course actively and regularly, not all of the participants' posts resulted in meaningful and active interaction with their U.S. partners, which upset the Korean learners. This suggests some improvement is needed in the manner of participation in this course to ensure more meaningful interaction can take place when managing the course. In relation to this difficulty, suggestions for improving Facebook participation were made subsequently during interviews with the Korean learners as follows:

*Student #19: "Instead of making it an obligation to write at least one post on Facebook every week, it would be better if we could also get credited for writing long replies. Everybody, including the Korean and American students, had to write something about the given subject every week, so when I read the posts, it all seemed very similar."*

*Student #8: "It would have been better to communicate if we'd made fewer posts and received more replies."*

These comments suggest that the requirement of the course that participants should write more than one entry and make more than two comments a week on others' posts should be revised to improve class participation in a way that ensures more meaningful communication and interaction. As students pointed out, it was problematic in that the requirement that everyone should write more than one post on the same topic

every week yielded an overflow of similar posts, so it prevented students from reacting to everyone's posts meaningfully and actively. In this regard, some improvement is needed in the way students can participate. As the students suggested above, credit should be given for writing long replies to others' posts, reducing the total number of posts per week by creating groups of students, with each group taking a turn writing postings and increasing the number of comments and responses in order to promote more meaningful and active interaction.

In addition, some students experienced discomfort and difficulty understanding others' posts, as seen in the following comments:

*Student # 24: "As someone mentioned before, at times I wanted to write a reply but did not understand the post. It was upsetting not to be able to understand what they were saying. I didn't have anyone to ask about it, so it was difficult for me."*

This comment presents a critical need for teachers' help as well as feedback to make students understand each other's posts clearly. Since the participants are intermediate-level English language learners, there were several cases wherein which the Korean learners couldn't understand what their U.S. partners were writing in their Facebook posts, and needed help with this. This finding is crucial in that there is the possibility that this lack of understanding of the thoughts and opinions of others might cause a communication breakdown and reduce the effectiveness of this course for IC development. Accordingly, teachers should be encouraged to provide feedback and help to ensure the Korean learners understand their U.S. partners' posts on Facebook fully and clearly in order to offer a better, more effective, and improved intercultural learning course. As noted in previous chapter 5, the importance of a teacher's role has been

already discussed since some students had their negative stereotypes reinforced and gained misinformed knowledge. Accordingly, both of these issues emphasize the need of the feedback from a teacher and importance of teacher's role (knowledge of language and knowledge of culture) if they are to be overcome.

Furthermore, while the previous section outlines various beneficial features of Facebook as a CMC tool, Facebook also has several weaknesses as it was used for the purposes of the course. Many of learners complained it was hard to find old entries on Facebook because there was no search function to find certain entries. Furthermore, the students said there should be a function for announcing important class notices. These points are reflected in the following comments:

*Student # 3: "It is hard to find old posts. There is no search function. You have to manually scroll down to find the posts."*

*Student #7: "However, the downside of Facebook is the fact that it lists all the posts in chronological order, and when the post gets old, it is hard to find. It is also hard to search for the post you want to see."*

*Student #16: "There was a new subject every week, and when I checked a little late, there were too many posts, and it was hard to find the post I needed to see. Kakao Talk [Korean smartphone application] has a function that can give an important notice to the group, but I couldn't find it on Facebook, so it was hard for me to use Facebook in that respect."*

All of these comments show the drawbacks of using Facebook in the course. For example, as student #3 mentioned, it is hard to find old entries on Facebook because there

is no search function, so someone who wants to find old entries needs to scroll all the way down to look for them. In addition, the teacher and participants were frustrated by the impossibility of organizing Facebook entries because the posts are simply spread out on the computer screen in chronological order, and the teacher's important notices relating to course tasks were pushed back with other posts to later pages. These difficulties were mainly due to the fact that Facebook has been designed for the optimization of effective and efficient communication that needs prompt responses, not for the purpose of courses. This suggests that even though Facebook offers various effective functions for communication that can benefit this course, for the purposes of the course there are some difficulties in managing the entries such as there is no functions of finding old entries and give important notices effectively to students, as mentioned earlier.

It is very important to note that some students were reluctant to use Facebook in this course for reasons of privacy. Some students in the U.S. dropped the course for this reason. These privacy concerns should be treated in a serious light when a teacher or practitioner considers using Facebook for future practice. Since Facebook, as a social networking site, is closely related to students' private lives, they want to separate it from the course. Some Korean students circumvented this issue by establishing double accounts on Facebook, one for their private life and the other exclusively for their participation in the course. Establishing two Facebook accounts might be one good way of addressing students' concerns about using Facebook due to their privacy risk.

In sum, with regard to the challenging aspects of using Facebook in the course, the findings show that not all of the participants had meaningful and active interaction with their U.S. partners with their own posts. The reason for this was the tendency for

some responses and comments to lean toward certain individual posts, not toward everybody's. This suggests the form of participation in this course could be improved by reducing the total number of posts per week, for example, while increasing the number of comments left. In addition, some students expressed discomfort and difficulty in terms of understanding each other's posts due to their lack of language competency, which suggests a critical need for teachers. It also suggests the need for feedback to enable students to understand each other's posts fully and clearly. It was also found that since Facebook doesn't offer the search function to find old entries, and there is no function that organizes Facebook entries in such a way that announcements of important notices appear prominently, these difficulties should be taken into account when Facebook is considered for use in future courses. In addition, some students were reluctant to use Facebook for the course because of privacy issues. This is another critical point teachers should bear in mind when Facebook is considered for use in future courses. This study found that establishing double Facebook accounts may be one way of resolving this issue.

In summary, this section presents many advantageous and challenging aspects of the course that adopted Facebook as a new CMC tool for intercultural communication to develop learners' IC. The study suggests that because of Facebook's advantageous and innovative features, using it as a CMC tool to develop learners' IC in an EFL classroom setting would benefit students. It not only provides the opportunity for members of two different cultures in different countries to connect for the purpose of intercultural communication, but it also makes intercultural communication more effective, enriching, interactive, fun, and rewarding. These intercultural learning experiences maximize the effectiveness of this course in developing learners' IC, as illustrated in this section.

However, despite the benefits of using Facebook's in this course, there were also some weaknesses. Addressing these could inform and improve future practice. For example, one difficulty was Facebook's lack of a search function to track down old entries. Another was Facebook's inability to organize entries and give students important notices effectively and conspicuously. In addition, some students were sensitive about privacy issues on Facebook. These difficulties should be carefully considered when future courses using Facebook are planned. In addition, the manner of participation and the lack of teachers' feedback in this course indicated there is some room for improvement for future practice.

#### **6.4 Instructional Improvement for Intercultural Teaching and Learning in the Course of IC**

In order to suggest practical improvements for this course, this section closely analyzes all of the data (i.e., interviews and observations) to determine possible areas of improvement. It also discusses the findings of the previous chapter and the previous section in terms of some conflicting results with regard to IC development and challenging aspects of the course again in this section to yield useful information and make practical suggestions for future practices to develop more effective and efficient intercultural teaching and learning that will be suitable for current EFL classroom practices related to IC.

As for possible improvement, many of the Korean students showed how much they enjoyed the last task of one-on-one 'ethnographic interviews' with U.S partners, and they wanted to have more of this type of learning experiences in the course as seen in the following comments.

*Student # 13: “For the last course task, we had to do a one-on-one interview with the American students. I thought it was great. I was able to talk about light and familiar subjects.”*

*Student # 7: “I think we should have more one-on-one time with the American students as in the last interview task. It would be great if we could choose the partner for the interview task because when we read others’ posts, there are ones that we really liked to be friends with or who we enjoyed interviewing.”*

These comments show that the ‘ethnographic interview’ task was an entertaining experience for the Korean learners and as students # 13 mentioned, they were able to talk and learn about familiar, casual, and daily subjects concerning American people and their culture by communicating one-on-one with the American students. Student # 7 explicitly shows his wish to have more one-on-one time with his U.S. intercultural partners. This finding suggests that the inclusion of more one-on-one interaction, such as the interview task to communicate with the U.S partners, could expand learners’ intercultural learning experiences to be more fun, close, casual, diverse, and interactive, which is a very different form of learning from formally planned discussion on carefully chosen intercultural topics in the course. So far, we have observed that formally planned discussion brought many chances of intercultural interaction between Korean learners and their U.S. partners and led positive outcome in terms of developing learners’ IC. Since one of the course tasks, ‘ethnographic interview’ is found to have some beneficial feature to expand intercultural learning experiences to be more entertaining, diverse and rewarding, which helps learner to better understand American people and their culture, it is recommendable to have both a formal planned discussion task and this more open-

ended kind of task to maximize the effect of this kind of course on learners' IC development.

In addition, many of the Korean learners expressed the wish to include synchronous interaction with U.S. partners, such as chatting and video calls, as seen in the following comments.

*Student # 9: "It would be great if we could use a messenger to chat with the American students. We could share our thoughts instantly."*

*Student # 20: "It would be more fun if we could meet in person to talk through video calls."*

*Student # 2: "If we could have a chance to really talk to the foreign students on the phone or through video chatting, it would be better and more fun and helpful for my communication skills."*

*Student # 19: "It would be helpful if we could invite an American instructor. Speaking and writing are two different skills. Perhaps video chatting might be a good idea too."*

This course of study was all asynchronous interaction on Facebook, since there was a time difference between the two countries. However, these comments all show that Korean learners wish to have some synchronous interaction with American students, such as chatting and making video calls during the course. The student #19 noted writing on Facebook is different from actually speaking to American people and recommended to include synchronous tool such as video chatting to improve his learning experience. Inclusion of synchronous interaction might be a good way of maximizing this opportunity

of intercultural communication with U.S students in a way that is more enriching, interactive, and practical. Even though this study couldn't adopt the use of synchronous communication tools due to time differences, this finding suggests that teachers can consider the inclusion of synchronous interaction in future courses if the time difference is not a hindrance.

Furthermore, in order to enhance the effectiveness of this course in terms of developing learners' IC for future practice, it is crucial to acknowledge that there were some conflicting results in this study, although the findings in general tended to support the claim that this course successfully helped to develop Korean learners in all the components of Byram's (1997) model of IC. The conflicting results that were found in the study, as discussed in the chapter 5, are firstly, that some learners reinforced negative stereotypes and misconceptions in this course. In addition, some learners gained misinformed knowledge about American culture and people. It critically highlights that learners need feedback from their peers or teachers about what they learned during intercultural communication. It is very important for learners to share their learning experiences with others to get feedback to avoid increasing misconceptions and misknowledge and reinforcing negative stereotypes so that learners can obtain accurate knowledge and overcome prejudice and negative stereotypes they might have. As for future improvements to the course, there should be teachers' feedback on learners' intercultural learning experiences. The inclusion of learners' self-reports or follow-up discussions within the course might be worth considering giving feedback to learners. Furthermore, as discussed earlier in this chapter, some students reported their difficulty of understanding some postings from their U.S. partners due to their lack of linguistic

competence. This critically indicates the need of a teacher's help and guide to make students to understand the postings clearly and perform classroom tasks successfully. This finding suggests the critical importance of a teacher's role in this kind of course that used Facebook to offer learners the opportunities of intercultural communication. As other research within CMC text has noted, simply making the chances of intercultural communication doesn't automatically lead to successful outcome of learners' IC development. Secondly, some Korean learners experienced difficulty implementing what they had learned under real-time circumstances, which is one component of '*skills of discovery and interaction*,' while other students clearly enhanced their application ability. They showed a lack of confidence because they thought intercultural interaction on Facebook was different from real face-to-face interaction in the U.S. In order to overcome this conflicting result, the course should be improved to enhance learners' application ability. In relation to this issue, the previous section's finding that learners wish to have synchronous communication with American students through chatting and video calls might be one solution to assist learners to overcome their lack of confidence in real-time face-to-face interaction. Because synchronous interaction can be done by speaking rather than writing, and by seeing each other's faces and hearing their voices, rather than seeing a computer screen, it can give learners opportunities that are much closer to real face-to-face interaction. This would enable them to better practice their skills. Thus, consideration should be given to helping learners to gain confidence in real-time interaction and develop their application ability. Lastly, some learners indicated difficulty in changing their perspective, '*critical cultural awareness*.' This finding shows that the development of this component of IC is quite challenging and cannot be

developed easily in this short learning experience, the one-semester course. In order to enhance learners' development of *critical cultural awareness*, future courses must pay more careful attention to developing this component and offer learners more opportunities to practice. In addition, follow-up courses or additional lessons within this course are recommended to improve learners' ability to change their perspective.

In addition, challenging aspects of using Facebook in the course discussed in the previous section can also suggest some possible improvements of this course, aimed at making this intercultural learning experience more effective and efficient and raise some useful and practical information to which teachers can refer. To state it here again: it has been observed that not all of the participants were able to have meaningful and active interaction with their U.S partners with their posts since there was a tendency for responses to lean toward certain posts, and not everybody's. This suggests there should be some improvement in the way students participate in this course. One suggestion is to give credit for writing long replies to others' posts, reducing the total number of posts per week by making each group of students take turns at writing posts, increasing comments left in order to promote more meaningful and active interaction. In addition, some students expressed discomfort and difficulty in terms of understanding each other's posts clearly due to their lack of language competency, which shows a critical need for teachers' help as well as feedback during students' intercultural communication to help students understand each other's posts clearly and fully. Furthermore, some students were reluctant to use Facebook during the course because of privacy issues. Establishing two Facebook accounts, one for the course and the other for the learners' private life, is one recommendation for resolving this issue. In addition, Facebook doesn't offer the search

function to find old entries or an organization function that highlights or prioritizes important notices. This made it challenging to utilize Facebook as a pedagogical tool. These difficulties should be considered when future courses consider using Facebook.

In summary, this section explored possible improvements to this course when Facebook is used to develop Korean learners' IC. The findings of this study enabled to present beneficial information and practical suggestions for future practices that will make the course more effective, enriching, and practical for intercultural learning.

### **6.5 Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter explored empirical and practical findings of the adoption of the Web 2.0 tool, Facebook, to develop Korean learners' IC in a classroom setting. It also presented practical guidance and suggestions to help inform how Facebook could be used in an EFL classroom environment and what teachers and practitioners should be aware of in considering and preparing Facebook for use in future courses. First, in order to provide a more complete picture of the effectiveness of using Facebook for this course, this study evaluated Korean EFL students' overall reactions to using Facebook and perceptions of the effectiveness of the course. The findings point to various beneficial features of Facebook use in the course. Specifically, learners expressed that Facebook use increased their motivation, made them feel comfortable by having preparation time, and offered great accessibility and interactive communication capability as with smartphones and an alarm service for new updates and responses. Similarly, functions such as '*share*' '*like*' '*add photos/video*', '*ask questions*', enabled communication not only between individuals but also among various people simultaneously. Second, this study's findings presented many of the benefits and challenges of using Facebook as a new CMC tool and supported

the benefits and advantages of using the platform for the IC development course. In addition, learners reported that using Facebook offered them opportunities for developing and practicing their writing skills and personal expression in English.

With regard to challenging aspects of using Facebook in the course, some learners experienced difficulties understanding each other's postings due to their lack of language competency, and a few students were reluctant to use Facebook due to privacy issues. Another limitation of Facebook that was mentioned was that it does not offer a search function to find old entries, and this, along with the chronological organization of Facebook entries sometimes made it hard to manage exchanges. These challenges underscore the critical role of teachers if the use of Facebook in classrooms is to be optimized. In particular teachers need to help students not only understand each other's postings clearly but also avoid gaining misinformation and reinforcing negative stereotypes. In addition, the findings point to the need for teachers to consider ways of improving participation in Facebook discussions. More one-to-one interactions with the U.S partners, perhaps through interviews using synchronous communication tools such as video call and chatting, might provide an important complement to Facebook interaction that can further foster interpersonal connections among Korean and U.S. learners.

## CHAPTER 7. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

### 7.1 Overview and Introduction

This study investigated the effectiveness of the most famous Web 2.0 tool, Facebook, in developing Korean EFL learners' IC, and as a means of offering practical guidance on Facebook use as a form of a computer-mediated language and as a new pedagogical tool in the classroom setting. The results of the previous two chapters indicated that overall, there are instances of Korean students' IC development that fall well within Byram's (2000) guidelines, which supports the view that Korean learners have successfully developed all of the components of Byram's (1997) model of IC, even though there were some differences in terms of development and some conflicting results. In addition, with regard to learners' views and perspectives on the effectiveness of using Facebook for their intercultural learning, in order to provide a more complete picture of the effectiveness of this course, most students considered their overall intercultural learning experiences with Facebook positive and rewarding and supported various beneficial features of Facebook. Furthermore, from the findings of the study, which include many beneficial and challenging aspects of this course, some conflicting results with regard to Korean learners' IC development, and some discovered areas of improvement for the course, this study presented beneficial and useful information that teachers and practitioners can refer to and consider when using Facebook in their future practices. This study also offered practical suggestions for the possible improvement of this course and better future practices in the adoption of a Web 2.0 tool, Facebook, for developing learners' IC in order to inform and develop current pedagogy.

Importantly, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory was employed as a central theoretical framework for this study on intercultural learning to understand how Korean learners' participation in Facebook activities promoted their IC development. From this perspective, Facebook use in the course is conceptualized as creating a mediational space where Korean EFL learners and American students in the target culture could interact and share and construct information and knowledge together. Central to this were the specific features of Facebook as a Web 2.0 SNS that created affordances that the learners could use to mediate their interactions (e.g., various tools such as the '*Share*' and '*Like*' functions, the comment feature, the ability to use a survey and to upload video and images, etc. for effective communication and interaction). This course provided enriching opportunities that enabled Korean learners to discuss cultural topics with their U.S. partners prompted by carefully designed course tasks on Facebook. It tried to have Korean learners use such opportunities of interaction in the context of meaningful activity shared with American learners as a mediator to promote IC development and help learners move from assisted to independent performance.

To finalize this qualitative study during a one-semester EFL course in Korea, which examined learners' IC development through the use of Facebook, this last chapter views the study's results (discussed at length in Chapters 5 and 6) through the prism of Vygotsky's theory in order to evaluate how they may help us to understand the three main research questions that prompted this study. Next, the chapter offers pedagogical implications from the study's findings that can inform useful and practical guidelines for teachers and practitioners who are interested in using Facebook in their future practices.

This study's limitations are then identified, with suggestions for what is needed in terms of future studies.

## **7.2 Discussion on This Study's Findings**

### **Research Question 1: To what extent does using Facebook as a CMC tool between students in Korea and the U.S promote Korean EFL learners' development of intercultural competence?**

The main aim of this research was to examine the pedagogical viability of repurposing Facebook, intended as a social networking site, as a sociocultural space in which intercultural communication between Korean and American learners may promote Korean learners' IC in the context of the EFL classroom. Specifically, the technological features of Facebook itself, along with the tasks and discussion topics that were purposefully designed and the quality of interactions among learners created conditions intended to support the development of Korean learners' IC. The findings of this study have shown encouraging outcomes regarding the effectiveness of this approach. Thus, it suggests that Facebook can be employed as a possible effective pedagogical cultural tool, offering an engaging online environment to mediate learner development, in this case, their intercultural knowledge, skills, attitudes, and critical cultural awareness.

To understand the effects of repurposing Facebook to create an online sociocultural learning environment, student activities and survey and interview responses have been discussed in relation to the categories of Byram's (2000) IC assessment criteria: (1) interest in other people's way of life, (2) knowledge about another country and culture, (3) knowledge about the intercultural communication process, (4) the ability to cope with living in a different culture, and (5) the ability to change one's perspective. However, this

study revealed that not all of the components of IC have been developed to the fullest extent, in that there are some conflicting results indicating that some Korean learners reinforced negative stereotypes, received misinformation, and showed difficulty in changing perspective as well as in putting into operation what they learned under real-time circumstances. This finding is crucial in that it supports and emphasizes the value of mediation, not just from the tasks themselves or the features of Facebook but also the need for expert human mediation. Put another way, without the support of teachers, learners would have some difficulties of developing their IC on their own. It indicates learners need to be mediated and we must not expect that we can simply create this new promising Facebook online learning environment and ‘turn the learners loose’ to develop IC on their own. The idea of using mediation is to amplify and support cognitive development by helping learners to “solve problems at hand and make it possible for them to perform independently in situation that previously required direct adult guidance” (Bodrova & Leong, 2007, p. 52). In the present case, this finding further supports the need for teachers and the expertise they can bring to guide and assist learners in the course.

Among Byram’s (2000) various criteria, the most developed component of IC is *knowledge about another country and culture*. Korean learners showed improvement in their knowledge with regard to the following: i) some important facts about living in American culture and about the country, state and people, such as various daily life experiences, the perspective of America on learners’ own culture, and true and accurate knowledge by removing and correcting negative stereotypes and prejudice; ii) how to engage in conversation with people from the American culture and maintain a

conversation with them, such as knowing the effectiveness of the direct way of talking and avoiding no eye contact, and iii) some new important facts about learners' own culture and people by seeing some liberal opinions of other Korean classmates about the controversial issue of Lady Gaga on Facebook interaction, and by conducting research about learners' own cultures to explain and convey to American intercultural partners. As such, Korean learners received many benefits from this course in terms of being able to advance their knowledge about their own culture and American culture for intercultural communication, as suggested in Byram's (2000) criteria. Therefore, Korean learners increased and improved their knowledge of what intercultural speakers need to know and to be aware and what would be a good way of interacting with others. Despite all of the positive evidence of advancement of learners' knowledge, there are a few cases in which Korean learners rather reinforced negative stereotypes and obtained misinformation about American people and culture. As described above, this finding indicated intercultural learning should be promoted under the guidance of expertise. For example, teachers should examine whether the knowledge learners acquired and understood about other cultures and people through intercultural interaction is correct or not. That is, it suggests that teachers' feedback on what students gained from intercultural interaction is necessary to overcome this potentially negative result. It highlights the importance of the teacher's role in intercultural communication, and other studies have taken note of this as well (e.g., Lee, 2009; O'Dowd, 2003, 2007; Ware & Kramsch, 2005).

In addition, Korean learners demonstrated their interest in other people's way of life, which is evidence of the enhancement of the most fundamental component of IC, *intercultural attitude*. Through this course, Korean students are shown to be: i) interested

in other people's experiences of daily life, particularly those things not usually presented to outsiders through the media, ii) interested in the daily experience of a variety of social groups within a society, not only the dominant culture, iii) interested in others' perspectives on learners' own culture, and iv) interested in being more involved with other cultures and other people. Therefore, from the various instances of observing Korean learners demonstrated their interest in other people's way of life, this study indicated that Korean learners developed appropriate attitudes which intercultural speakers must possess when they interact with others.

Throughout this course, Korean learners also developed the skills to "recognize and resolve misunderstandings, discover new knowledge, and apply that knowledge to new circumstances," which are *skills of interpreting and relating*, and *skills of discovery and interaction*, additional crucial components of IC (Elola & Oskoz, 2008, p. 456). These skills are as significant as the IC components of *knowledge* and *attitude* to become successful intercultural speakers, because these skills enable students themselves to be able to prepare for and deal with various situations they might encounter in real interaction. In this study, Korean learners demonstrated their ability to increase their knowledge about American culture and people by not only searching on the Internet, but also by inquiring directly with American intercultural partners and reading American students' postings on Facebook, which supports Korean learners' ability to acquire new knowledge of other cultures, a part of *skills of discovery and interaction*. In addition, they demonstrated their ability to recognize those things that can cause misunderstandings and miscommunication between two cultures and to know how to resolve these problems by using skills of comparing and decentering of their own culture, which are *skills of*

*interpreting and relating*. In particular, the finding that Korean learners developed the skills of discovering new information in this course is significant and noteworthy, in that the ability of discovering new information and new aspects of another culture is most likely to be developed in an immersion context, such as learners' study-abroad experiences, where students can investigate what is unfamiliar in their new environment for themselves and seek direct explanations from those who live in that environment (Byram et al., 2002). Thus, this study's result is very compelling and inspiring to see that intercultural interaction on Facebook provides the new possibility as mediation that this similar discovery process among learners, in which mirrors the immersion context, can take place in the foreign language classroom, a benefit that was previously only possible in the study abroad context.

In line with the skills that help learners deal with various situations they might encounter in real circumstances of interaction with others, in researching the development of Korean learners' ability to cope with living in a different culture, which requires the abilities of operating knowledge, attitudes, and skills under real circumstances, one part of *skills of discovery and interaction*, two conflicting results have been found in this study. That is, while some Korean learners seem to develop this ability by showing their intention of trying to apply what they have learned from this intercultural experience in the real circumstance of interaction with the American people, such as changing their way of talking in a direct way and adjusting their behaviors to avoid misunderstanding and miscommunication, other learners showed a lack of confidence about their ability to apply what they learned in the course during real, face-to-face interaction because they think their intercultural communication with American people on Facebook is different

from real face-to-face interaction in the U.S. This finding indicates the weakness of this course in terms of developing application abilities and suggests that some improvement in this course is needed to enhance learners' application abilities in order to overcome this conflicting result. As for suggestions to address this issue, the inclusion of increased one-to-one interaction, such as interview tasks and synchronous interaction with American students with the use of chatting and video calls as part of the course, is founded, since these suggested methods seem to be much closer to real face-to-face interaction, providing learners with opportunities for practice.

With regard to the development of *critical cultural awareness*, which is also a critical component of Byram's (1997) model of IC, Korean learners in this study demonstrated their ability to change perspective in that they are able to understand American people and their culture by looking at things differently and trying to see the learners' own culture from Americans' perspective, which can be regarded as evidence of having *critical cultural awareness* of their own culture and the culture of others, as Byram's (2000) guideline suggested. However, some students denied that they could develop this ability within this short time frame of experience and showed reluctance and negative responses to changing their own view on their culture. This conflicting result indicated that developing learners' *critical cultural awareness* is a challenging, sensitive, and time-consuming process to some students, because it requires changing learners' own way of looking at things, which they have taken for granted throughout their entire lives. This finding suggests that this component cannot be easily developed through a single course, and there should be some improvement in the course to overcome this conflicting result. It is recommended that future courses should pay more careful attention to

developing learners' critical cultural awareness and provide learners with more chances for practice. As for suggestions, additional lessons within the course which focus more on the component of *critical cultural awareness* and follow-up courses to develop learners' IC are encouraged.

Overall, this study focused on Korean learners' developing IC intentionally mediated through intercultural communication with U.S. students in a sociocultural online learning environment. As sociocultural accounts of learning explains that learners' participation in social practices and social interactions provides the fundamental mechanism for learning, which lead to cognitive growth or competencies (Sutherland et al., 2009), the online social and learning environment created for this course provided learners enriching opportunities of social interaction and interpersonal activity with the U.S. partners to participate in and various distinctive features that Facebook owns offer affordances to learners to use to mediate their interaction to develop IC. The findings of this study are indeed promising with regard to the potential for this kind of activity to promote IC development, understood according to Byram's (2000) guidelines. This finding supports the effectiveness of this course in developing learners' IC and the positive viability of using Facebook as a pedagogical tool and a proper mediator in an EFL course for IC development purposes, which is an important and compelling outcome to inform current L2 practice. However, some conflicting results are also found in the study, such as reinforcement of learners' negative stereotypes, acquired misinformation, and exhibited difficulty with changing perspective as well as of operating with what they had learned under real-time circumstances, which emphasizes that learners' IC development in this type of course should be mediated under the guidance of expertise or

teachers. Just providing the chances of interaction and communication with the U.S. partner via Facebook is not enough to assist learners to develop their IC. It suggests that there should be some improvement in this course to overcome these weaknesses and to create a more effective and helpful course. In terms of some improvement, there should be teacher feedback regarding learners' intercultural learning experiences after intercultural interaction on Facebook. In addition, to better develop the somewhat challenging components of '*skills of discovery and interaction*' and '*critical cultural awareness*' more effectively and successfully, future courses should give more careful attention to developing those components by including follow-up courses or additional lessons within the existing course which provide learners with more chances to practice these components.

As Byram et al. (2002) elaborated, intercultural speakers are able to understand intercultural human relationships, and in order to do so, it is crucial to have some cultural knowledge, skills, attitudes and values and to possess "an awareness that there is more to be known and understood from the other person's perspective (p. 6)." In this regard, this course, which adopted Facebook as a means of creating a meditational space for developing learners' IC, was successful and beneficial in assisting learners to develop what an intercultural speaker needs in terms of helping learners to increase various aspects of their cultural knowledge, to gain interest in and curiosity about American people and culture, to acquire useful skills to be better prepared in real circumstances of intercultural communication for themselves, and to recognize relationships between their own and other cultures and acquire an awareness that their own cultural values and behaviors can be seen differently from other peoples' perspectives and vice versa. This

positive and successful outcome yields significant, useful, valuable, and practical contributions to current L2 pedagogy of developing IC, since it demonstrates the possibility of using a new emerging Web 2.0 tool, Facebook, in the classroom setting and the strong effectiveness of this course on learners' IC development.

**Research Question 2: How do learners view the effectiveness of using Facebook (CMC tool) for intercultural learning?**

In order to provide a more complete picture of the effectiveness of using Facebook for this course, this study attempted to evaluate Korean EFL students' overall perceptions and reactions toward using Facebook and the effectiveness of their intercultural learning experience in the survey result, along with interview data. The findings revealed that most of the students considered their overall intercultural learning experiences with Facebook positive, rewarding, worthwhile and even fun.

In addition, the study revealed several beneficial effects of Facebook use during the course: One of the advantageous features is that it increased learners' motivation to learn and participate in the course. It was observed that some learners changed their behavior by taking an active role in learning and participating in the course because they were very excited about this opportunity for real interaction with American people, and this led to enhancement of their attitudes toward participation and learning. It is significant to note that Facebook brought this new possibility into the conventional Korean EFL classroom by opening the door to the real world of communication with American people, the speakers of the target culture. In other words, this course showcased the potential for Facebook, which was intended as a social networking site, to be leveraged as a mediating space to assist learners in understanding the real-world

intercultural communication and relationships with American people. Thus, having this opportunity changed the passive, text-based, and uninteresting current Korean EFL practice of intercultural learning, which is confined to classroom activities, into an active, real, engaging, stimulating, and fun learning environment, which fundamentally brought about the increases in learners' motivation to actively participate in the course. Next, Korean learners regarded Facebook as a comfortable tool for sharing their ideas and interacting with U.S partners, not only because of its own unique and convenient features which help learners to use to mediate their interaction and activity to develop IC, but also because it is happening in a virtual online learning environment, where they could have some preparation time to overcome the lack of language competency and confidence in communication skills, which is more demanding in actual, face-to-face interactions. This finding signifies that using Facebook is particularly beneficial for learners who are not proficient in English language skills and who have no experience interacting with other cultures, like the Korean intermediate-level EFL learners in this study, because a virtual online environment like Facebook gave learners time for preparation before sharing their thoughts in communications with their U.S partners, which made them feel comfortable and secure. Last, as a communication tool itself, Korean learners viewed the use of Facebook as an effective way to communicate with others online and to engage actively in discussions because it offers great accessibility and interactive communication capabilities. To be specific, with features that connect Facebook to smartphones and offer alarm service for new updates or responses to its users, Facebook enables learners to have great accessibility to intercultural communications as they are taking place through their own smartphones whenever they want, and to be more actively involved in intercultural

interaction because it is easy to know what is happening through Facebook's alarm service and to easily participate in intercultural communication with smartphones. With these unique, innovative, and convenient features, Facebook has a very crucial and much stronger benefit in terms of being an effective and efficient communication tool over other communication tools, such as blogs, discussion boards, etc.. Accordingly, with Facebook use, Korean learners were able to effectively communicate with others online, to actively engage in course participation and to develop their IC through mediation.

Perhaps most importantly, the survey results show that generally, Korean learners positively evaluated what they learned in the course in terms of IC development, which also matches the findings in Chapter 5. In brief, most Korean learners positively recognized that they learned that differences exist between two cultures; gained intercultural knowledge and communication skills by working with peers and native speakers; considered themselves able to understand, analyze, and generate cross-cultural issues; and obtained diverse cultural perspectives and reflected further about their own beliefs and their enhanced understanding of the target culture.

**Research Question 3: How can the instructional practices of using Facebook for developing learners' intercultural competence be approached and realized in an actual EFL classroom?**

This study presented empirical and practical findings regarding the adoption of a Web 2.0 tool, Facebook, as a new CMC tool in the EFL classroom for developing Korean learners' IC and revealed many beneficial and challenging aspects of the course. Therefore, research question 3 can be answered by suggesting some informative practical instructional guidance on implementing Facebook in classroom environments in order to

develop new approaches to current intercultural learning and to improve current pedagogical practice.

First, it is significant to note that this study demonstrated the beneficial features of Facebook as a CMC tool in and of itself. Perhaps more importantly, the distinctive features of Facebook revealed the positive possibility that Facebook can be encouragingly adopted in the classroom for IC development purposes, and it can outperform other CMC tools, such as blogs, discussion boards, etc. For example, Facebook has a very strong ability to enable effective interaction and communication, in that all postings that participants write are arranged in chronological order on one page, so that students are able to read all the entries without the effort of visiting all postings, but merely by scrolling down so that they can at least skim all entries for content. In addition, it is much easier to join the ongoing discussion, because when some posting obtained new comments and responses, these appear at the top of the page so that students are aware of what has been most recently added without searching every posting. These unique and innovative functions of Facebook make intercultural interaction and communication effective and efficient in terms of efforts saving time, maximizing student participation, and offering a well-optimized environment to communicate with various people simultaneously. In addition, given the popularity and wide use of smartphones, Facebook can have greater accessibility in that it can be used with smartphones; thus, students can easily join in communications with their own smartphones and also enable active interaction through an alarm service for new updates of postings and responses by email, Facebook, and smartphones, so that learners can easily know what is happening on the site where their intercultural communications took place; thus, it increased learners'

participation. Additionally, Facebook offers various useful functions for effective communication, such as *'share,' 'like,' 'add photos/video,'* and *'ask questions,'* which make intercultural communications more interactive, resourceful, fun and rewarding, with the easy *'click'* of these user-friendly functions. This clearly provides affordances that the Korean learners could use to mediate their interactions with students in the U.S. As such, Facebook has distinctive, innovative, beneficial and attractive features as an effective communication tool that other CMC tools couldn't offer, and these merits suggest that Facebook has much potential as a mediating artifact to be used in the classroom for the purpose of learners' IC development through intercultural communication.

Second, in terms of strengths of this particular course in its use of Facebook, this course served to form the foundation of developing learners' IC by giving learners the chance to share thoughts and opinions about diverse intercultural topics by interacting with people from other cultures, which is not possible in a traditional EFL classroom in Korea. The key here, of course, was that Facebook was not merely an environment for students to function in any manner they chose, but rather specific activities were intentionally designed so that Facebook became a socio-culturally organized learning environment. By facilitating this chance to interact with others, in this case American students, through the use of Facebook and through carefully preplanned tasks (i.e. discussion on intercultural topics and ethnographic interview), this course supported Korean learners' IC development in terms of learning through participation and collaboration with others. Thus, it supported the positive pedagogical possibility of this

same kind of course to develop learners' IC in the actual EFL classroom environment in future practice.

Importantly, another merit of the course is that it gave learners the chance to practice their current IC abilities. Their experiences interacting with American students over Facebook in this structured environment – where their activity was mediated not only by Facebook but also by the discussion topics and tasks as well as the other Korean and American learners – created conditions for the Korean learners to gain practice in intercultural interactions before face-to-face interactions that they may have with Americans outside of the course in the future. In some sense, course experiences such as these may be seen as helping students to move from interactions in which they are heavily mediated (externally) and preparing them for future interactions where they will likely need to function in a more autonomous way. Thus, it is important and useful to note that Facebook use in this course offers Korean learners not only opportunities to learn and advance various intercultural knowledge, skills, attitudes, and awareness in developing IC, but also to practice what they are able to do to facilitate successful interaction with various cultures in future interactions outside of the course.

Third, from the findings related to some challenging aspects of using Facebook in this course, this study suggests improvements for this course so that it can be better put into practice in future actual EFL coursework by ameliorating some drawbacks discovered through this study.

Chief among these is that this study revealed a critical need for feedback, either from peers or teachers, to help students not only clearly understand each other's postings, but also to avoid the acquisition of misinformation and the reinforcement of negative

stereotypes. In particular, it signifies the importance of sharing learning experiences with a teacher or peers to receive feedback during the course, which guides learners in their pursuit of accurate knowledge, to develop intercultural understanding, and to further avoid misunderstanding and miscommunication. As for feedback, learners' self-reports or follow-up discussions in the course are recommended. As discussed in O'Dowd (2003), learners' mere contact and interaction with other cultures and people don't necessarily and automatically lead to successful IC development. This highlights the important role of teachers in an intercultural communication course, which other studies have also noted (e.g., Lee, 2009; O'Dowd, 2003, 2007; Ware & Kramsch, 2005). When it comes to teachers' roles in intercultural interaction, this study adds new findings which clearly indicate that teachers should give feedback by examining whether the knowledge learners have acquired and what learners understood about other cultures and people through intercultural interaction is correct or not.

Another consideration is that methods of participation in this course can be improved, since many of the responses leaned toward certain posts, not to everybody's, which students complained about in terms of their quality. In order to encourage more meaningful and active interaction, it is recommended that the method of participation in discussion tasks on Facebook be amended; for example, instead of requiring everyone to write postings more than once every week, which resulted in many postings expressing similar opinions, one solution might be to reduce the total number of postings per week by creating groups of students, with each group taking a turn writing postings and increasing the number of comments and responses.

As discussed in research question 2, with regard to this study's conflicting results about learners' IC development, Korean learners showed a lack of confidence in the application of what they learned in the course under real-time circumstances, which suggests the need for a more carefully designed course to improve learners' application abilities. In relation to this suggestion, the inclusion of more one-to-one interaction to interact with U.S partners, such as interview tasks and the possible use of synchronous tools such as video calls and chatting, along with Facebook interaction, which are found to improve the course, might serve as one solution in assisting learners to overcome their lack of confidence in application abilities during real-time interactions, since these suggested methods are much closer to real face-to-face interaction, which offers learners increased opportunities for practice.

In addition, some learners indicated that they experienced difficulties in changing perspective, '*critical cultural awareness*,' in this short time frame of experience, a one-semester course, which highlights the challenging, sensitive, and time-consuming aspects of developing this component. This finding reveals that this one course alone cannot sufficiently and fully develop *critical cultural awareness* as well as other components of IC, and it suggests that follow-up courses or additional lessons within this course should be implemented to improve learners' *critical cultural awareness*, which requires more careful attention and greater opportunities for learners to practice interacting.

Finally, in addition to challenging aspects of the course, there are some difficulties in using Facebook for the course purpose; that is, as a pedagogical tool itself used in this study, the results may provide helpful information for teachers and practitioners who want to consider using Facebook in their future practice. It is very

important to note that there were a few students who were reluctant to use Facebook due to privacy issues; even some students in the U.S dropped the course. As for a solution to this, it was noted that some Korean students made double accounts for Facebook: one for their private life, and the other for the course, in order to join in full participation without privacy concerns. Students' sensitivity to privacy issues when their private and personal Facebook use is combined with the course is an important consideration that teachers should take into account when planning to adopt Facebook in future practices.

In addition, since Facebook is designed for effective communication, not for the course purpose, there were some inconvenient aspects to utilizing Facebook as a pedagogical tool. For example, it was difficult to manage students' entries, because all Facebook postings written by students were simply spread out on one computer screen. Facebook doesn't offer the search function to find old entries, so scrolling down the screen is the only way to look for certain postings. In addition, it was hard to make an effective announcement for an important notice, because a teacher's notices as posted on Facebook were easily left behind as an old entry in the wake of new and updated postings. It can be burdensome for students to look for a teacher's notice amid all of their Facebook postings.

In sum, this study found many beneficial as well as challenging aspects of using Facebook as implemented in the actual EFL course to increase our understanding of how Facebook can be used in practice and reveal its possibilities as a pedagogical tool. First, the study presented the strong points of using Facebook, including its practicability and effectiveness in terms of IC development, and demonstrated how it can overcome limitations and advance the current traditional EFL classroom. Next, this study also

discovered difficulties in using Facebook during the course of this study, which might also occur in an actual EFL classroom; thus, it identified what should be improved and changed in the course in detail and also what should be acknowledged in order to give teachers useful and practical information that should be carefully taken into account when Facebook is adopted in the classroom setting in future practice. Therefore, it revealed positive evidence to support the adoption of Facebook to develop learners' IC in classroom settings and, more importantly, it helped to inform and improve instructional practices in order to facilitate more effective and efficient intercultural teaching and learning, which can be realized in future actual EFL courses with regard to IC development.

Overall, this study recognized the necessity of developing learners' IC in the language classroom and adopted Facebook as a means of creating a meditational space where Korean learners could collectively and individually reflect on cultural issues and could jointly construct new knowledge about the target culture through interactions with American learners. Results from the study revealed that it had successfully developed Korean learners' IC by advancing not only knowledge, but also skills, values and attitudes. In addition, with regard to the general view of Korean learners on the effectiveness of using Facebook for their intercultural learning, this study revealed very positive overall reactions and perceptions from Korean learners toward using Facebook and the effectiveness of their intercultural learning experience, and they regarded this course as effective, rewarding, and fun based upon the survey results and the interview data.

Importantly, this study provides evidence for the pedagogical values of mediating learners' development of IC through Facebook activity. When it comes to the primary benefit of this course, considering the fact that being exposed to the target culture is an absolute must for learners to develop IC (Byram et al., 2002), adopting Facebook was the most effective alternative to open channels with other cultures for learners who have no opportunity to leave their own country to have immersion experiences, since Facebook enabled real-time communication and interaction in which there were chances of sharing and hearing each other's opinions and receiving real accounts and explanations directly from native speakers. In particular, the finding that learners obtained new knowledge through direct interaction with American people by asking questions and participating in the course on Facebook is very compelling and meaningful, because Facebook presents the possibility that learners in foreign language classrooms may be able to acquire the same skills of knowing how to discover new information and new aspects of another culture for themselves and seek explanations directly from those who live in that environment, which represent the primary benefits of the study abroad context (Byram et al., 2002).

In addition, it can be quickly, easily, inexpensively, and efficiently implemented in the EFL classroom, and all that is required of learners is a computer device and an Internet connection. Facebook not only enables learners to communicate with native speakers of the target language and maintain contact with the target culture, but also to enjoy various innovative and effective functions, such as 'share,' 'add photos/video,' 'like,' and 'ask questions,' which make intercultural interaction more colorful, fun, enriching, productive and meaningful. Thus, this study points to the positive and realistic

possibility that Facebook can be adopted in instructional practices as an effective, convenient, and practical means to develop foreign language learners' IC.

In sum, this study provided new insight into the practicality of implementing a Web 2.0 tool, Facebook, in an EFL classroom context for learners' IC development. Through the use of Facebook, which is recently getting attention as a new pedagogical tool and emerging as a new methodology in L2 literature, this course of study successfully developed Korean learners' IC. It was proved to provide learners with enriching opportunities to communicate with native speakers of the target language and to enable a holistic, intercultural learning experience that offered the chance to develop intercultural skills, new attitudes, knowledge and values, which are critical components in becoming intercultural speakers. Therefore, this study clearly supports the effectiveness of this course and the pedagogical possibility of Facebook being implemented in an actual EFL course for IC development in future practice.

### **7.3 Pedagogical Implications**

Given the realization that Web 2.0 technologies have opened new horizons for language learning and teaching (Lee, 2009), this study examined the pedagogical possibility and feasibility of the most famous Web 2.0 tool, Facebook, for developing learners' IC in the EFL classroom. To take advantage of Facebook as a new Web 2.0 CMC tool, this study provided Korean EFL learners with opportunities to engage in intercultural communication with the speakers of a target culture, to have the chance to express views on the learners' own culture to their partners of a different culture, and to share and discuss various opinions and cultural values when given various intercultural topics for discussion, which resulted in challenging learners' sense of self, cultural

identity and world view while at the same time challenging learners to better understand their own and their U.S partners' cultural views (Hager, 2005), a process which fundamentally developed learners' IC. Despite some challenges reported, such as learners' sensitivity to privacy issues, and some difficulties of effective management for course purposes, this course of study demonstrated how Korean learners learned to use the Facebook tool for their intercultural learning in ways that are pedagogically effective.

To summarize and elaborate, the main benefit of the use of Facebook in this course for IC development is that it connected two different cultural classrooms, which exist in opposite and very distant directions, easily and conveniently, which is not possible without this kind of technological advancement in the conventional EFL classroom. Accordingly, it offered learners the opportunity to connect with the target culture and people without leaving their own country with only the appropriate computer device and an Internet connection. In addition, given the wide use of smartphones and Facebook's availability through smartphones, learners could easily access Facebook and interact with peers whenever and wherever they wanted by employing their own smartphones, which was a very innovative, convenient and outstanding feature of Facebook. New updates of postings and responses/comments could be instantly known with Facebook's alarm service by way of email, smartphone and Facebook's website, which resulted in an increase in class participation. Furthermore, in terms of learning experiences, since this represents real communication and interaction between two cultures online through Facebook, it was very beneficial in that that whenever learners had questions and wanted to know more about the target culture and people, they directly and immediately asked questions toward speakers of the target culture and received

answers through American people's own explanations and stories. This is meaningful in that learners had the opportunity to increase accurate and reliable knowledge in a more understandable and acceptable way, and this learning experience met the learners' needs, since learners themselves sought the answers and encouraged active learning. This kind of real interaction and communication with other cultures and people by sharing ideas and opinions and asking questions eventually increased the closeness and favorability of the target culture and people, as well as learners' knowledge and skills, so learners were better able to understand and respect differences and learn to be open toward others, thus overcoming stereotypes and prejudice and developing the skills needed to resolve misunderstandings. Importantly, there is another crucial merit of using Facebook for foreign language learners. In this study, it was found that Korean EFL learners felt very comfortable, relieved and even confident about intercultural communication through Facebook because they could have preparation time for discussion and communication due to the fact that it is not real-time, face-to-face interaction but interaction via online communication. The study demonstrated that this method of communication via online was more effective, practical, and helpful for intermediate- or low-level English language learners in order to participate in the course, who felt a lack of confidence about communicating in English, and also in their knowledge of the target culture and their skills for intercultural communication in real-time, direct, face-to-face interaction, since learners could prepare and organize what they were going to write and communicate before actually posting it. In addition, learners regarded this Facebook activity as an opportunity to practice what they could do before they actually encounter real face-to-face interaction. Overall, it is important to note that Facebook use in this course

functioned not only as an effective communication tool by connecting two cultures, but also as an online learning place for IC development and practical preparation for actual face-to-face interaction.

As is the case with the various advantages of using Facebook as a pedagogical tool, several important practical issues need to be taken into account when implementing Web 2.0 tools in future practice. First, it is essential to provide learners with sufficient time and training so that they are comfortable with a new tool. Additionally, how to engage in intercultural communication such as “agreed rules for such discussion based on an understanding of human rights and respect for others” (Byram et al., 2002, p. 22), and how to participate in the course tasks at the beginning of the course before actual intercultural communication between two cultures begins must also be addressed.

Second, Facebook is a readily available tool for course purposes if teachers wish to utilize it in their classrooms. However, there might be some possible problems with some students who are reluctant to use Facebook for the course purpose due to learners’ sensitivity to privacy issues. Teachers may suggest that students make double accounts on Facebook: one for their private and social lives, and the other for the course, in order to separate their usage and participate in the course without worrying about their privacy risk. In addition, there are some minor difficulties related to tracking down old entries that students or teachers have posted, since they are simply listed on a screen. In particular, teachers may encounter difficulty in effectively conveying important notices to students.

Third, the combined use of a Facebook tool and carefully designed course tasks is significant in making the course effective and beneficial. Merely creating opportunities

for intercultural communication between two cultures via Facebook is not adequate for the development of learners' IC. Task-based instruction should be incorporated with the use of Facebook as a CMC tool. Teachers in the intercultural dimension need to focus not on the learners' acquisition of greater knowledge of other countries and cultures, but, rather, on "how to organize the classroom and classroom process to enable learners to develop new attitudes, new skills, and new critical awareness" (Byram et al., 2002, p. 27). Teachers are encouraged to show learners that various perspectives are possible and legitimate, as opposed to the notion that learners' single perspectives are acceptable, and to promote "an atmosphere in the classroom which allows learners to take risks in their thinking and feeling" (Byram et al., 2002, p. 28), which gives learners of the opportunity to take a step back and examine their own cultural values and behaviors by viewing them from a different point of view. Eventually, many learners will be able to critically evaluate and better understand others' cultural beliefs and behaviors. One way of doing this, as in the case of this study, is to integrate topics for discussion that are relevant to learners' interests and that are debatable intercultural issues designed to encourage intercultural communication. This will offer learners many opportunities to compare and contrast two cultures in the course and to learn to relate what they found regarding unfamiliar aspects of American culture to their own culture. It was found that learners' discovery of cultural differences between two cultures by comparison and contrast and the process of relating them to their own culture becomes the basis of decentering learners' own culture and seeing it differently, as well as a means of looking at others' cultures from a different perspective.

Fourth, the importance of teachers' roles in this type of intercultural communication is highlighted. This study demonstrated the crucial need for feedback from teachers or peers to make students not only understand each other's postings clearly, but also to avoid acquiring misinformation and the reinforcement of negative stereotypes about other cultures and people. It is of significant importance for teachers to guide learners to obtain accurate knowledge, to develop intercultural understanding, and to further avoid misunderstandings and miscommunication. Accordingly, teachers should give feedback by examining whether the knowledge learners have acquired and what learners understand about other cultures and people through intercultural interaction is correct or not. As for feedback, learners' self-report or follow-up discussion in the course is recommended.

Finally, it is critical to keep in mind that just one course cannot fully and completely develop learners' IC. The following statement from Byram et al. (2002) indicates that learners' acquisition of IC cannot be easily accomplished. "The acquisition of intercultural competence is never complete and perfect, but to be a successful intercultural speaker and mediator does not require complete and perfect competence" (Byram et al., 2002, p. 7). As is evident from the results of this study, even though this course successfully helped learners to develop all of the components of IC to some extent, it is difficult to say that learners' IC was fully and completely developed. Rather, the study suggests the critical need for ongoing efforts to support learners in their desire to be successful intercultural speakers. Some conflicting results indicated that a few particular components of IC, including *critical cultural awareness* and *skills of discovery and interaction*, need more time and attention allocated in order to be fully developed.

Therefore, IC development using Facebook in the EFL classroom should not be regarded as a one-time course, but, rather, should be conducted over a longer time span (more than one semester), with more time and careful attention allocated to the development of each component in order to maximize the effects of the course for IC development.

#### **7.4 Limitations and Future Studies**

Although this study successfully reported its findings on the effectiveness of this course in developing learners' IC in the EFL classroom by using Facebook and on practical guidance and suggestions to improve current pedagogy, there are some limitations to this study.

The current study focused on general and overall Korean EFL learners' experiences and IC development during the course of online exchanges in order to show the big picture in terms of the pedagogical possibility and practicability of using Facebook as a new CMC tool to develop learners' IC in the EFL classroom. These concepts would be meaningful and worthwhile to explore exclusively with one or perhaps a few Korean student's IC development process over time to present a more in-depth and detailed examination regarding the effectiveness of the course on individual development.

Another limitation is that a teacher's role in this study was quite minimal in that the study was conducted by being incorporated into the existing EFL course in Korea and was designed and managed primarily by a researcher. Therefore, the teacher in this course merely played the simple role of delivering important notices and feedback when the researcher asked her to do so. Additional studies are needed to find out how a teacher's role affects learners' interaction with one another and enhances IC development during online intercultural communication in the course.

In addition, as many articles have already discussed, there has been ongoing discussion of the difficulty in assessing learners' IC (e.g., Fantini, 2009; Schulz, 2007; Sercu, 2004), and there is "even less consensus on whether or how it should be formally assessed" (Schulz, 2007, p. 9). This study used Korean learner's interviews, post-surveys, and Facebook entries as primary sources for the assessment of IC development, which were also used in other studies for the assessment. Future studies might consider additional incorporation of learners' portfolios to assess IC development and to evaluate students' emerging IC, which are recently proposed and regarded as clear, provable demonstrations of students' progress and achievements, as reported in Eaton's (2010) research.

Finally, another area deserving investigation is the inclusion of other variables, such as different levels of English learners, gender, and enhanced course tasks to determine whether those variables influence how learners interact to develop their IC in online intercultural communication and further contribute to a clearer understanding of the effects of Facebook on learners' IC development.

## **7.5 Conclusions**

The current research explored the effectiveness of the most famous Web 2.0 tool, Facebook, in the development of Korean EFL learners' IC, which has recently been regarded as an emerging and expanding methodology for intercultural learning in the current L2 literature. The findings indicated that students had positive, enriching and rewarding experiences by interacting and communicating with speakers of the target culture via Facebook that created online social learning environment where learners could mediate their thinking and learning experiences to successfully developed their IC

by a meaningful, helpful, and significant margin as described in Byram's (2000) guidelines.

Therefore, this study proposed the adoption of Facebook in the EFL classroom as a realistic, effective, and practical way of facilitating the development of IC. It is particularly meaningful and useful for foreign language learners who have no opportunity to study abroad to have contact with a target culture and people, since Facebook, Web 2.0 technology, brings numerous new possibilities into the EFL classroom. That is, it enabled learners to have real intercultural communication by connecting two different cultures and people, who exist in opposite and distant directions, via online interaction, and to make this intercultural learning experience more interactive, effective, fun, enriching, and rewarding. Facebook use plays various roles in the course as an online learning place, a new mediating artifact, an intercultural learning tool, an effective communication tool, and a practice tool. Importantly, it helped to overcome the fact that "learners who have immersion experiences generally develop a greater IC than learners who have only classroom experiences with the target language" by helping learners to "access updated, authentic cultural materials and to communicate with native speakers of the target language," which was not possible in existing traditional EFL classrooms without this kind of technological advancement (Elola & Oskoz, 2008, p. 455).

So far, there has been no empirical research that has examined how learners develop IC through Facebook. This study, which sought to develop Korean learners' IC through Facebook use, represents the first attempt, and it has demonstrated a positive and successful outcome and great promise in terms of practicability of Facebook use in the actual EFL classroom. It is a particularly meaningful and timely contribution to current

L2 literature. In addition, this study presents beneficial and practical information for teachers and practitioners to review for pedagogical practice in promoting IC in the EFL classroom in a way that represents effective and efficient intercultural teaching and learning that, importantly, occurs without the need for actual contact with a target culture. That is, this study contributed to a greater understanding of how a Web 2.0 tool, Facebook, can be adopted as a mediating artifact to promote EFL learners' IC development in future practices. I conclude that the adoption of Facebook, along with carefully designed tasks in the course, is a new, effective, efficient, and practical model of developing language learners' IC (Bennett & Salonen, 2007).

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### Appendix A. Overview of Tasks and Their Topics and Aims

		<b>Topic</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Aim</b>
<b>Phase I</b>	<b>Week 1</b>	Introduction to using Facebook	In-class discussion regarding the value of intercultural competence, the purpose of Facebook, and how it would be used throughout the course.	Students reflected on intercultural competence and the value of Facebook for learning. They learned to about becoming accustomed to using Facebook during the course.
	<b>Week 2</b>	Introductions	Participants introduced themselves to each other and expressed their expectations of the course.	Students got to know their partners and became familiar with communicating via Facebook.
	<b>Week 3</b>	East vs. West cultural differences	Participants read Yang Liu's (2007) work, "East meets West," which depicts the differences in ways of thinking and handling daily affairs; the case compares Germans and Chinese citizens. Students discussed the reading with their peers.	Students had opportunities to reflect on cultural differences (East vs. West) and shared their opinions on this particular material (bias, stereotypes, etc.) They were asked to compare the reading with their own cultures.
	<b>Week 4</b>	Pop Culture	Participants read information from various sources such as journals, newspapers, and Web sites about each topic, reflect on the cultural differences between Korea and the U.S., and discussed topics with their peers.	Students had opportunities to reflect on various topics in which cultural differences exist between Korea and the U.S. They had time to share their opinions and discussed their perceptions and stereotypes.
	<b>Week 5</b>	Marriage		
	<b>Week 6</b>	Parenting		
	<b>Week 7</b>	Communication styles		

	<b>Week 8</b>	<b>Mid-term exam</b>		
<b>Phase II</b>	<b>Week 9</b>	Learners chose their own topics	Participants chose several appropriate intercultural topics based on their own interests for the next three weeks of the course (e.g., Education and Entertainment, Smoking, Alcohol in Advertisement.). They discussed each weekly topic with their peers.	Students explored, analyzed, and reflected on intercultural topics of their own choosing.
	<b>Week 10</b>			
	<b>Week 11</b>			
	<b>Week 12</b>	<b>Thanks Giving Break</b>		
<b>Phase III</b>	<b>Week 13</b>	The ethnographic interview	Participants conducted an ethnographic interview (online) with their native-speaking partners to support intercultural learning. The interview was targeted based on students' curiosity toward the target culture.	This phase aimed to foster intercultural interaction to help students understand cultural differences and awareness more effectively.
	<b>Week 14</b>	Interviews and survey	Interviews (face-to-face) and a survey (online) was conducted only with Korean Students.	Students had an opportunity to reflect on their learning and course activities.
	<b>Week 15</b>	<b>Final term exam</b>		

## **Appendix B. Interview Questions**

### **A. Semi-structured interview with students**

#### **General information**

- 1) Before taking this course, did you use Facebook?  
-If not, are there any social networking sites you used frequently before taking this course?
- 2) How often did you use Facebook for the purposes of this course?
- 3) In what ways did you use Facebook (e.g., smartphone, computer, etc.)?
- 4) Please describe your overall thoughts, experiences, and impressions about this course in terms of using Facebook for intercultural learning with your native-speaking partners.

#### **Intercultural competence related to Byram's (1997) categories: Adopting the adapted interview questions of O'Neil (2008) and Stickler and Emke (2011)**

#### ***Knowledge***

- 5) What have you learned in this course? What do you think you learned most?
- 6) Has your knowledge about American culture and its people increased?

#### ***Attitudes***

- 7) How do you feel about learning about American culture and its people?
- 8) How did you feel or think when you found differences?
- 9) Has your attitude toward the U.S. culture changed based on your experiences in this course?
- 10) What aspects of the culture from the U.S. still pique your curiosity?

#### ***Skills of discovery and interaction***

- 11) Have you developed any new strategies or skills to improve and expand your cultural knowledge or understanding of American culture and people during this course?  
(For example, what efforts have you made to understand more about new aspects of American culture and your native-speaking partners?)
- 12) How do you think you can deal with people from the U.S.?  
(For example, do you feel more confident that you can communicate with people from the U.S. without offending them?)

***Skills of interpreting and relating***

- 13) Has your awareness of cultural differences and similarities between your own culture and the U.S. increased?

***Critical Cultural Awareness***

- 14) Have your previous behaviors or ways of thinking about America and its people changed now that you talked to your Facebook partners?  
-If so, can you tell me about the differences?
- 15) Did you start questioning your own perceptions of other people and your usual ways of thinking about other people?
- 16) Did you become more critical toward your perspective of your own culture and try to understand other cultures from a different point of view?

**Perspective on using Facebook and its effectiveness for intercultural learning**

- 17) How did you feel about the use of Facebook in this course (e.g., motivation, difficulty, etc.)?
- 18) Was Facebook an effective tool for communicating and interacting with native speakers and peers? Why or why not?
- 19) What do you think about the assignments (posting, discussing, and interviewing)? Were these activities relevant for intercultural learning?
- 20) Do you think this course helped you to enhance intercultural competence?

**Practical information**

- 21) What do you think about the benefits and difficulties of using Facebook for this class?
- 22) Might you be interested in taking this type of course in the future? Why or why not?
- 23) Can you suggest ways to provide more effective learning experiences for this course?
- 24) If you have any other thoughts, please feel free to tell me.

**B. Semi-structured interview with the instructor**

- 1) Please describe your overall thoughts, experiences, and impressions about using Facebook for this intercultural exchange and its affordance of learners' IC development?
- 2) What were the benefits of employing Facebook for intercultural learning for this class? What were the difficulties?
- 3) How did you handle the difficult circumstances you mentioned in the previous answer?
- 4) What suggestions do you have regarding how this course could be more effectively implemented or applied?
- 5) How do you think this kind of international exchange course would work in future educational systems in terms of its practical possibilities for implementation?
- 6) If you have any other thoughts, please feel free to tell me.

### Appendix C. Survey Questions

- 1) I enjoyed communicating with people from the U.S. using Facebook.
- 2) Using Facebook was a motivational tool for me to learn about American culture and people.
- 3) I felt comfortable sharing my ideas and interacting with my peers and native-speaking partners using Facebook.
- 4) I found Facebook assignments stimulating and meaningful.
- 5) By regularly writing on Facebook, I was able to understand cross-cultural issues.
- 6) By regularly writing on Facebook, I was able to analyze cross-cultural issues.
- 7) By regularly writing on Facebook, I was able to generate cross-cultural issues.
- 8) Reading others' postings helped me gain diverse cultural perspectives.
- 9) Reading others' postings helped me reflect further about my own beliefs.
- 10) Discussions on Facebook enhanced my understanding of the target culture.
- 11) I gained intercultural knowledge by working with my peers and native speakers using Facebook.
- 12) I gained communication skills by working with my peers and native speakers using Facebook.
- 13) After talking to my Facebook partner, I learned differences exist between people from the U.S. and people from Korea.
- 14) Using Facebook was an effective way to communicate with others online and to engage actively in the discussion.
- 15) Overall, this was a positive experience for me.

## Appendix D. Byram's (2000) Assessment Guidelines

### A self-assessment of my Intercultural Experience

#### A. Interest in other people's way of life

- I am interested in other people's experience of daily life, particularly those things not usually presented to outsiders through the media. Example:
- I am also interested in the daily experience of a variety of social groups within a society and not only the dominant culture. Example:

#### B. Ability to change perspective

- I have realized that I can understand other cultures by seeing things from a different point of view and by looking at my culture from their perspective. Example:

#### C. Ability to cope with living in a different culture

- I am able to cope with a range of reactions I have to living in a different culture (euphoria, homesickness, physical and mental discomfort etc.) Example:

#### D. Knowledge about another country and culture

- I know some important facts about living in the other culture and about the country, state and people. Example:
- I know how to engage in conversation with people of the other culture and maintain a conversation. Example:

#### E. Knowledge about intercultural communication

- I know how to resolve misunderstandings which arise from people's lack of awareness of the view point of another culture. Example:
- I know how to discover new information and new aspects of the other culture for myself. Example:

**Appendix E. Byram's (2000) Assessment Guidelines Adopted in Elola & Oskoz's (2008) Study**

**Categories, Subcategories, and Examples of  
Byram's (2000) Adapted Guidelines**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Definitions</b>	<b>Examples</b>
A. Interest in knowing other people's way of life and introducing one's own culture to others	<i>To be interested in other people's experience of daily life, particularly those things not usually presented to outsiders through the media</i>	<p>"Actually beyond class these are of personal interest to me, because I will be studying at Salamanca University next year, and am quite excited, but realize I know very little about life in Spain." (Beth, blog #14, United States)</p> <p>"I have not yet visited a hospital here, but I definitely plan to before I leave because I have a lot of questions also." (Mary, blog #6, Spain)</p> <p>"The partners (in Spain) used regateo to get things they needed and wanted at a bargain, and they found it very easy." (John, questionnaire, United States)</p> <p>"I realize that there is more to this world than the US." (Anne, questionnaire, Spain)</p>
	<i>To be interested in the daily experience of a variety of social groups within a society, not only the dominant culture</i>	<p>"I would like to know more about the culture of the younger crowd." (Sophie, questionnaire, Spain)</p>
B. Ability to change perspective	<i>To realize that other cultures can be understood by seeing things from a different point of view and by looking at one's own culture from their perspective</i>	<p>"Do you know if they produced the jacket in Spain? Because that would be the only reason I could think of that they would actually sew it themselves. Since most of the clothes in the US are not actually produced here, I guess it is cheaper for those stores to just exchange a faulty product for a good one rather than send it back to wherever it was produced" (David, blog #2, United States)</p> <p>"From what I have learned about the people in Spain they do not have the same idea as Americans do in the fact that almost every [American] has their own cars." (Sophie, blog #9, Spain)</p> <p>"I know about the culture of Spain much more and have almost transformed to it in some ways." (Susan, questionnaire, Spain)</p> <p>"[Before] I never thought it was odd to others that most people own cars and that public transportation is not often used until I learned that in Spain it is the opposite." (Kerry, questionnaire, United States)</p>

*continued*

C. Ability to cope with living in a different culture	<i>To be able to cope with a range of reactions one experiences when living in a different culture (euphoria, homesickness, physical and mental discomfort, etc.)</i>	<p>"I can tell you I am looking forward to getting my car back so I won't have to worry about walking alone anymore!" (Holly, blog #2, Spain)</p> <p>"I have more respect for the way they do things in Spain and how they act." (Kenny, questionnaire, Spain)</p>
D. Knowledge about one's own and others' culture for intercultural communication	<i>To know some important facts about living in the other culture and about the country, state and people</i>	<p>"There are movies made in Spain, but most movies are made in the United States and then dubbed over in Spanish. Also, the movies come out later." (Alice, questionnaire, United States)</p> <p>"Spain holds an academy-award-like show which is called The Goya Awards, named after the great Goya." (Mark, blog #8, Spain)</p>
	<i>To know how to engage in conversation with people from my culture and explain to them differences and similarities between countries</i>	<p>"Things that I have most definitely noticed is that Europeans are more efficient with their cities." (Kenny, blog #12, Spain)</p> <p>"My blog partner made me pay more attention to living arrangements." (Iris, questionnaire, Spain)</p> <p>"From my blog partner I learned that most people live in the cities and use public transportation." (Sue, questionnaire, United States)</p>
E. Knowledge of the intercultural communication process	<i>To know how to resolve misunderstandings which arise from people's lack of awareness of the viewpoint of another culture</i>	<p>"As far as your question on haggling, I must agree with my friend Kenny. I think the reason for haggling being such a common practice in Latin America is due to the fact that their economies are still (what we would call) developing. Here in Spain, since it is a member of the EU, it's a developed country and its economy is strong. Therefore the Spanish market does not need to rely on bargaining/haggling." (July, blog #12, Spain)</p>
	<i>To know how to discover new information and new aspects of the other culture for oneself</i>	<p>"However, the Spanish life expectancy rate is the highest in the world. (<a href="http://www.puentespain.com/Spain%20Statistics.htm">http://www.puentespain.com/Spain%20Statistics.htm</a>)." (Jim, blog #14, Spain)</p> <p>"From what I have researched on Spain it has a population of over 40 million people, which is a little different from the US." (John, blog #1, United States)</p> <p>"People in the US think everywhere else is very different, but it's not all that different." (Sam, questionnaire, Spain)</p> <p>"At the moment Spaniards are slowly becoming more conservative. But I did not learn that from my chats/blog partners." (Kate, questionnaire, United States)</p>

## VITA

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### Education

- Pennsylvania State University** **August 2010-August 2013**  
Ph.D. in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction,  
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- Pennsylvania State University** **August 2009-August 2010**  
M.A. in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction,  
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- Sungkyunkwan- Georgetown University TESOL Program** **Jan 2009-June 2009**  
Completed the Course and Earned the TESOL (Teaching English to  
Speaker of Other Language) Certificate
- Ewha Womans University** **2002-2006**  
B.A. in the Department of English Language and Literature
- Blookline High School** **2001-2002**  
Massachusetts (MA) in the USA
- Hanyoung Foreign Language High School** **1998-2001**  
Major in Germany and English
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### Research Interest

- Second/Foreign Language Teaching and Learning
  - Technology-integrated Language Learning in Second/Foreign Language Classroom
  - Bilingualism and Multilingualism
  - Bilingual Identity & Code Switching
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### Conference Presentations

Jin, Seunghee. (2008). *Grammatical Alternation in Adult SLA: The Case of Present Perfect Construction*. The Paper was presented at the 6th Annual Hawaii International Conference on Arts and Humanities. Honolulu, Hawaii.

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### Certificates

**TESOL Certificate** **June 2009**  
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