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Developing Intercultural Competence Through Online English Language Teaching

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The University of San Francisco

DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE THROUGH ONLINE ENGLISH
LANGUAGE TEACHING

A Dissertation Presented
to
The Faculty of the School of Education
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

by
Didem Ekici
San Francisco
December 2018

THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Dissertation Abstract

Developing Intercultural Competence Through Online English Language Teaching

With an increasing number of refugees and immigrants in European and American classrooms, teachers need to be prepared to meet their varied and complex needs. In particular, to help these diverse students succeed, teachers need to be interculturally competent, which is a combination of many skills including attitude, linguistic and cultural awareness, empathy, and flexibility. However, developing these skills not only takes theoretical knowledge but also hands-on training and practice. While many programs in school of education provide experiential practicum projects and online collaborations with diverse students, they have not expanded to the population in war zones. Moreover, a review of literature revealed a gap in research on how online tutoring might impact the intercultural competence development of pre-service ESL teachers. This study attempted to fill that gap by exploring how teaching English online to students in Afghanistan for six weeks impacted the intercultural competence of pre-service ESL teachers.

Ten pre-service ESL teachers participated in this study. Pre-interviews, post interviews, and five reflection journals during the six weeks comprised the qualitative data. The data were analyzed through the lens of the process model of intercultural competence framework by Deardorff (2006a).

The data, which was analyzed, categorized, verified, and interpreted, revealed that the preservice ESL teachers developed intercultural competence within a six-week period. While some pre-service ESL teachers expressed their initial discomfort about the unknowns of teaching online face to face, the dynamics of interacting with student of a different culture, fear of

miscommunication, and grappling with their own assumptions, this discomfort diminished after a few sessions. In fact, some participants described this experience as “eye-opening.”

Therefore, this study concluded that becoming familiar with the people and practices of a diverse culture, in an online environment and for even a short duration, helped preservice teachers develop self-awareness, empathy, and linguistic knowledge, all factors that helped developed their intercultural competence. So it is recommended to integrate online teaching into practicum and international field projects to help build a new generation of interculturally competent and globally minded teachers.

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

Didem Ekici, Candidate

December 4, 2018

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December 4, 2018

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to all forcibly displaced families, refugees, immigrants, asylum seekers and their children. I hope all your journey ends in a place you feel like home and I hope you always meet globally minded people who understand what you are going through during this journey.

I also would like to dedicate this dissertation to my former students who taught me how to become a culturally responsive teacher. You will always be remembered.

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CHAPTER I

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Introduction

Student diversity continues to grow in the classrooms as schools are welcoming the children of immigrant, refugee and asylum seekers. During the acculturation process, these newcomers not only struggle with the difficulties of going back and forth between the school and home cultures but also deal with the discrimination from their peers and even sometimes from their teachers. The stereotypes and prejudices that have been imposed by the media might have negative influence on some people's approach to immigrants and refugees.

Considering the increasing number of refugees and immigrants in the U.S. and European schools, being interculturally competent is crucial for educators to respond the needs of newly arrived students (Hersi & Watkinson, 2012). In fact, Davis and Cho (2005) claimed teachers face an increased pressure "to change curriculum and learning" to foster "global citizens who preserve the variety and vitality of life" (p. 2), and Keengwe (2010) noted the pressure to help students understand the "similarities and differences between/ among cultures" (p. 197). Agudo (2014) called this intercultural competence "an essential life skill for both teachers and students" (p. 85). So to be role models themselves, teachers need the right skills to appreciate, understand, and communicate with people of diverse cultures. Therefore, teachers need to learn cultural competence.

Those who teach English as a second language (ESL) especially need to develop intercultural competence since they have more interaction with culturally diverse students than content subject teachers. Since the majority of ESL teachers are native speakers of English and the students are speakers of other languages, intercultural interaction already occurs not only

between the ESL teachers and the students but also among the students (Nelson, 1998). Given the multicultural nature of the ESL classrooms, intercultural competence is critical.

Intercultural competence is generally defined as the ability to have “effective” and “appropriate” communication in intercultural situations (Deardorff, 2004). This ability is sometimes taken for granted because it is assumed that teachers are capable of communicating successfully with their students. However, studies show that teachers are uncomfortable communicating with students from unfamiliar cultures (Diller & Moule, 2005; Futernick, 2007). Because “most teachers do not see themselves as ready for a multicultural classroom” (Walters, Garii & Walters, 2009, p. 151), it is important to create real life opportunities for teachers to develop intercultural competence during their pre-service years. (He, 2013; Smolcic & Katunich, 2017). Because research shows that this competence can be developed by cross cultural experiences (Jin, Cooper & Golding, 2016), it is important to create hands-on experiences during the preservice years. Moreover, it is important to make sure the particular hands-on experiences are effective.

Many Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) programs provide international hands-on opportunities such as practicum teaching and study abroad programs for their student teachers during their preservice years (Wong, Indiatsi & Wong, 2016; Wurr, 2013). However, because of geographical limitations, affordability, and safety concerns, these programs are not preferred by most pre-service ESL teachers. Reaching out to students in war and post-war zones is considered especially inconvenient. Because most refugees and immigrants come from war regions like Afghanistan and Syria (Beaubien, 2017), online tutoring is an excellent option to make intercultural experiences more accessible to both the students and teachers. “Just as financial aid and scholarships make education possible for those who are unable to afford the

cost,” said Kentnor (2015), “distance education makes education attainable for those who are unable to sit in the traditional classroom” (p. 30). In other words, online teaching not only addresses the safety, financial, and geographical concerns of education but also provides an alternative to traditional brick and mortar schools.

The history of distance education such as radio, television and mail goes back to the 18th century (Kentnor, 2015), but online teaching/tutoring is a new concept in the literature. In 1987, computer conferencing was introduced with a few Open University courses (Hawkrige & Wheeler, 2010). Right after the invention of the World Wide Web in 1991, the first online education programs were offered by University of Phoenix century (Kentnor, 2015). In 1990 the first online collaboration was used for language education (O’Dowd, 2007). As a result, the number of research studies about the impact of online teaching on cultural competence development of preservice ESL teachers is limited. This dissertation aims to add to the body of literature by exploring how pre-service ESL teachers’ online tutoring experiences with students from Afghanistan influenced their development of intercultural competence.

Statement of the Problem

As a result of the increasing number of immigrants and refugees in the US and European classrooms, teachers more frequently have students from cultures with which they are not familiar (Hersi & Watkinson, 2012; Miller, Kostogriz & Gearon, 2009). According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (2016), the number of forcibly displaced people has increased “from 37.3 million in 1996 to 65.3 million in 2015 – a 75 per cent increase and this is the highest number since World War II” (p. 6). Most importantly, the UNHCR (2016) data showed that children below 18 years of age constituted about half of the refugee population in 2015, and 75,000 children applied for asylum as “unaccompanied” minors’ in 2016. The

increase of school-age refugees, immigrants, and asylum seekers has increased the need for teachers who are able to create comfortable classroom environments for these students. This is why intercultural competence has become so popular in the field of education.

Intercultural competence is generally defined as the ability to effectively and appropriately communicate with people from different backgrounds (Chen & Starosta, 1996; Deardorff, 2004; Hammer, Bennet & Wiseman, 2003). For the teaching profession, intercultural competence is more complex than the ability to successfully communicate. It is gaining knowledge about the students' culture, developing empathy and understanding, respecting differences, and questioning their own values, biases, fears, and prejudices. An interculturally competent teacher should be able to communicate successfully with students as well as maintain an unbiased perception of the students' culture. This development is only possible when teachers become aware of their prejudices, come out of their comfort zones, and face their fears about certain groups (Mahon & Cushner, 2002; Ross, 2008), especially when teachers lack experience with those groups.

English language teachers are more likely to engage with students of different groups than content subject teachers (Nelson, 1998) since ESL classrooms are places "where students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds meet" (Barraja-Rohan, 1999, p. 143). Therefore, they especially need the awareness and experience to apply "pedagogic innovations across contexts" (Dogancay-Aktuna, 2005). TESOL programs provide the necessary skills to teach English as a foreign or second language, but few of these programs create opportunities for hands-on cross-cultural interaction. Lack of experience with culturally diverse students might create anxiety among pre-service English language teachers, and as Futernick (2007) found, one of the factors that affected teachers' decision to leave the teaching profession was not being committed or

prepared to meet the needs of English learners. This problem should be addressed during the training period so that preservice teachers develop the awareness, empathy, confidence, and commitment to work with students of diverse backgrounds.

According to Diller and Moule (2005), the anxiety of working with culturally different students comes from both disregarding students' cultures and "the guilt over the existence of racism" (p. 171). These stereotypes are often developed in a subconscious way because they are imposed in a repeated way by forces such as the media. While the media, according to Liu (2012), can promote "better understanding and appreciation of different cultures," it can also "increase misunderstanding, fear, and antagonism through negative stereotypical representations of people" (p. 274). These hidden and unconscious biases can prevent people from addressing their fear of multicultural interactions. Even though it is the only way we can eliminate them, it takes time and courage to admit our prejudices.

Teacher training programs can help preservice TESOL teachers to overcome their fears, think critically about the foundations of these fears, and gain confidence and experience with the diverse population before they perform on the "real stage" of the classrooms. In other words, TESOL programs can prepare ESL teachers for cultural interactions by creating opportunities for real life experiences with culturally diverse students, enabling them to reflect on these experiences to diminish their fear and anxiety. Because "courses that remain mostly at a cognitive level are less likely to help students reduce prejudice," said Rodenberg & Boisen, 2013, p. 572), "immersion, dialogue, or other experiential methods that force affective involvement are also needed." As stated earlier, this need has increased with the increasing number of immigrants and refugees from post-war zones in the U.S. classrooms.

This study aimed to show how teaching students from the war zone of Afghanistan in an online environment for six weeks impacted the intercultural competence of the pre-service ESL teachers. In particular, this study also investigated the comfort level of pre-service ESL teachers as they communicated with students from another culture.

Background and Need

Effective communication with students from diverse races and ethnicities successfully has become crucial for teachers, especially TESOL teachers. While some TESOL teacher training programs have integrated pedagogical content that emphasizes multiculturalism and cultural competence, these courses stay at the theoretical level. But there is a huge difference between knowing something on the theoretical level and on a practical level. Practical, hands-on experiences enhance the confidence of pre-service teachers (Barnes, 2017; Reeves, 2017; Vinagre, 2017), for the more pre-service ESL teachers interact with culturally diverse students, the more they are able to develop their intercultural competence. According to Allport's (1954) contact theory, the interaction between majority and minority groups actually enables the group members to understand "the other," appreciate the difference, and reduce prejudice. To provide multicultural immersion and prepare pre-service ESL teachers for culturally diverse classrooms, some TESOL programs integrate service learning projects, international field experiences, study abroad programs, and immersion programs into their curriculum. Research shows that programs that provide international field experiences develop a pre-service English language teachers' intercultural competence because these programs help raise awareness about the individual teacher's cultural values and perceptions of the world (Lopes-Murphy & Murphy, 2016; Malewski, Sharma & Phillion, 2012).

Most of the study abroad or service learning projects are with students from regions outside of the war zones (Barnes, 2016; Chen, Liao, Chen, & Lee, 2011). However, data shows that most refugees and asylum seekers come from war zone countries. In 2016 alone, according to UNHCR, 75,000 children applied for asylum as “unaccompanied minors”. Most were from Afghanistan and Syria” (Beaubien, 2017, p. 8). However, no studies have been conducted about the preservice ESL teachers’ intercultural experiences with the students from a war zone like Syria or Afghanistan

Bringing English language teacher candidates together with students from war zones has been challenging because of geographical limitations, safety concerns, and affordability. However, in this technological era, when people can connect with people from overseas with one click, the distance can disappear. While Rodenborg and Boisen (2013) said, “Instructors in geographic regions with racially homogenous populations can make use of media and social networking methods to enhance the diversity of their students' indirect contacts” (p. 576), these same networking methods can be used to connect teachers with students from post-war countries. However, because of limited access to internet in post-war countries and the difficulty of finding a population in war zones with whom to cooperate, no previous empirical studies have assessed the effects of computer-mediated cross-cultural interaction.

Research is needed on this issue so that teacher training programs, school administrators, and especially TESOL programs can understand how online interaction with students from post-war zones can contribute to the cultural competence of pre-service English language teachers. This can show if e-service learning projects or online immersion programs should be integrated into teacher training curriculums to help teachers feel comfortable and confident as they communicate with students of diverse cultures.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of a six-week virtual synchronous tutoring on the development of the intercultural competence of pre-service ESL teachers. These ESL teachers volunteered to teach students in Afghanistan through a non-profit peacebuilding organization, Pax Populi, Applied Ethics Inc. By documenting the cross-cultural experiences of the pre-service ESL teachers, this dissertation focused on the intersection of self-reflection, online English language teaching, and intercultural competence. In essence, this dissertation sought to explore how this experience influenced pre-service ESL teachers' perception of Afghan culture and people.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How does the experience of online teaching English as a foreign language to students from Afghanistan for six weeks contribute to the development of the intercultural competence of pre-service ESL teachers?
 - a. To what extent are pre-service ESL teachers open to explore another culture?
 - b. To what extent are pre-service ESL teachers able to tolerate ambiguity?
 - c. How and to what extent do pre-service ESL teachers become culturally and linguistically aware during the tutoring process?
 - d. To what extent do pre-service ESL teachers develop their empathy skills and become more flexible after completing six-week online tutoring?

Theoretical Framework

This study explored the experiences of ESL preservice teachers who interacted with students from a war zone, Afghanistan, through the lens of Deardorff's (2006b) research-based framework, the Process Model of Intercultural Competence. This was the first grounded research based framework and "the first study to document consensus among leading intercultural experts" (Deardorff, 2006a, p. 242). Deardorff research used questionnaire and Delphi study methods for data collection. Delphi method is a process of anonymous communication among the expert consultants who reflect on an important issue to arrive a consensus. Hsu and Sandford (2007) described the Delphi technique as "well suited as a method for consensus-building" based on the data from "a panel of selected subjects" (p. 1).

To implement this study design, Deardorff (2004) sent invitations to 73 higher education institutions all over the United States, and 23 of them accepted to participate in the study. With the participation of higher education administrators and experts in the field, she identified the basic skills required for intercultural competence. The data were developed in three rounds of questions. In the first round, open ended questions were sent to the participants. In the second round, the experts rated the data of the first round. In the third round, the experts explained whether they agreed with the data. The findings laid the foundation of the Process Model of Intercultural Competence Framework.

Deardorff (2004) described the following the limitations of her study: getting input from the institutions located in the United States (western perspective), possibility of biased wording in the questionnaire, cultural bias of the expert panelists, and the researcher's possible misinterpretation of the answers for the open-ended survey questions.

Deardorff's (2006b) framework has fifteen components under five broad categories: 1- attitudes, 2- knowledge & comprehension, 3- skills, 4- internal outcome and 5- external outcome. Initial components are at the individual level while the final components at interaction level (Figure 1). People can enter this process model framework from any component; however, "having components of the lower levels enhances upper levels" (Deardorff, 2006a, p. 255), for as she explained it, one can "go from attitudes and/or attitudes and skills/knowledge directly to the external outcome, but the degree of appropriateness and effectiveness of the outcome may not be nearly as high as when the entire cycle is completed and begins again" (p. 257). Two important conclusions of Deardorff's (2004) study were that 1) components in the study were "more general in nature (e.g., culture-specific knowledge, flexibility)" (p. 192) and 2) one component is not enough to ensure intercultural competence. Most importantly, Deardorff (2006a) emphasized that intercultural competence development is an ongoing process and "one may never achieve ultimate intercultural competence" (p. 257). Detailed explanation of each component is presented below.

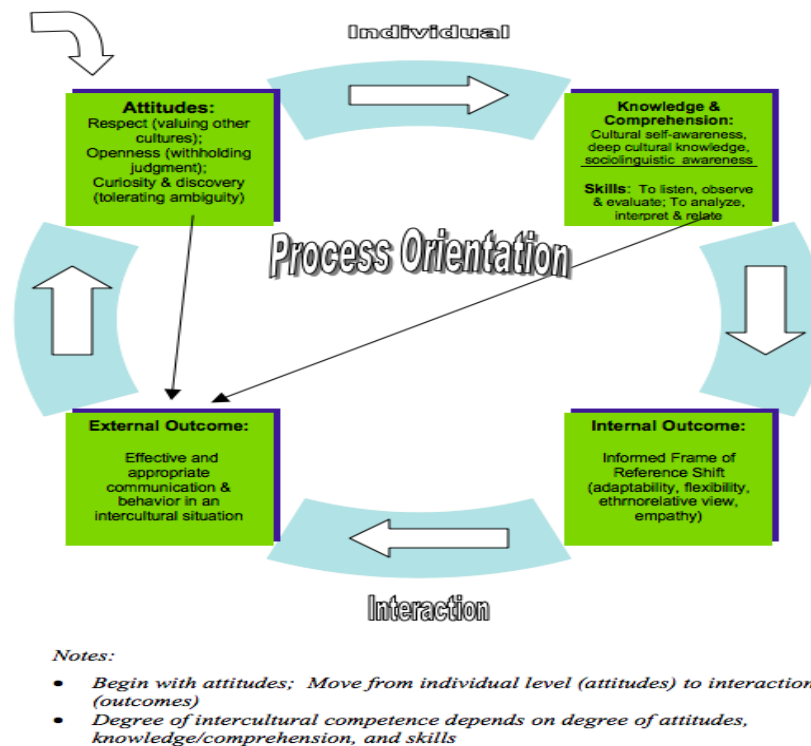


Figure 1: Deardorff's (2004) Process Model of Intercultural Competence (p. 196)

1. **Attitudes:** Attitudes determine the ability to move beyond one's comfort zone.

Interacting with people from different cultures might create anxiety for many teachers because of the “unexpected” or “unknown” things. According to Deardorff (2006b), openness, curiosity, and discovery are the elements that can motivate one outside his/her comfort zone, and so these elements are fundamentals of intercultural competence. She explained that “attitudes—particularly respect (which is manifested variously in cultures), openness, and curiosity—serve as the basis of this model and have an impact on all other aspects of intercultural competence” (Deardorff, 2011, p. 68). Respecting and showing interest in others as well as challenging one's own assumptions are key initial stages of developing intercultural competence.

2. **Knowledge:** Awareness of one's own culture affects one's perception of the world and interaction with others. Knowledge about other cultures enables people to make sense of things from others' perspective. Cultural self-awareness, culture-specific knowledge, deep cultural knowledge (including understanding other world views), and sociolinguistic awareness are essential for this component (Deardorff, 2006b)
3. **Skills:** According to Deardorff (2006b), skills can be interpreted as how we acquire and process knowledge. There are different ways of acquiring knowledge such as listening, observing, and evaluating. Furthermore, the skills we use affect the way we think interculturally.
4. **Internal outcomes:** Deardorff (2006b) states that in this stage of the intercultural competence model, people start developing flexibility, adaptability, and empathy, which creates an internal outcome of the intercultural interaction. Developing empathy especially enables one to see the world from other people's perspectives and it is very important to develop this internal outcome. Internal outcome enhances the external outcome which is observable (Deardorff, 2006a). Deardorff (2006b) emphasizes the importance of this component this way: "At this point, individuals are able to see from others' perspectives and to respond to them according to the way in which the other person desires to be treated" (p. 1). In other words, this is the stage in which people start understanding others' perspectives and adjust their behaviors accordingly.
5. **External outcomes:** According to Deardorff (2006b), an external outcome is the combined impact of all the previous stages on the behavior of an individual. Attitudes, knowledge, skills, and internal outcomes determine how effective and

appropriate an individual behaves during intercultural interactions. Referring to Spitzberg's work (1989), Deardorff (2006a) described appropriateness as the "avoidance of violating valued rules" and effectiveness as "the achievement of valued objectives" (p. 256). It is also important to note here that "effectiveness can be determined by the individual while the appropriateness can only be determined by the other person" (Deardorff, 2006b, p. 2).

Deardorff's framework has been used by many studies conducted in higher education context in the US and in other countries as well. For example, Toyoda (2016) conducted a study with 20 students who were enrolled in a university-level advanced Japanese language course in an Australian university. She aimed to assess the intercultural competence development among the students based on the video diaries, end of semester surveys and observation notes. Throughout two academic semesters, Australian students created six videos in groups and they shared these videos with the university students in Japan. Afterwards, they got the ideas of native speakers of the target language about these videos. They also kept video diaries to reflect on their learning. All the participants completed an end-of semester survey to provide information on their knowledge and growth. The findings showed that "students became increasingly aware of cultural issues concerning the Self and Others" (Toyoda, 2016, p. 512) and developed components of intercultural competence. She also emphasized the importance of higher order thinking skills, such as awareness and comprehension in the process of intercultural competence development.

Ko, Boswell and Yoon (2015) did a similar study to analyze the development of intercultural competence. They studied 14 physical education (PE) graduate students who were enrolled in a distance education course in a United States university. The PE graduate students

completed a seven-week global link project that included five weeks of individual interaction (emails, social networking) and two weeks of group video conferencing with Korean students. They exchanged information such as personal life, culture, and professional issues in physical education. Based on the qualitative and quantitative data that consisted of open-ended questionnaires, reflection reports, and Cultural Intelligence Scales (CQS), the researchers concluded that this experience promoted the fundamental elements such as attitude, knowledge and skills and behaviors that were described in Deardorff's (2006) framework, and therefore this experience developed the PE students' intercultural competence.

Limitations/Delimitations

Nevertheless, attitudes like withholding judgement or openness to another culture are abstract terms that cannot be observed directly and easily. That posed a limitation to this study. Even though some questions in the reflection journals directly asked the participants if they made assumptions, withheld judgements, or adapted communication style and behavior, these subjective questions were open to interpretation. Moreover, while expressing their perception of the Afghan people, the participants might have felt hesitant to express their real opinions or they may not have even been aware of their own implicit bias.

The length of the study was also a limitation. The pre-service ESL teachers interacted with the students in Afghanistan only for six weeks. Even though this amount of time might be enough to start developing linguistic, cultural, and self-awareness, it may not have been sufficient to promote other complex skills such as empathy and flexibility. Still, since intercultural competence is an ongoing process without an end point, time constraints were regarded as a major limitation.

Since this study focused on the development of intercultural competence of preservice ESL teachers, no feedback was collected from the Afghan students. However, collecting data from both sides would have enabled the researcher to see the cross-cultural interaction in more dimension. Collecting data only from the pre-service ESL teachers was hence a delimitation of this study.

Educational Significance

This study aimed to explore the development of intercultural competence in pre-service ESL teachers who taught English to students from a war zone, Afghanistan. Even though much research has evaluated the impact of study abroad programs, service learning, or field projects on the intercultural competence development in pre-service and in-service English language teachers, few studies have been conducted on the teachers' online interaction with students from the war zones. Understanding how online interaction impacts intercultural competence can provide alternatives to experiential projects not only in TESOL programs but also in education curricula in general.

Part of this insight included gaining a better understanding of cross-cultural interactions in a virtual space. The preservice ESL teachers' reflections on the use of online educational tools and its influence on their teaching practices and intercultural interaction also informed the current body of knowledge. Examining this impact through the lens of Deardorff's (2006b) intercultural competence framework and analyzing how this process affected pre-service teachers' ability to tolerate ambiguity, to feel empathy, and maintain flexibility was meant to offer insight for other teacher training programs. This insight can be used for future telecollaborative projects that focus on intercultural competence development.

Online projects can eliminate the financial, logistic, and safety concerns of teaching students in war zones. However, as the number of refugees from war zone countries increases, teachers also need to augment their skill set. Because teachers rarely interact with people from postwar zones before they have refugee students in their classrooms, they often feel unprepared to navigate the cultural differences. That can stir uncomfortable feelings in the teacher. This study looked at factors that might cause discomfort and the determinants that can increase a teacher's comfort and confidence. That development can perhaps inspire TESOL programs, curriculum developers, school administrators, and teacher education programs to develop online projects or virtual immersion programs to help teachers confront their fears during the preservice years. These hands-on experiences can promote cultural interaction with students from unfamiliar places, and hence develop the teacher's own intercultural competence.

This study also offered a better understanding of the implementation of online cross cultural projects in a virtual space. Preservice ESL teachers' reflection on the use of online educational tools and their influence on their teaching practices and intercultural interaction also informed the current body of knowledge. The exploration of this intersection offered insights to the future telecollaborative projects that focus on intercultural competence development.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions clarify the terms used in this study.

Asynchronous instruction: Asynchronous instruction is a way of online teaching that “does not require the simultaneous presence of the participants by allowing them to access materials and make contributions via textual, recorded audio-visual, or multimodal communication tools at designated periods of time” (Schmitt & Eilderts, 2018, p. 290).

Cross cultural communication: Cross cultural communication is “the ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural contexts when the students encounter interlocutors whose languages, beliefs, backgrounds, and communication styles may vastly differ from their own” (Tseng, 2017, p. 24).

Distance education: “Distance education is defined as a method of teaching where the student and teacher are physically separated” (Kentnor, 2015, p. 22).

Diverse students: “Diverse student learners include students from racially, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse families and communities of lower socioeconomic status” (Cole, 2008, p. 42).

Experiential Learning: “Experiential learning exists when a personally responsible participant cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally processes knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes in a learning situation characterized by a high level of active involvement” (Hoover & Whitehead 1975, p. 25).

Hands-on: “Applied as opposed to theoretical” (Webster's New World College Dictionary, 2005, p. 515).

Intercultural Competence: There is no consensus on the definition of intercultural competence in the literature. For the scope of this paper Deardorff's definition, which is based on a grounded theory, will be used. Deardorff (2004) defines intercultural competence as “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 194).

Service Learning: Service learning is a pedagogy that enables students to put theories into practice by creating hands-on experiences while also serving the community. Service learning pedagogy is different than traditional teaching practices since it is always student

centered, incorporates hands-on experiences, and integrates self-reflection into teaching practices.

Study abroad programs: “Study-abroad programs are educational experiences that involve exposure to foreign countries while participating in instructional practices that provide credits for academic degrees at home” (Varela, 2017, p. 531).

Synchronous instruction: Synchronous instruction is an online teaching method that requires “all the participants [to be] present online at the same time and participate through textual, audio-visual, or multimodal communication tools” (Schmitt & Eilderts, 2018, p. 290).

Telecollaboration: Telecollaboration is the process of communicating and working with other people, individually or in groups, in different geographical locations through online or virtual means (Chun, 2015).

TESOL: Abbreviation for teaching English to speakers of other languages. (Hornby & Crowther, 1995)

Tutors: In this study, the tutors are the pre-service ESL teachers who are enrolled in a TESOL master’s programs of a university in the United States.

Summary

Seeberg and Minick (2012) said, “As the world population exceeds seven billion, distances shrink, and people move in greater numbers across national borders, teacher educators are asked to prepare teachers who are competent in helping learners function in a globalizing reality” (p. 1). ESL teachers work with students who come from diverse cultural backgrounds and do not speak English naturally. Besides teaching a new language to students, ESL teachers are expected to create a bridge, or a smooth transition, between students’ native cultures and the new culture. This can be done not only by acquiring knowledge about student’s culture but also

by withholding judgements, valuing and respecting students' home cultures and native languages, feeling empathy, and being flexible, which are regarded as the most important components of being culturally competent.

However, few TESOL programs have sufficiently prioritized culturally responsive teaching as part of their curriculum. Therefore, many ESL teachers start their teaching profession unprepared for cross-cultural interaction. This can cause uncomfortable feelings. This concern was even stated as one of the reasons for leaving the teaching profession by many teachers (Futernick, 2007).

Therefore, it is crucial for teacher training programs to integrate more practicum teaching opportunities with culturally diverse students in their curriculum. Still, these practicum experiences, such as service learning projects and study abroad programs, might not be convenient for all preservice teachers because of limitations of time, accommodation, and affordability. To overcome these limitations, online English teaching can be considered as an alternative to traditional practicum experiences. However, since online teaching is a new phenomenon, the number of studies about the impact of online English teaching on the cultural competence of preservice ESL teachers is limited. If more studies explore this topic, online English teaching can be used by TESOL programs to provide practicum experiences for the kind of cross-cultural communication that can develop intercultural competence.

Considering these facts, this dissertation aimed to explore the cultural competence of ten pre-service ESL teachers who taught English to students in Afghanistan in an online platform called Schoology. Through the lens of Deardorff's (2006b) Process Model of Intercultural Competence, this study examined the interviews and the reflection journals of preservice English language teachers to analyze the impact of online teaching on component such as openness to

another culture, tolerating ambiguity, linguistic and cultural awareness, and the ability for empathy and flexibility. The researcher also explored the ESL preservice teachers' comfort level and their perception of Afghan culture and people.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Overview

This literature review chapter is divided into five sections. The first section concerns the perception of teachers about the linguistically and culturally diverse students in their classrooms. The second section includes the theories and background of the concept of intercultural competence in education and foreign language teaching. The third section discusses the theoretical and practical diversity training provided by the teacher training programs and especially TESOL programs to prepare culturally competent teachers. The fourth section introduces the concept of online tutoring and online intercultural practicum experiences in teacher education and TESOL programs. Lastly, the final section addresses the experiential projects and the development of cultural competence among ESL preservice teachers through online tutoring.

Introduction

Immigration and the refugee issue is not a new phenomenon in the history of the United States. According to the Migration Policy Institute (MPI), as of 2017, one-fifth of the world's migrants live in the US (Zong, Batalova & Hallock, 2018). Moreover, statistics show that there has been an increase in the population of first and second-generation immigrants. McNeely et al. (2017) state, "First- and second-generation immigrant and refugee children represent the fastest growing segment of the US population" (p. 121). Only in 2015, the United States opened its doors to 70,000 refugees from different parts of the world (Zong, Batalova & Auclair, 2015). Most importantly, the data of UNHCR shows that children below 18 years of age constituted

about half of the refugee population in 2015 and that 75,000 children applied for asylum as "unaccompanied minors" in 2016 (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2016).

This rapid influx of refugees and immigrants also showed itself in the education system. As a result, immigrant students comprised "the fastest-growing segment of the school-age population" in the United States (Hersi & Watkinson, 2012, p. 108). The fact that half of the refugees and immigrants are school-aged has made the US classroom represent more diversity of culture and languages than ever before. The increasing linguistic and cultural diversity has not only created multicultural classrooms but also has generated some demands and difficulties within itself. Miller, Kostogriz and Gearon (2009) state:

One of the most critical realities of contemporary education in a globalised world is the growing cultural, racial and linguistic diversity in schools and the problems involved in educating large numbers of students who do not speak the dominant language as their home or heritage language. (p. 3)

The main reason behind these demands and problems is the adaptation process of the newly arrived refugees and immigrants. When immigrant and refugee students come to the U.S., they struggle with both language and cultural issues. The cultural and behavioral norms at home and at school become different, and students are accordingly expected to switch from one culture to another. Goodwin (2002) states, "Immigrant children end up being caught in the middle between the culture of their ancestors and parents and the dominant culture of U.S. society" (p. 165). This cultural adaptation process automatically shows itself in the academic success of the culturally diverse student. According to Ambe (2006), "One of the reasons why schools have not successfully met the literacy needs of students of diverse cultural backgrounds is due to a

mismatch between the home culture of students and that of the school” (p. 691). So cultural adaptation becomes more difficult as students try to negotiate these competing identities.

In addition to a complicated cultural adaptation process, these students also have to deal with the attitudes, prejudices, and biases from their peers and even from their teachers. Moinolnolki and Han (2017) state, “Not only are resettled refugee students often subjected to prejudice and bullying from their peers, they also might be facing a teacher’s lack of cultural sensitivity and preconceived notions about students’ cultural backgrounds” (p. 4). These preconceived ideas or biases might affect the adaptation and the academic success of newly arrived immigrant students in a negative way. According to Diller and Moule (2005) “Culturally different students may have their achievement incentive affected if they sense racist or biased practices” (p. 42). Similarly, Gay (2013) claims that “negative teacher beliefs” towards diverse students “produce negative teaching and learning behaviors” (p. 56). In other words, immigrant students are expected to catch up with their peers in terms of the academic content while also dealing with language and culture issues. Negative attitudes from their peers and even from their teachers do not make this process easier.

Therefore, teachers’ ability to cope with these problems and also address the needs of the immigrant and refugee students in their classrooms has become an important issue (Friedlander, 1991; Pryor, 2001). Increased diversity in the US classrooms has brought more attention to a teachers’ ability to communicate with culturally diverse students (He, 2013; McNeely et al. 2017). Hersi and Watkinson (2012) argue that, “To respond to the complexities and diversity within the school-age ELL population, educators must take into account the different experiences and academic needs of a wide range of students” (p. 98). Because teachers are expected to create an inclusive and validating learning community by reaching out the culturally diverse students,

the importance of intercultural competence for educators comes into play (Taylor, Kumi-Yeboah, Ringlaben, 2016; Witte & Harden, 2011).

Intercultural competence is a critical skill for educators both in K-12 education and higher education (Arshavskaya, 2017). Considering the fact that ESL teachers have linguistically and culturally diverse students in their classrooms, this issue becomes more crucial for ESL teachers (Moeller & Nugent, 2014; Sercu, 2005). To train culturally competent language teachers, some TESOL programs provide various practicum opportunities for pre-service ESL teachers to work closely with culturally diverse students (Kim, 2017; Longview Foundation, 2008; Tomaš, Farrelly, & Haslam, 2008; Yang, 2014). However, these opportunities are not provided in the war or postwar regions because of the logistic, financial and safety issues. Walters, Garii, and Walters (2009) state that prospective teachers and their parents “are likely to reject placements in non-traditional locations with limited amenities” (p. 155). They argue that “Internships abroad create logistical and financial challenges for prospective teachers” with extra curriculum workload besides “additional debt associated with flights and housing” and as a solution to this “To economize, ways to save prospective teachers, money and time will have to be identified” (p. 154-155). Likewise, Longview Foundation (2008) reports that because of the limited time and resources, teacher candidates cannot take advantage of study abroad programs and therefore, “Education programs are exploring innovative ways to ensure that their students have international experiences in the course of their teacher preparation” (p. 21). To overcome these concerns, online tutoring can be considered a viable solution to reach out to students in the war zones and create some online practicum experiences for the pre-service ESL teacher (Sehlaoui, 2001). Because the research on online English teaching to develop cultural competence started in 1990s and is quite recent (Chun, 2015; O’Dowd, 2007), the number of

studies are limited, especially the ones conducted with the students from a war zone like Afghanistan. Therefore, there has been a gap in the literature about this topic.

Some of the issues that this literature review focuses on are the importance of cultural competence for educators and how teachers, especially ESL pre-service teachers, are becoming ready for the increasing numbers of immigrants and refugees in the US classrooms. Intercultural competence is a broad topic and it has been applied and implemented in different fields such as health care, social work, business and education (Witte & Harden, 2011). This literature review narrows down the topic to mainstream and ESL pre-service teachers specifically. Also, while analyzing the previous studies, the researcher also focuses on online intercultural practicum opportunities in TESOL programs which is limited. Thus, most of the research studies conducted in this field concern K-12 mainstream classroom teachers but there are only limited number of research studies that have been done with pre-service ESL teachers. Because of the limited literature resources about the intercultural competence development of pre-service ESL teachers, this review of literature also includes the studies with K-12 mainstream classroom teachers to give the readers a general idea of the importance of the topic of intercultural competence for educators.

The history of online collaborations and projects started in the 1990s (O'Dowd, 2007) and, therefore, the research studies on this field is limited as well. Thus, even though the focus of this dissertation is on the impact of synchronous (simultaneous) online language teaching specifically, asynchronous (not simultaneous) studies are also involved in this section.

Lastly, some TESOL programs and teacher education programs in general adopt some practicum experiences such as field projects, service learning, or study abroad to develop cultural competence among pre-service teachers (Longview Foundation, 2008; Richards & Crookes,

1988; Yang, 2014). The majority of these research studies are conducted with the students out of war zones because of logistic and safety limitations. Canh (2014) supports this fact saying, “Most of the studies that have been documented in the TESOL practicum literature were conducted in the Western world” (p. 200). For that reason, the research studies reviewed in this chapter are mostly about the students from a region out of a war zone.

Teachers’ Perception of Diversity

To be able to successfully communicate with culturally diverse students, teachers need to feel comfortable interacting with these students. Since schools have more linguistically and culturally diverse students, whether or how teachers become more skilled and confident to reach out to these students is uncertain. Moinolnolki and Han (2017) state that “teachers’ stressors in working with newly arrived immigrant and refugee youth are relatively unexplored research areas,” with a limited number of studies (p. 130). Dixon, Liew, Daraghmeh and Smith (2016) also support his fact, “Very few studies have examined pre-service teachers’ attitudes toward and beliefs about ELLs” (p. 5) Therefore, the topic of teachers’ comfort level communicating with immigrant and refugees is not a widely explored area in the literature and the research studies on this topic are limited.

On the other hand, some studies do show that some teachers feel nervous working with students and their families from a culture with which they are not familiar. Larke (1990) states that teacher education students do not feel comfortable communicating with ethnic minority parents. These distressing feelings arise from the “unknown” nature of the communication. People usually know the social and behavioral norms in the communities and cultures in which they grow up, and this knowledge gives them comfort in daily communications. However, when people are exposed to unfamiliar behavioral and social norms, they start to feel uncomfortable.

Pedersen (1994) also supports this fact, saying “Multicultural situations are often ambiguous and result in stress because you're not sure what others expect of you or what you can expect of them” (p. 71). As a result, teachers’ insufficient knowledge and experience about students’ culture may cause some negative educational and psychological outcomes (Sirin, Ryce & Mir, 2009).

Diller and Moule (2005) explain the cause of this anxiety among pre-service and in-service teachers from a different perspective, explaining that teachers can feel or guilty “due to feelings of guilt over the existence of racism or feelings of embarrassment because of past indifference, the racist behavior of family and friends, or feelings of personal privilege or entitlement” (p. 171). Moreover, approaching culturally diverse students with some assumptions not only creates anxiety among teachers but also affects the teachers’ academic expectations from the students (Peterson, Rubie-Davies, Osborne & Sibley, 2016). For example, Sirin et al. (2009) examined impact of teachers’ perception of immigrant first grade students and their parents on the students’ academic competence in the Northeast United States. The researchers collected data from teachers and parents of 191 immigrant first grade students who attended Islamic and public schools. The teachers’ academic expectations was assessed by a survey where teachers responded using a five-point scale. They found that even after controlling the variables of gender, ethnicity, parent involvement and education, teachers who perceived their students’ parents as having more different values than themselves stated lower expectations of these students in terms of their literacy and math skills. This study concluded that some teachers set lower academic expectations of the culturally diverse students in their classrooms. Additionally, most teachers feel more comfortable teaching students who are from the same ethnic group and culture as they are (Larke, 1990; Zimpher, 1989). Valdés (1998) claims that

besides the language errors of immigrant students, English teachers were also worried about “their own ability to work with such youngsters effectively” (p. 6). Considering that the majority of teachers are ethnically white, this might be problematic on many different aspects (Taylor, et al., 2016).

Regardless of factors that cause teachers anxiety, if teachers do not feel comfortable with culturally and linguistically diverse students in their classrooms, then it is hard to acknowledge their ability to make connections with the culturally diverse students. It follows that if teachers are not reaching out, this may negatively impact student success (Blanchard & Muller, 2015; Song, 2016). Conversely, when teachers feel comfortable with immigrant language-minority students and have higher expectations of them, these attitudes influence students’ academic performance positively. For example, Blanchard and Muller (2015) examined how teachers’ perceptions of immigrant and minority language students influence these students’ academic achievement by using the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002, which is “a nationally representative survey of more than 16,000 2002 10th graders enrolled at 750 public and private U.S. high schools” (p. 266). Data were collected from two follow up surveys in 2004 and 2006 in addition to the school transcript data in 2005. The researchers measured the students’ academic outcome by looking into two things in the data: the first one is the math GPA, and the other one is whether the students advanced to the next level in math in 11th grade. Similarly, teachers’ perceptions of students’ academic success was measured based on math teachers’ expectations of students’ ability to complete college or to earn a graduate degree. By comparing the immigrant and language-minority groups, teachers’ perceptions, and the academic outcome variables, they found that students whose teachers have higher academic expectations of them had higher GPAs. Since this longitudinal study was based on data collected over three years--and based on a huge

amount of data--the findings are substantial. On the other hand, because the age range of students is limited to 10th and 11th grades and the academic achievement assessment was based on the math grades only, the findings cannot be generalized to all immigrant students and to different content areas.

As discussed above, the US classrooms are getting culturally and linguistically diverse as a result of increasing number of refugees and immigrants in the US school system (Miller, Kostogriz and Gearon, 2009; Pappamihel, Ousley-Exum, & Ritzhaupt, 2017). Also, the needs of these students differ from their peers because of the cultural adaptation process and the negative attitudes coming from their peers and even teachers (Moinolnolki, & Han, 2017). If these needs and the problems of culturally diverse students are not addressed efficiently, their academic success might be affected in a negative way (Blanchard & Muller, 2015; Gay, 2013; Song, 2016). Therefore, the role of teachers and their approach to their students are very important in addressing these issues in their classrooms. Even though the number of research studies about the teachers' approach to linguistically and culturally diverse students is limited (Dixon et al., 2016; Moinolnolki & Han, 2017), the existing resources show that teachers feel anxious communicating with diverse students in their classrooms (Diller & Moule, 2005; Pedersen, 1994). If the lack of intercultural knowledge and experience cause these uncomfortable feelings, some opportunities should be provided for the teachers during their pre-service years to help them overcome these feelings (He, 2013; Sinicrope et al., 2007). For this reason, teacher training programs play a big role at the stage of preparing teachers to culturally diverse classrooms (Valentiín, 2006). The following section will explore what it means to be an interculturally competent teacher and how teacher training programs, especially TESOL programs, can contribute to the development of intercultural competence among pre-service teachers.

Intercultural competence

There has not been general agreement on a precise definition for intercultural competence in the literature (Liu, 2012; Moeller & Nugent, 2014). Witte and Harden (2011) state that even though the interest has increased for the last three decades, the “concept of intercultural competence is still vague” and there are 300,000 different definitions of cultural competence on the internet (p. 1). As a reason for this, say Moeller and Nugent (2014), is that individuals are prepared for intercultural relations in different contexts such as business, study-abroad, international schools, medical careers, living abroad, and K-16 education, which leads to various models and explanations of intercultural competence. Likewise, according to Kramersch (2002),

The desire to make sense of and cope with the differences and connections in worldviews, international patterns, and discourse preferences of people who didn't use to come into contact with one another, but now increasingly do, both in real or virtual environments, is what makes the concept of intercultural communication so timely but so difficult to define. (Kramersch, 2002, p. 276)

However, a clear definition is important for consistent discussions.

Since scope of this dissertation is intercultural competence, it will provide some common definitions before moving forward. Fantini (2007) defines intercultural competence as “a complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself” (p. 12). Similarly, Flakerud (2007) defines cultural competence as “a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, policies, and structures that enable an individual to effectively work in cross cultural situations” (p. 121). Hammer, Bennet, and Wiseman's (2003) define of intercultural competence as “the ability to think and act in intercultural appropriate ways” (p. 422). Some of the words used in these definitions such as

“performing effectively and appropriately,” “set of congruent behaviors,” and interculturally appropriate ways” are subjective and open to discussion. Still, the basic idea behind these definitions of intercultural competence is the ability to communicate successfully with people from different backgrounds (Sinicrope et al., 2007).

The concept of intercultural competence has become more popular in educational field as a result of the need for culturally responsive teaching for increasing number of refugees and immigrants (Barnes, 2006; Kolano, Dávila, Lachance, & Coffey, 2014). In the field of education, cultural competence is defined as the ability to successfully teach students who come from cultures other than our own (Diller & Moule, 2005). When we think of the demographics of the U.S. classrooms, the requirement for teachers to be interculturally competent more critical. To address the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students and communicate with them successfully, all teachers are expected demonstrate this competence on their instruction and behavior (Kolano et al., 2014; Merz, 2016). Goodwin (2002) explains the role and need of culturally relevant instruction while teaching to immigrant children:

The practice of culturally grounded teaching and learning is particularly relevant for the education of immigrant children because these youngsters not only bring many different skills, strengths, and needs, but also represent unique histories, cultures, stories, values, languages, and beliefs. In essence, culturally relevant teaching ensures child centeredness through appropriate and meaningful instruction. (p. 167)

The impact of interculturally competent teachers and culturally responsive teaching on the success of students has been demonstrated by some studies (Brown & Lee, 2012; Blanchard & Muller, 2015). For example, Garcia and Chun (2016) conducted a study with 110 ethnic/racial minority middle school students at three middle public schools in a city close to US-Mexico

border. They investigated the impact of culturally responsive teaching and teacher expectations on ethnic/racial minority students. They used different scales to measure teacher expectations and culturally responsive teaching. Also, students' academic assessment was made by students' self-report on their grades in Math, English and Science. Findings of the study show that the diverse teaching practices and teachers' high expectations of culturally diverse students is likely to contribute to students' academic success and self-efficacy. According to this study, if the teachers' cultural competence has a positive impact on the academic performance of culturally diverse students, then having teachers who are trained in this competence is key.

Training interculturally competent teachers is important not only to address the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students but also to educate globally minded students. According to Garrett-Rucks (2016) "considerable academic attention and resources are spent on internationalizing education," and that is why "integrating intercultural dimensions into educational systems" can "prepare learners for the challenges of a global workforce in the 21st century" (p. 1). Likewise, Niculescu and Bazgan (2017) also believe that teachers not only "play a key role in the development of any student's IC" but these teachers can also "affect future generations' thought and action" in other words, beyond being interculturally competent, teachers "should encourage the development of students' IC" (p. 26). Merz (2016) further explains the chain reaction of this teacher training, or lack thereof, saying if teacher educators are not "modeling appropriate intercultural skills, attitudes, and knowledge to their pre-service teachers," then who would? (p. 97). In other words, to educate globally minded and culturally competent individuals of the future, all teachers and teacher educators should be trained for effective intercultural interactions.

Intercultural Competence and Foreign Language Education

As a result of increasing diversity in the US classrooms, most teachers have interactions with culturally and linguistically diverse students at some point. Song (2016) claims, “Given the current increase of ELLs and the projected demographic changes in U.S. schools, it is likely that all teachers at some point will have to teach ELLs” (p. 767). Considering the fact that the entire student profile of English language teachers are ELLs, being culturally competent becomes more crucial for ESL teachers. Moeller and Nugent (2014) claim, “With increased globalization, migration and immigration there has been a growing recognition for the need for an intercultural focus in language education” (p. 1). This recognition of the cultural dimension in language teaching has made a big change in language learning and teaching over the last few decades (Atay, Kurt, Çamlıbel, Ersin & Kaslıoğlu, 2009). Researchers and curriculum developers in language education have understood the importance of the connection between language and culture, and the impact of intercultural competent communication (Moeller & Nugent, 2014).

Most of this change showed itself in the language instruction in the curriculum. Both intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence affect the language curriculum (Moeller & Nugent, 2014) but most of the resources in the literature focus on training intercultural competent language learners (Byram, 1997; Chaouche, 2017; Lázár, 2007; Sercu & Bandura, 2005). Thus, even though there are so many studies about how to integrate intercultural competence into foreign language education, few studies explore the assessment or development of intercultural competence among foreign language teachers. As stated above, to be able to train culturally competent students, language teachers should be competent first. Atay et al. (2009) claim “language teachers have to be familiar with what lies behind the new skills and strategies their students are expected to acquire for intercultural understanding” (p. 131) and

so teacher training programs should integrate cultural practices and experiential learning activities to enhance pre-service and in-service teachers' intercultural competence.

Being interculturally competent enables the language teachers not only to teach the target language in a better way but also to interact with the culturally diverse students in a more effective way (He, 2013). Bastos and Araújo e Sá (2015) believe “investment in teacher education is crucial, not only for language teachers to be able to build the professional skills for fostering their learners' development of ICC (Intercultural Communicative Competence), but perhaps above all, to develop their own ICC” (p. 132). Therefore, intercultural competence can be regarded as a required skill for ESL teachers in today's world.

Still, some language teachers might misconceive the meaning of intercultural competence. Sercu (2005) states, “From the kinds of teaching activities reported most frequently in the foreign language classroom, it appears that teachers define intercultural competence primarily in terms of familiarity with the foreign culture” (p. 166). However, when we think of the complexity of being interculturally competent, this kind of definition stays limited. During the adaptation period of the immigrant and refugee students in the new culture, ESL teachers should be able to support their students as well as their families. This kind of support requires more than being familiar with the new culture. He (2013) states, “With the increasing number of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in school settings, ESL teacher candidates are not only challenged to provide students with academic facilitation, but also to communicate positively and effectively with students and their families” (p. 67). Intercultural competence is essential to go beyond the state of being knowledgeable about another culture and reaching the capacity of positive and effective communication with culturally diverse students and their families.

To sum up, even though there is no agreed upon definition of intercultural competence in the literature, the need of intercultural competence for educators is something that all researchers acknowledge. Intercultural competence is required for all teachers in the 21st century not just because of the need to effectively support linguistically and culturally diverse students but because of the need to encourage the new generation to be globally minded. Teacher training programs play a substantial role in this ripple effect, for interculturally competent teachers can help their own students learn competence in intercultural communications. The next section will explore experiential projects and practicum experiences that teacher training programs adopt to develop intercultural competence in teacher candidates.

Diversity Training for Teachers

In theory

As mentioned before, since communities are changing linguistically and ethnically around the globe, diversity training has become crucial in fields such as health care, business, tourism, psychology, and especially education (Moeller & Nugent, 2014). Considering the teachers' role in molding the new generation, the significance of intercultural competence in education field has become more substantial. Niculescu and Bazgan (2017) emphasize the importance of being interculturally competent for educators, "All people of the world need an intercultural training in the context of the new millennium. But for teachers, as important actors of the education of these people, the necessity seems to be more than obvious" (p. 23).

In preparing teachers for student diversity, addressing their concerns, and developing their intercultural competence, teacher training programs have considerable responsibilities. To what extent the teacher training programs prepare teachers for culturally diverse classrooms has been unexplored. However, the fact that most teacher training programs are not effective in

preparing teachers to address the needs of culturally diverse students has been mentioned by some authors. For example, Niculescu and Bazgan (2017) mention the gap between the teachers' culture and the students' culture in U.S. classrooms, stating, "They are obvious when analyzing the teacher training programs that still are strongly affected by traditional pedagogy, which either ignores the real teacher profile or ignores the reality of multicultural school environment" (p. 25). This kind of neglect results in lack of background knowledge and previous experience with diverse students among teacher candidates. Goodwin (2002) claims that "too many teachers or administrators lack any personal experience that might engender empathy and direct them to focus their attention on immigrant children" (p. 161). Moreover, Georgiou (2011) states the situation is not so different for the ESL teacher training programs, "Unavoidably, language teacher training adopts a similar stance: only few teacher training programs include cultural or intercultural components in their curricula (Lázár, 2007; Byram, 2009)" (p. 99). On the other hand, Taylor et al. (2016) emphasize, "It must be a clear and important goal for teacher education that their programs produce culturally competent teachers" (p. 45). This is important because culturally competent teachers help students adapt to a new culture and at the same time help improve the students' chance of success (Brown & Lee, 2012; Ly, Zhou, Chu, & Chen, 2012; Sirin et al., 2009). Therefore, the disparity can be recognized between what is expected from the teacher training programs and what is accomplished in reality in terms of interculturally competent teachers.

For a successful implementation of culturally responsive teacher training, some theories, principles, and concepts must be integrated in teacher education programs (Akiba, Cockrell, Simmons, Han, & Agarwal, 2010). As mentioned before, immigrant students might be struggling with going back and forth between the home culture and the school culture and their

“participation in school quickly introduces them to (and seduces them into) ‘American’ culture’, which often results in children feeling ashamed of their home cultures” (Goodwin, 2002, p. 165). If teachers adapt the approach of valuing the culture of new immigrant students, they might help students avoid the shame they may feel about their home culture. Knowledge and interest about students’ home culture is a great way to show that their home cultures are valued and welcomed in the classrooms (Gay, 2010). Likewise, closing the achievement gap between linguistically and culturally diverse students and their native peers can be decreased by addressing their specific needs (Wong et al., 2016). Therefore, teacher education programs should provide the background information of the difficulties that immigrant students are going through and at the same time teach ways to help students deal with these transitions. This comprises the theoretical aspects of multicultural education.

In Practice

Despite the benefits of learning multicultural theories, acquiring knowledge about diversity issues and other cultures would not be enough to create culturally competent teachers. He (2013) claims that “enhanced knowledge about culture is a necessary yet insufficient component for their cultural competence development” (p. 55). Therefore, opportunities must be created for teachers to put these theories into practice and directly interact with culturally diverse students. Pedersen (1994) emphasizes the importance of practice of theories for teacher candidates,

Teaching programs that overemphasize knowledge about a culture through lectures readings and excessive accumulation of information fail unless the student is already aware of the importance of this knowledge is the basis for developing skills in applying the accumulated knowledge. These programs provide large amounts of information

through readings, lectures, and factual data regarding a particular group or topic. The participants are frustrated because they do not see the need for this information, and because they are not sure how to use the information once it has been gathered. (p. 26)

Likewise, Gay (2013) claims that teachers have “the general idea of culturally responsive teaching but may not know what it means for practical application” (p. 52). Therefore, it is crucial that intercultural competence courses at the theoretical level should be supported by some hands-on opportunities that theoretical knowledge can be applied.

Studies show that experience is the key for teachers to gain confidence and feel comfortable communicating with diverse students (He, 2013; Sinicrope et al., 2007). If teachers do not have any previous experience with specific cultures, creating opportunities for them to familiarize themselves with diverse cultures in the pre-service years might be helpful. Cushner and Mahon (2002) state that to be able to live and work effectively with people from diverse cultures, “significant, long term, direct personal interaction” is required and international students teaching is an excellent way of addressing this need (p. 45). Also, considering the fact that job opportunities for ESL teachers are worldwide, some international student teaching experiences might be beneficial to practice successful intercultural communication as well. Spooner- Lane, Tangen, Mercer, Hepple, and Carrington (2013) support this fact:

Teacher education programs are in an excellent position to provide opportunities for domestic and international pre-service teachers to collaborate and engage in meaningful intercultural experiences that will enhance their cultural knowledge and skills, so that they can communicate and teach successfully in a global context. (p. 2)

Therefore, hands-on real life experiences are required for a successful development of cultural competence among pre-service teachers. This issue has been emphasized by some of the national

teacher education accreditation standards as well. For example, Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) require every educator to be able to address the needs of all students including the English language learners (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, 2013).

However, not all teacher education programs implement these standards into their curriculum. Akiba et al. (2010) argue that even though the skills of working in diverse settings have been emphasized in many national standards such as NCATE, TEAC, INTASC, the implementation of these standards depends on the adherence of the institution. Likewise, Diller and Moule (2005) state that teacher training institutions decide how to implement cultural competence and it is generally done by requiring only one or two courses. As a matter of fact, most of the teacher education programs give their trainings at the cognitive level. Taylor, et al., (2016) claim that many teacher education programs do not prepare preservice teachers for diversity and fail to teach culturally responsive pedagogy beyond academic material. Similarly, Akiba et al., (2010) claims, “Field experience and internship in diverse settings also represent critical elements in teacher education candidates’ educative experience, yet fewer than half the states include these elements in their standards” (p. 460).

In order to investigate how ESL teacher candidates feel prepared for teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students, Wong et al. (2016) conducted a Diversity Awareness Survey with 25 pre-service ESL teachers who were enrolled in an ESL Methods course in a university in the Northeast of the US. The majority of the teacher candidates reported that they did not get the sufficient amount of training in different cultural backgrounds from the teacher education program and did not feel prepared to work with culturally and linguistically diverse students. Wong et al. (2016) emphasized the necessity of well-prepared teachers and concluded that

personal experience through field work or being engaged in culturally relevant activities increases pre-service ESL teachers' confidence in working with culturally and linguistically diverse students. Besides field experiences, service learning, study abroad, and student teaching can be mentioned as some of other options for experiential learning (Chou, 2014; Wong et al. 2016).

When teachers have more experience with a culture different than theirs, they overcome their anxieties for intercultural interactions (He, 2013; Regalla, 2016). When we think of the fact that the majority of teachers in the US are white, the student population they interact with is economically, culturally and ethnically different and this mismatch might create some discomfort among the students and the teachers (Wong et al., 2016). In light of the role of experience in teachers' comfort level, providing some practicum opportunities during pre-service years becomes crucial. Regalla (2016) states:

In order to meet the needs of the culturally and linguistically diverse student body, teacher preparation programs must structure experiences for teacher candidates to get out of their comfort zones with opportunities that allow candidates to encounter a language barrier and engage in conversations about culturally relevant classroom management. (p. 72)

Likewise, He (2013) states, "While readings and discussions are essential components of teacher education coursework, teacher candidates still need opportunities to apply their understandings in order to overcome their initial fear or anxiety in cross-cultural communication" (p. 67).

Medina-López-Portillo (2014) ran a project with 13 TESOL graduate students who were enrolled in an intercultural communication class to explore both their own as well as other cultures and to develop cultural competence among the TESOL graduate students. TESOL

students met someone from another culture face to face at least four times during the semester: The first two meetings were to interview the participant and the other two were for social interaction. TESOL students found the individuals they were going to work with based on their interests and relevance to their own lives. At the end of the semester, the researcher collected the data through a questionnaire comprised of open ended questions. Data showed that students-- even though nervous at the beginning of the project--gained cultural self-awareness, developed intercultural competence and confidence in interacting with people from diverse cultures, and put newly acquired intercultural theory into practice. The findings of this study is significant in terms of exploring how TESOL students perceived working with culturally diverse students. However, enabling TESOL students to decide on the participant they would work with may not yield an authentic parallel, and thus an accurate inference, since teachers do not have a choice to choose their students in real life.

In conclusion, literature highlights the positive impact of practicum experiences and the direct interaction with culturally diverse students on the development of intercultural competence of preservice teachers. At the same time, it is hard to say that TESOL programs and other teacher training programs provide this kind of experiences and the necessary skills for pre-service teachers. As stated by Diller and Moule (2005), cultural competence is an ongoing process:

It does not occur as the result of a single day of training, a few consultations with experts, reading a book, or even taking a course. Rather, it is a developmental process that depends on the continual acquisition of knowledge, the development of new and more advanced skills, and ongoing reflective self-evaluation of progress. (p. 13)

In other words, there is no ending point for the development of intercultural competence but there should be a starting point, and teacher training programs can be that starting point.

Online Tutoring

In this technological era, communicating with people from overseas via e-mail or video conference is as convenient as talking to someone next door. This convenience of communication with people from all over the world with one click also made the intercultural interaction more frequent. Liu (2012) states “Thanks to the Internet, people find themselves moving among different cultures without leaving home, or staying immersed in their home cultures even after they have geographically located elsewhere” (p. 269). This technological evolution also changed the way people live. For example, people are working from home, shopping from home, and even receiving therapy and counseling services online.

The education field has also benefited from technological trend and various courses are offered online. Online instructional technologies have substantially changed the face of teaching and learning (Bonk, 2009; Nganga, 2016). For example, open educational resources enabled people to adjust the materials on their learning pace. In other words, learning technologies created “personalization” of “unique and low cost learning opportunities and formats” (Bonk, 2009, p. 11). Thus, besides providing various online academic programs in the comfort of people’s home, online instructional technologies also lowered the cost of education. Painter-Farrell (2014) state that because in the case of online education “classrooms do not need to be rented or heating bills paid” and “classes can reach huge numbers of students and internationally with a cost of only one instructor's fee” (p. 3). As a result, convenience and affordability of online education made it attractive for both teachers and students.

Depending on the goal and the form of the collaboration, there are different names for online interactions. Telecollaboration, virtual exchange, global learning network (GLN), e-learning, computer mediated instruction, blended learning, and distance learning are some of the

examples of online instruction and learning. They can also be further grouped according to their structures, “Such interactions may be tightly structured and incorporated into the curriculum of language courses, for instance in blended or hybrid classrooms,” or “they can also be more unstructured and student-driven interactions” such as “through social media and public forums” (Aristizábal, & Welch, 2017, p. 226). Moreover, there might be different versions of online interaction based on whether they are held simultaneously (synchronous) like video or audio chat or held in different times (asynchronous) like emails, discussions forums and blogs. When the trend of online learning became popular in 1990s, the communication was basically asynchronous. Later on, as the speed of the internet developed, the communication turned out to be more synchronous like video conferencing and text chats (Akiyama & Cunningham, 2018). For the scope of this literature review, the focus will be on the online interaction in the form of telecollaboration.

According to Anikina, Sobinova, and Petrova (2015) in telecollaboration “interaction generally occurs between participants who are involved in tasks designed to foster language skills and intercultural communicative competence” (p. 156). Even though this definition seems accurate, when we think of the speed of the technological innovations and the different needs of the virtual learners, it is inevitable to have some changes on the technological terms over time. In light of this, Akiyama and Cunningham (2018) state that the concept of telecollaboration is going through a conceptual expansion that “the definition of ‘telecollaboration’ may need concomitant modification” (p. 67).

There are different models of telecollaboration like e-Tandem, Cultura, e-twinning and each of them has different methodology of collaboration such as the use of different languages and thematic content or kinds of collaborative projects (Anikina et al., 2015; O’Dowd, 2007). As

the demand for online learning increases, so does the number of variations of online collaborations and it does not seem too far to have a form of online education based on the individual needs (Bonk, 2009). Telecollaboration, which is one way of individualizing the online learning and instruction, has been used for language learning/ teaching and intercultural competence development for the last three decades (O'Dowd, 2007). The following sections will explain more about the telecollaborative projects for these purposes.

Language teaching and Online tutoring

The history of online collaboration in the field of language education goes back to 1990s as a result of easy access to the internet and rise of research studies with the first publications in this field (O'Dowd, 2007; Von der Emde, Schneider, & Kötter, 2001). Towards the end of nineties, British Open University's Department of Languages created audio-conferencing applications for students to improve their speaking skills which introduced the online tutorials that comes until today (Guichon & Hauck, 2011). Another online project in language education that started in the late nineties is "Learning Circles project (Riel, 1997), sponsored by the American telephone company AT&T, which was one of the first to bring together primary and secondary school foreign language learners from countries all over the world in collaborative project work" (O'Dowd, 2007, p. 5).

Furthermore, in language education where interaction with native speakers are regarded invaluable, quick access to the native speakers of target languages made online learning priceless. According to Chun (2015) telecollaboration "holds the potential to enrich the learning experience by providing SL(Second Language) /FL (Foreign Language) learners with opportunities for interaction and communication with others who know the same language" (p.

5). Moreover, this interaction and communication does not have to occur between the instructor and the students but among the students as well. O'Dowd (2007) states:

The internet opens language teachers to a host of new tools and resources, including a vast amount of authentic materials in the target language as well as communication tools that enable teacher student or student student communication in the same class-room or between classes at geographically different locations. (p. 18)

Lin (2015) conducted a meta-analysis of the primary studies about computer mediated communication (CMC) in second language acquisition (SLA) between the years of 2000 and 2012. She analyzed 59 studies looking into the learner, methodological and publication characteristics and also moderator variables. Based on the results, she concluded that “CMC has a positive and medium effect on language learning” and more effective in developing writing skills than the oral skills (p. 100). Additionally, Lin (2015) stated that another eight meta-analysis studies that analyzed technology supported SLA conducted between 2003 and 2013 also concluded that technology and computer use has a positive impact on fostering language acquisition.

Intercultural dimension of online teaching

As mentioned before, as the interaction with people from different parts of the world become more accessible and convenient, so do the opportunities for language learning and intercultural communication. Wach (2017) highlights the importance of developing communicative intercultural competence among language learners through virtual exchanges, stating that “opportunities for intercultural learning” can be facilitated “through a variety of in- and out-of-class tasks,” which creates a “promising solution” to create “cross-cultural online collaboration” (p. 1). Consequently, the convenience of virtual exchanges for the purpose of

language and intercultural learning has originated several online collaborations among groups from different cultures.

“The term ‘online intercultural exchange’ refers to the activity of engaging language learners in interaction and collaborative project work with partners from other cultures through the use of online communication tools such as e-mail, videoconferencing and discussion forums” (O’Dowd, 2007, p. 4). In terms of language education and intercultural competence, Anikina et al. (2015) defines telecollaboration as “promoting telecollaboration in EFL (English as a foreign language) classroom is an imperative for educators and one of the area where intercultural dialogue may find a collocation” (p. 157). Most importantly, the opportunity to communicate with people from different parts of the world made telecollaboration a new option for the development of intercultural competence among language learners. Akiyama and Cunningham (2018) explains the relation between online interaction and intercultural competence development,

Connecting geographically distant learners of a foreign language (FL) with native speakers (NSs)/expert users of the language was somewhat impractical until the introduction of computer-mediated communication (CMC) tools into the language classroom. Telecollaboration (TC) is an approach that can facilitate such intercultural exchange online. (p. 50)

Online interaction through telecollaboration or tutoring helps to develop intercultural competence among the participants by reducing the misconceptions about the certain population. O’Dowd (2007) supports this fact saying, “Online communication should provide students with the opportunity to confront and deal with the prejudices, stereotypes and myths that they hold about other social groups and cultures and that others may hold about them” (p. 29). On the other

hand, not all online interactions result in confrontation or reduction of prejudices and biases. For example, Sehlaoui (2001) claims, “Computer technology can hinder cross-cultural communication by exposing students and teachers to cultural material that can develop or strengthen stereotypes and prejudices rather than reduce or eliminate them” (p. 56). Therefore, it is important to be aware of the fact that online interaction might yield either positive or negative outcomes.

Lazar (2015) analyzed the impact of online collaboration in intercultural development with seventy eight English as well as foreign language students in four different countries in Europe in a project for five months. The study included 10th and 11th grade students who used an online open source learning management system (Moodle) to reflect on different topics such as introducing themselves and their cities as well as traditional meals and table manners and songs. Based on the analysis of the student contributions in forums, wikis, journals and questionnaires on the online platforms, the researcher concluded that despite the initial difficulties in communication among the participants, students acquired knowledge about other cultures, advanced their understanding of others and developed their cultural competence. However, the cultures of the students (Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy and Turkey) involved in this study can be regarded as similar which may not require to appreciate the differences. Also, this study was based on asynchronous interaction like discussion forums and the same kind of synchronous interaction might give different results.

It is important to note that these virtual interconnections does not minimize the cultural differences among people and make “the whole world being subsumed into one global culture” (Liu, 2012, p. 269). Nevertheless, these virtual interconnections certainly create a new context that is different from face to face interaction. Liu (2012) argues that “Online communication

calls for a shift in our understanding of traditional cultural boundaries” and emphasizes the need for further research on this topic, “the extent to which traditional boundaries between interpersonal communication and mass communication would apply in cyberspace warrants future research” (p. 274). Likewise, Young (2006) states that even though there are many similarities between the traditional and online environment, she acknowledges the differences as “changing roles of students and instructors and the importance of careful planning” (p. 66). Therefore, the evaluation of online intercultural projects should be different from the face-to-face in person interactions.

Experiential projects

The variety of online interaction models enabled curriculum developers and teachers to use them for different goals and objectives. O’Dowd (2007) states, “Any educators considering engaging their learners in online exchange with a partner class in another culture will inevitably have to make various methodological decisions as to how the exchange should be organized and implemented” (p. 8). For example, in terms of language learning and teaching, this kind of online interaction can be used for e-service learning projects, online practicums, online curriculum development, and teaching pronunciation and speaking skills (Cushner, 2007; Hare Landa, Holm, Shi, 2017). Likewise, Lazar (2015) states that even though study abroad programs and exchange trips are popular in developing intercultural dimension of language teaching, they are not available for everyone, so the “web collaboration project” may “provide something of the ‘in-country’ experience that can fill the gap” (p. 208). In other words, learners do not need to travel to the country of the language they would like to learn since online interaction makes this interaction more logistically and financially convenient.

As mentioned in the previous section, study abroad, field projects, and immersion programs are provided to develop intercultural development of teacher candidates during the pre-service years. However, these programs are conducted with the students from certain parts of the world. The majority of the research studies done in the field of cultural and linguistic exchange through telecollaboration are with participants whose culture is similar. Çiftçi and Savas (2017) conducted a qualitative meta-synthesis by analyzing the publications about language and intercultural learning in telecollaborative environments between 2010 and 2015. They have found that the USA, Spain and Germany are the first three popular country “in terms of frequency of participation” (p. 284). China, Taiwan and The Netherlands followed these countries. Akiyama and Cunningham (2018), who reviewed 55 synchronous telecollaborative projects that were run by the university foreign language classes over 20 years, between 1996 and 2016, also demonstrated this in their study. They found that these projects were conducted with students from similar cultures. They concluded “from the predominant number of exchanges in English, German, and Spanish,” that “the current research body may not necessarily exemplify intercultural exchanges involving languages and cultures that are extremely different from each other” (p. 66). Therefore, there has clearly been lack of research with students coming from different backgrounds.

Experiential online projects

Intercultural immersion programs that take students to war or postwar are very uncommon. Considering the safety issues of traveling to the war zones of the world, the dearth of cultural exchange programs with students from these regions can be anticipated. Yet, many of the refugees and immigrants from these war and post war zones end up in US classrooms. According to UNHCR, “In 2016 alone, 75,000 children applied for asylum as “unaccompanied

minors" and most were from Afghanistan and Syria (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2016). Likewise, Bartlett, Mendenhall and Ghaffar-Kucher (2017) claim:

Given the global climate and increased movement of people across borders, refugee populations will continue to grow in the U.S., changing the landscapes of classrooms and schools across the country" even though "many schools seem ill-equipped" to address the issues related to refugee population. (p. 118)

Therefore, teachers need to get familiar with the culture of these diverse students and also gain some experience before they actually have students in their classrooms, which will help them phase out their previously mentioned concerns.

To address the logistics and safety limitations, online tutoring can be used to reach out to these students in the war zones. Thanks to some videoconference tools like Skype, Zoom and Google hangouts, interacting with students from war zones has become easier. Therefore, making virtual classes, either synchronous or asynchronous, available for students from the war zones is not as difficult as it used to be. Online tutoring might sound intimidating at first, especially if the teachers have no previous experience with online instruction, but when we think of the growing interest for online learning, the demand for teachers who are comfortable using this technology will also increase. Most importantly, online education is a valuable resource to develop intercultural competence among pre-service teachers. As Painter -Farrell (2014) state, "Online pedagogy and face-to-face pedagogy work differently, but they can both result in teacher development outcomes" (p. 5). Therefore, online teaching can be implemented by teacher training programs for the professional developments of teacher candidates.

Summary

This literature review critically explored the key findings of the intercultural competence development among the teacher candidates through online collaboration. As a result of an increasing number of refugees and immigrants in the US classrooms, many studies have researched the necessity of intercultural development among teachers. Moreover, considering the fact that large number of immigrants and refugees are coming from the war zones (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2016), more teachers need to become familiar with these cultures (Diller & Moule, 2005; Niculescu & Bazgan, 2017;). Particularly, since the proficiency in English is essential for all newly arrived immigrants in the US classrooms, this issue has become more crucial for ESL teachers (Atay et. al., 2009; Moeller & Nugent, 2014). While giving the linguistic support, ESL teachers should also be able to help these students in terms of cultural adaptation.

The positive impact of interculturally competent teachers on students' success has been demonstrated by many studies (Brown & Lee, 2012; Ly et al., 2012; Sirin et al., 2009). Additionally, language teachers are expected to train globally minded students by integrating successful intercultural communication skills into their instruction (Wach, 2017). This is important because teacher training programs either do not provide any intercultural training or they fail to go beyond the theoretical aspects of intercultural competence (Akiba et al., 2010; Barnes, 2006). Nevertheless, acquiring knowledge about diverse students on its own does not help teachers develop their intercultural competence. Experience with diverse students is also required (He, 2013), and teachers who are not ready for the culturally diverse classrooms need more training during their pre-service years (Akiba et al., 2010; Kolano et al., 2014; Taylor et al., 2016). As a result, teacher training programs and especially TESOL programs are expected

to integrate hands-on projects that enable ESL teacher candidates to interact with students from cultures with which they are not familiar.

Moreover, with safety and logistic concerns, it is burdensome to work with students from the war zones. This is where online tutoring comes into play. Online collaboration projects and online teaching might be an effective way to reach out to the students in the war zones without facing problems of safety and logistic. Another proven benefit of online interaction is the development of intercultural competence, which can reduce prejudice among pre-service teachers (Ceo-DiFrancesco et al., 2016; Leh, Grau, & Guiseppe, 2015). However, most of these studies are conducted with students from similar cultures (Akiyama & Cunningham, 2018; Çiftçi & Savas, 2018). Thus, there has been a gap in the literature about training in intercultural competence to work with students from different cultures, especially from the war zones.

Therefore, the goal of this qualitative study is to analyze the interaction of the pre-service ESL teachers with students from a war zone, Afghanistan, through the lens of Deardorff's (2006b) framework, the process model of intercultural competence. In this regard, this research contributes to a growing body of literature by exploring the intercultural competence development for ESL teacher candidates in the U.S. with Afghan students in online setting.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Restatement of the Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain a better understanding of the intercultural experiences of preservice ESL teachers who taught English to students in Afghanistan through videoconferencing. As a framework for this study, the researcher used the process model of intercultural competence developed by Deardorff (2006b). From this intercultural perspective, this researcher analyzed the data from the participating pre-service ESL teachers' interviews and reflection journals to describe how synchronous video conferencing (through Zoom) impacted their intercultural competence.

Research Questions

To explore this intercultural competence development, this study relied on the following research questions:

1. How does the experience of online teaching English as a foreign language to students from Afghanistan for six weeks contribute to the development of the intercultural competence of pre-service ESL teachers?
 - a. To what extent are pre-service ESL teachers open to explore another culture?
 - b. To what extent are pre-service ESL teachers able to tolerate ambiguity?
 - c. How and to what extent do pre-service ESL teachers become culturally and linguistically aware during the tutoring process?
 - d. To what extent do pre-service ESL teachers develop their empathy skills and become more flexible after completing six-week online tutoring?

Research Design

Maxwell (1996) stated that “the purposes of your study are an essential part of your research design” (p. 14). Because the purpose of this study was to analyze the intercultural communication of the pre-service ESL teachers in the United States with the students in Afghanistan in an online environment, the researcher regarded a qualitative research design as the most appropriate. Chun (2015) argued that “solely quantitative methodologies are not able to capture the complex nuances of intercultural discourse, thus qualitative methods or, alternatively, multiple methods are more appropriate for this type of research” (p. 17), such as allowing data to emerge and themes to generate.

According to Creswell (2009), the qualitative research process involves “emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant’s setting, data analyses inductively building from particular to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data” (p. 4). Moreover, Creswell (2009) claimed researchers should “think through the philosophical worldview assumptions that they bring to the study, the strategy of inquiry that is related to this worldview, and the specific methods or procedures of research that translate the approach into practice” (p. 5). These considerations of philosophical worldview, strategy of inquiry, and methods and procedures also guided this study’s methodology and discussed in detail as follows.

Philosophical worldview: This study’s methodology worked from the social constructivist worldview, which relies “as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation being studied” (Creswell, 2009, p. 8). To understand these participants’ views, this researcher explored how the pre-service ESL teachers make meaning of their online tutoring experiences with the students in Afghanistan. According to Creswell (2009), subjective meanings “are formed through

interaction with others (hence social constructivism) and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals' lives" (p. 8). The perception of reality is constructed based on the social interaction and the social context rather than being entirely objective (Lee & Greene, 1999). Considering the scope of this research was to learn more about the "perception of reality" that pre-service ESL teachers experience with Afghan students, a social constructivist worldview seemed most fitting for this research design.

Strategies of Inquiry: To glean these perceptions of reality, this study used a qualitative instrumental case study approach. According to Crowe et al. (2011), a case study is "a research approach that is used to generate an in depth, multifaceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context" (p. 1). Since the researcher aimed to explore the real-life intercultural experiences of the preservice ESL teachers, allowing for in-depth and versatile interpretations, the case study approach seemed right for this aim. Similarly, Ridder (2017) stated that the "potential advantages of a single case study are seen in the detailed description and analysis to gain a better understanding of "how" and "why" things happen" (p. 282). Therefore, because this study wanted to understand how online English teaching influenced/and or developed the cultural competence of preservice ESL teachers, a case study research design was adopted.

According to Yin (2014), there are three conditions for a case study research design: "a) type of research question posed b) the extent of control a researcher has over actual behavioral events c) the degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to entirely historical events" (p. 9). This study met all the conditions since the researcher aimed to explore how preservice ESL teachers developed their cultural competence during a six-week online tutoring and did not have any control over a contemporary event. Also, the main goal of a case study is not usually to make generalizations or abstractions (Wiebe, Durepos, & Mills, 2010). Therefore, even though the

findings of this research study can be compared with other studies to explore the topic in depth, these findings will not provide any generalization.

Research Methods: For data gathering, interviews were conducted before the pre-service ESL teachers started and after they finished their six online tutoring sessions with their students in Afghanistan. Five reflection journals were collected from the participants after each tutoring session--except for the first one--to learn more about their experiences. Since the “process” and the awareness of learning are the key factors for the intercultural competence development (Deardorff, 2004), the participants were asked to submit journals after each session throughout the study as opposed to submitting them all together. These research methods will be further detailed in the instrumentation, procedures, and data analysis sections of this chapter.

Therefore, while designing the research study, these approaches helped the researcher plan the process and conduct the research. All these components contributed to the study in connection with each other rather than in an isolated way. For instance, while exploring how pre-service ESL teachers constructed meaning of their experiences with Afghan students, social-constructivist approach revealed that each participant made unique interpretations of their interactions although they intersected at certain points. Likewise, incorporating the case study design informed how this meaning construction contributed to the development of intercultural competence throughout the six-week interaction. Lastly, the data collection methods and the data analysis provided insights to the establishment of the meaning from the pre-service ESL teachers’ viewpoints.

Research Setting

Pax Populi, a people-to-people peacebuilding program of Applied Ethics a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Marblehead, Massachusetts in the U.S. “Pax Populi” is a Latin

phrase meaning the “People's Peace.” Pax Populi Academy (PPA) provides one-on-one online English language tutoring for the students in Afghanistan and is the primary way to achieve the organization’s goal of “peace through education”. Through the PPA, tutors from around the world, but mostly from various universities in the United States, provide synchronous English language tutoring to students in Afghanistan via videoconferencing.

Pax Populi works with four schools in Mazar-e- Sharif, Kabul, Kandahar, and Herat provinces in Afghanistan. These schools are affiliated with the Kabul Educational Advising Center (KEAC), which is funded by Education USA. The four Afghan schools working with Pax Populi have a separate coordinator who works in collaboration with the assistant manager who administers the daily operations, such as creating a waitlist for students to be tutored, assigning students to the tutors, and supervising the tutoring sessions.

Pax Populi uses an online Learning Management System (LMS) called Schoology to provide a platform for the students and tutors to have their online sessions. Schoology offers services like creating and archiving attendance records, developing online gradebooks, preparing online tests and quizzes, etc. Besides the private messaging system among the tutors and the students, Schoology has a page similar to other social media sites that enables the students and teachers to post announcements and create discussion forums.

This study took place in the Schoology platform since the pre-service ESL teachers (who were tutors in this context) and the students needed to log into this system to be able to have access to lesson materials and to have their session successfully. While the Schoology platform was used for the online materials, the communication between the pre-service ESL teachers and the students occurred in the video conferencing tool, Zoom.

Pax Populi Academy (PPA) chose Zoom after experimenting with different online sites. Even though it started providing online tutoring services on Skype, it switched to Big Blue Button (BBB), an open source web conferencing system that is embedded in the Schoology platform of PPA a few years ago for the convenience of the tracking feature. Just recently, PPA changed the BBB videoconferencing tool to Zoom because of the better internet quality. Plus, Zoom provides the information of the login and logout times of both the tutors and the students, which enables the administrators to keep track the duration of each online tutoring session. Zoom also has educational features such as whiteboard facilities, an instant chat system, and screen sharing. Before they can have these Zoom tutoring sessions, the tutors and the students have to be registered to PPA.

English courses that Pax Academy offers are at intermediate and high intermediate levels. All four language skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) are integrated in each lesson; however, tutors are always encouraged to adapt the lessons based on the skills their students would like to develop. Each lesson is developed around a theme such as music, peace, or success (Appendix L). Moreover, each lesson starts and ends with discussion questions to give both the tutors and students more opportunities to talk and get to know each other, and each lesson concludes with a short quiz to assess the course objectives. Normally, every English language course has ten lessons--with each lesson prepared for a 90-minute session period—but since this study was conducted in the summer time, one course was shortened to six lessons.

Population

The participants for this study were 10 pre-service ESL teachers who were enrolled in a TESOL master's program in different universities in the United States. Eight of the participants were recruited from a state university in Massachusetts. Other two preservice ESL teachers were

recruited from TESOL master's programs of two different universities in California and Missouri. Age, gender, and teaching experience were not used as criteria for the selection of the population. Instead, the condition for selecting participants was to be enrolled in a TESOL program in the United States since the focus of this study was on the intercultural development of preservice teachers of English. Therefore, preservice teachers from other teacher education programs were not included in this study.

The participants' age range was between 25 and 58 and they were all born and raised in the United States except for two participants who identified themselves as Asian and Arab. All participants were female and they were at different stages in the TESOL master's program. Eight of the participants worked in education field even though the subject they taught and the age group they worked with varied. One of the participants had a part time job in another profession and another participant who identified herself as a "stay-at-home mom" was not working at the time of the study.

The researcher invited all the preservice ESL teachers to participate in this study on a voluntary basis. To reach potential participants, the researcher contacted university professors she knew in U. S. based TESOL programs and asked them to announce her dissertation research study to their graduate students. Preservice ESL teachers who were interested in participating in the study and becoming a tutor in Pax Populi reached out to the researcher via email and they scheduled a 30-minute meeting on Zoom, a video conferencing tool. The basic aim of this meeting was to explain the purpose of the research study, the tutoring process, and what was expected from them. Before the face to face Zoom meeting, the researcher emailed the consent forms to the volunteers so that they could ask if they had any questions about the study process during the meeting.

Protection of Human Subjects

After the dissertation proposal was approved by the dissertation committee, the University of San Francisco's Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) gave permission to begin the proposed research study (Appendix H). Before collecting data from the participants through reflections and interviews about their tutoring experiences, the researcher sent the consent forms to all volunteer participants via email and obtained their signature and approval. The consent form included a description of the research purpose, the methodology and how the information will be used by the researcher (Appendix A). The consent form also included the statement that the participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

To further protect the participants, pseudonyms were used for each participant to keep their identities private. Moreover, the researcher has kept all the data confidential and secure by keeping them in a digital file that is protected with a password.

Instrumentation

Since the purpose of this study was to explore the development of intercultural competence among the preservice ESL teachers through online tutoring, the researcher collected data only from preservice ESL teachers, not from the students they worked with. The reflection journals that the participants submitted after each online tutoring session, pre-interview, and post interview served as the instruments of data collection for this study.

Reflection Journal Questions: With the permission of Darla Deardorff, the researcher used the teacher reflection questions developed by Berardo and Deardorff (2012). Each question represented a component of the process model of intercultural competence framework. To gain this permission, the researcher emailed Darla Deardorff to explain the purpose of her study and

to ask to use the “Teacher Reflection Questions” (2012) for the data collection. Dr. Deardorff granted permission via email on the following day (Appendix F). The researcher then selected two questions from the “Teacher Reflection Questions” for each component of the framework based on their relevance to the purpose of this research study (Appendix B). There were 10 questions in total. Some were closed-ended questions that required short answers such as yes or no. According to Bhattacharya (2017), since closed-ended questions have fixed answers, they do not provide rich details, so open-ended questions are more appropriate for exploring how the participants understand their experiences (p. 137). Therefore, the researcher turned the closed-ended reflection questions into open-ended questions by adding “Please explain” at the end of each question.

All the reflection questions were grouped by journal numbers and sent to preservice ESL teachers via email right after their first session. The researcher asked the participants to email their answers for the questions of each journal to the researcher after each tutoring session. It is important to note here that the purpose of these questions was not to assess intercultural competence but to guide the reflection process of the preservice ESL teachers to encourage them think critically by reflecting on their intercultural experiences with students in Afghanistan.

Interview questions: The researcher developed pre-interview and post interview questions by consulting her advisor as well as five experts in this field to review their validity. In particular, she emailed professors and researchers who are experienced in the field of TESOL, virtual learning, and intercultural competence to establish the validity of the interview questions.

While preparing these questions, the researcher made sure that all the questions were informed by the research purpose and served to answer the research questions (see Table 1). While every research question could not be addressed equally by the interview questions, the

researcher's follow up questions in the post interview referred directly and indirectly to the themes in the research questions. The researcher also used these post interviews to clarify some of the participants' statements in reflection journals.

Moreover, the researcher made sure these post-interview questions aligned with the pre-interview questions to compare their answers and to identify any changes in their perception of this tutoring experience. For example, the first and the second questions in the pre-interview helped to determine their expectations and anticipated challenges of the pre-service ESL teachers. The first and the second questions in the post-interview helped elucidate if this tutoring experience met their expectations or created any unexpected challenges. The purpose of the third questions in the pre- and post-interviews was to learn more about their perception of Afghan people before they started tutoring and after they finished the six-week session. The last question in the pre-interview was designed to discover what kind of information they wanted to know about their students, while the corresponding question in the post-interview was designed to discover what kind of information was useful to tolerate ambiguity. Each interview consisted of four questions (Appendix D, E).

Table 1

Alignment of Research Questions (RQs) with Questionnaire Items

Research Questions (RQs)	Questionnaire Items	
	Journal Reflection Questions	Interview Questions
RQ 1-a	1-2-5-6	Pre-Int (1)
RQ 1-b	2-3	Pre-Int (4) Post-Int (4)
RQ 1-c	4-9	Pre-Int (3) Post-Int (3)
RQ 1-d	4-7-8-10	Pre-Int (2) Post-Int (2)

Note. Adapted from Roberts, C. M. (2010). *The dissertation journey: A practical and comprehensive guide to planning, writing, and defending your dissertation*. Corwin Press. Copyright © 2004 by Carol M. Roberts

Before the tutoring process started, the researcher interviewed participants via Zoom to learn more about their previous experiences with Afghan culture and their expectations from this tutoring experience (Appendix D). These interviews were scheduled after the orientation and before the first day of tutoring, based on the participants' availability.

At the completion of all tutoring sessions, the researcher conducted a post-interview with the preservice ESL teachers (Appendix E). These interviews were scheduled based on the participants' availability and conducted over Zoom or over the phone.

The researcher transcribed the pre-interviews herself by using the Google voice tool on google docs. Each interview lasted between 6 and 10 minutes approximately. The post interviews were longer than the pre-interviews and lasted between 16 and 26 minutes. Therefore, the researcher used one of the online transcription services to transcribe the post interviews. To ensure the anonymity in the transcripts, the names of the participants were removed from the documents and instead numbers were assigned to each transcript as Participant 1, 2 etc. The same process was followed for the reflection journals and all the data from the same participant were kept in digital folders labeled with the same number. After receiving the interview transcriptions, the researcher checked the accuracy of the transcriptions by listening to the interviews twice.

Procedures

Before tutoring:

Before the online tutoring sessions started, the researcher had one-on-one meetings with each of the preservice ESL teachers via Zoom to give some information about Pax Populi and to explain the tutoring process. The researcher also answered the preservice ESL teachers' questions and addressed their concerns during these meetings. At the end of the meetings, the

researcher asked if they had any questions about the consent forms. With the participants who sent their signed consent forms before or during the meeting, the researcher conducted the pre-interviews before finishing the meeting. All the pre-interviews were recorded by an electronic device to be transcribed later. After this short orientation and pre-interview, a Doodle Poll (an internet calendar tool to schedule meetings) was sent to preservice ESL teachers to ask their availability for online tutoring for six weeks. The same process was followed by the Afghan students and their training was given by the Pax Populi Assistant Manager located in Afghanistan. This scheduling process was a little bit challenging because of the time zone difference between Afghanistan and the U.S. (8.5 hours for the East Coast, 9.5 hours for the Central time and 11.5 hours for the West Coast time zone). This time difference limited the scheduling options because the tutoring sessions would be either very late at night or very early in the morning. This was because most students in Afghanistan did not have computers or an internet connection at home. Therefore, they had to be at the educational advising center to attend their tutoring sessions. Considering the fact that female and male students had different school hours and most students did not prefer to commute to school after dark because of the safety issues, the pre-service ESL teachers were expected to be more flexible for the tutoring hours to accommodate the students' needs.

After the schedules were set, the researcher sent introduction emails to the preservice ESL teachers and the students in Afghanistan in coordination with the assistant manager of Pax Populi. The contract, which included the dates and times of the tutoring sessions for the following six weeks, was attached to this introduction email (Appendix C). The preservice ESL teachers and students were expected to confirm the tutoring times and dates on the contract and

notify the assistant manager if they wanted to make any changes on the schedule in advance. After both sides confirmed the schedule, they became ready for the first tutoring session.

During tutoring:

At the time of the scheduled tutoring session, both the students and preservice ESL teachers logged onto Zoom and Schoology. Just before they started each session, a Zoom meeting link was shared with all the preservice ESL teachers and students by the assistant manager located in Afghanistan. When they clicked on the link, they were automatically connected to Zoom to start their sessions.

During the six weeks of online tutoring, the pre-service ESL teachers were expected to submit reflection journals about their experiences in five different journal entries. These reflections were important tools for the participants to learn from their experiences and to become aware of their perceptions of another culture. According to Poulou (2007), "Reflection offers a means of unfolding prospective teachers' concerns and personal theories and integrating them into teaching decisions" (p. 92). In other words, reflecting on experiences allowed the teachers to develop self-awareness, which is an important aspect of cultural competence development.

The participants' reflection journals had some guiding questions that were taken from Berardo and Deardorff (2012) (Appendix B). The participants were expected to submit their first journal after the second tutoring session and the following journals after each tutoring session. By the end of the six weeks, the participants submitted five journals in total.

After tutoring:

After completing six tutoring sessions, the researcher scheduled a post interview with the pre-service ESL teachers. This interview included four questions that aligned with the pre-

interview questions as explained above. To give the teachers time to think about their answers, they were given these questions a few days ahead of the post-interview. The researcher conducted these interviews via Zoom and recorded them to be transcribed later for the data analysis. Only one of the interviews was conducted over the phone.

Data Analysis

Among different ways of approaching the qualitative data, the researcher chose inductive analysis. Bhattacharya (2017) refers to it as “working up” from the data and describes the inductive analysis as:

The process through which a qualitative researcher might look at all the raw data, chunk them into small analytical units of meaning for further analysis (usually called codes), cluster similar analytical units and label them as categories, and identify salient patterns after looking within and across categories (usually called themes). (p. 150)

To begin this inductive process, the researcher started by broadly reading the interview transcripts and the reflection journal entries to familiarize herself with the data. After getting a holistic sense of the data, the researcher created a document on Google doc to identify and categorize the similar topics that were mentioned by the participants. Under each category, she added related quotes with the participant’s assigned number (like Participant 1). She also noted how many participants mentioned the same topic to see how frequently the same topic was brought up, and then she labeled them as major or minor topics. Based on the themes that emerged from this data, the researcher created abbreviated codes for each topic. The researcher also detailed her chunking and clustering process to explain her rationale for the debriefers who would evaluate the data analysis process (which will be explained in the credibility and trustworthiness section). After grouping the similar topics together, she created another

document for mind mapping to show the relationship among the categories that came up during the coding process (Appendix I). These connections were informed by the theoretical framework and the research questions. Finally, the researcher ended up with two documents: one document with the coding categories and the participants' quotes under each category (Appendix J); and one document with a mind map showing the relationship among these categories (Appendix I)

In the process of data analysis, the model of intercultural competence by Deardorff (2006b) was used to make sense of the data. The emerging themes from the preservice ESL teachers' reflections and interviews were grouped and analyzed under the five components of this framework: attitudes, knowledge, skills, internal outcomes, and external outcomes. As Miles and Huberman (1994) stated, their preferred method of coding is to "create a provisional start list of codes" that "comes from the conceptual framework, list of research questions, hypotheses, problem areas, and/or key variables that the researcher brings to the study (p. 58). Therefore, the researcher created a "start list" of codes based on the themes in the research questions.

Afterwards, the researcher included the other emerging themes that came in the data even if they were not among the initial code list. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), these emerging codes are "better grounded empirically" so that readers "can see that the researcher is open to what the site has to say, rather than determined to force-fit the data into preexisting codes" (p. 62). So even though the predetermined codes guided the data analysis, the researcher also included the progressively emerging themes during the data collection.

At the end of the data coding, categorizing and analyzing process, the researcher connected various parts of the data and the research questions to provide meaningful and accurate answers. For example, for the first question (openness), the themes of "desire to

learn/know more about Afghan country/culture/people,” “interest in another culture,” “concern of disclosure,” and “withholding judgements” were coded under the category of “openness.” Codes that emerged under the theme of the second question (tolerating ambiguity) were “gender of the student,” “culturally appropriate communication,” “background information of the students,” and “online teaching.” For the third question (linguistic and cultural awareness), the researcher coded the emerging themes that demonstrated the awareness of “implicit & explicit knowledge of a language,” “semantics,” “awareness of daily language use,” “general cultural awareness,” “cultural self-awareness,” and “situation specific awareness.” For the fourth question (empathy skills & flexibility), the researcher coded themes that indicated the ways the participants developed empathy for “living in a conflict zone,” “religious practices,” and “privileges.” As for flexibility, the sub-themes were grouped as “academic flexibility” and “behavioral flexibility” (Appendix J).

Credibility and Trustworthiness

Creswell and Miller (2000) suggest nine different procedures of validity (See Table 2). They grouped these based on the lens of the researcher, the lens of the participant, and the lens of the people outside the study. Creswell (2007) recommended using at least two of the procedures in any given qualitative study. Based on this recommendation, the researcher applied one validity procedure from each lens: triangulation for the lens of the researcher, member checking for the lens of the participants, and peer debriefing for the lens of the people external to the study.

Table 2

Validity Procedures Within Qualitative Lens and Paradigm Assumptions

Paradigm assumption/Lens	Postpositivist or Systematic Paradigm	Constructivist Paradigm	Critical Paradigm
Lens of the Researcher	Triangulation	Disconfirming evidence	Researcher reflexivity
Lens of Study Participants	Member checking	Prolonged engagement in the field	Collaboration
Lens of People External to the Study (Reviewers, Readers)	The audit trail	Thick, rich description	Peer debriefing

Note. Retrieved from Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into practice*, 39(3), 124-130. Copyright © 2000 College of Education, The Ohio State University.

Triangulation. For social research, Flick (2004) explained that “triangulation” means observing “the research issue from (at least) two different points” (p. 178). Triangulation, which can be used to increase the validity of the data, has four different types: triangulation of data, triangulation of theories, triangulation of methods, or investigator triangulation (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The researcher triangulated her research by combining data from two different sources (from the reflection journals and the interviews) at different times. Miles and Huberman (1994) said that “a new source forces the researcher to replicate the finding in a place where, if valid, it should re occur” (p. 267). Accordingly, having different questions for the interviews and the reflection journals--all of which aligned with the research questions--set the foundation for the same themes to recur in a way that confirmed the data from different sources. During the post interviews, the researcher also asked for confirmations and clarifications for some statements in the participants’ reflection journals.

Member Checking. Lincoln and Guda (1985) described member checking as “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” and “a reasonable valid way to establish the

meaningfulness and of the findings and interpretations” (p. 314-315). They elaborated that member checking can be conducted informally but suggested a more formal checking by having a member check panels and sessions for a whole day or several days. Since the participants were located in different states and with conflicting schedules, the researcher sent emails containing the interview transcripts and the theme categories of the data to each participant and asked them if the researcher’s interpretation of the data reflect the intended meaning. She also asked them to make any corrections or additions.

Peer Debriefing. To establish interrater reliability, the researcher used the method of peer debriefing. Peer debriefing, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), is “the process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind” (p. 308). Many researchers claim that peer debriefing increases the credibility of the research (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Spall, 1998). Spall (1998) said peer debriefing ensures that “the interpretations are worthy, honest and believable” (p. 280). To strengthen the credibility of this qualitative study, the researcher consulted two experts in the field who are knowledgeable of both of the topic and of qualitative methodology in general. Besides their knowledge, the trust was another criterion to choose the debriefers. According to Spall (1998) a high level of trust is important for an open dialogue between the researcher and the debriefers.

Considering this criteria, the researcher asked two professors from TESOL departments of universities in the United States to debrief her dissertation. Although they were not on the dissertation committee, these debriefers were among the group of experts that field tested the interview questions, so they were familiar with the research process from the proposal stage .

When the researcher emailed the professors to ask if they could be her study's debriefers, she explained her expectations from them in this process (Appendix K). The expectations were stated as examining data analysis, checking for bias, and building consensus on the themes and categories to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness. The professors agreed. Even though most of the communication was conducted on the Google doc., the researcher shared with the debriefers, three face to face debriefing meetings via Zoom created more opportunities for discussions and for building a consensus on the themes emerged in the data. Since some of the themes such as empathy, cultural awareness, tolerating ambiguity etc. were broad terms and open to interpretations, these discussions helped the researcher to approach the data objectively.

Background of the Researcher

The researcher completed her bachelor's degree in Foreign Language Education at Middle East Technical University in Turkey. Prior to earning her TESOL master's degree from Salem State University, MA, she taught English as a Foreign Language (EFL) with ethnically and linguistically diverse students, from elementary to high school levels, in different regions of Turkey for nine years. During her graduate studies, she volunteered in bilingual immersion schools in Massachusetts to work with newly arrived immigrant students to help them improve their English language skills and support their cultural adaptation process. Besides the graduate assistantship award, she earned the Distinguished Service Award from Salem State University during her graduate studies. The researcher has also actively worked in a Berkeley Turkish School and in a Chinese after-school immersion program in the San Francisco Bay Area. She is currently working as a teaching assistant in the International and Multicultural Education Program with TESOL graduate students and also coordinating the Supplemental Instruction Program in the Learning Center at the University of San Francisco. Additionally, the researcher

has been working in a non-profit peacebuilding organization, Pax Populi-Applied Ethics, which aims to build peace through online education. In Pax Populi, she has worked in different positions for more than four years by contributing to the development of the organization by tutoring, coordinating the university partnerships and individual tutors, and developing curriculum.

She has presented at different conferences on the various topics such as “Integrating Service Learning into COIL Projects,” New York City, NY (March 2018), “Online Tutoring as Teacher Development,” Tuscon, AZ (January 2018), “Transcending boundaries of language and culture,” Chicago, IL (October, 2017), “Implementing Online Tutoring: Intercultural Competence for TESOL,” Santa Clara, CA (October, 2017), “E-Service Learning as Teacher Education: Exploring the Unknown,” Toronto, Canada (March, 2015), “Global Engagement: Diverse Opportunities” Boston, MA (November 2014), and “Teaching Global Learners: A Panel Discussion” Salem, MA (November 2014). Her research interests are language teaching and technology, intercultural competence, teacher training for diversity, and intercultural curriculum development.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Overview

This study aimed to better understand the intercultural experiences of preservice ESL teachers, all of whom taught online English to students in Afghanistan for six weeks. The study was driven by a central question: How did teaching English as a foreign language to students from Afghanistan develop the intercultural competence of pre-service ESL teachers?

To explore this question, the researcher chose a qualitative approach. This approach allowed rich descriptions and meaningful insights to be drawn from the perspectives of online pre-service ESL teachers who were tutoring to students in Afghanistan for six weeks. Data from their pre-interviews, five reflection journals, and post interviews generated emergent themes that helped answer this study's research questions.

This chapter reports the findings related to this study's central question as well as four supporting questions. These supporting questions, combined with the process model of intercultural competence framework by Deardorff (2006b), guided both the data collection and the theme generation of this study. Because some of the themes might be open to interpretation, each section starts with the definition of themes according to the literature. This format clarified how the researcher interpreted the emerging themes in the data. (See Appendix J for the coding system used by the researcher). The findings are presented below.

Participant Profiles

The participants in the study were ten pre-service ESL teachers who were enrolled in a TESOL master's program in three different universities in the United States. The participants, whose ages ranged from 25 to 58, were born and raised in the United States except for two:

Sophia, who was originally from South Korea, and Tina, who was originally from Iraq. Each participant was at a different stage in the TESOL master's program and aside from Tina, who described herself as a "stay at home mom" and Linda who had a part time job in another profession, all the participants worked in the education field. They all had experience with students of different age groups. Here is more information about the participants using their assigned pseudonyms.

Table 3

Profiles of the ten pre-service ESL Teachers

Name (Pseudonym)	State	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Year in TESOL program	Current occupation
Sophia	MO	Female	White /Asian	Last semester	Works as a graduate assistant at the university
Emily	MA	Female	White/American	First semester	ELL tutor in an elementary school
Olivia	MA	Female	White/American	Second semester	Teaches workplace and job readiness to adults
Carol	MA	Female	White/American	First semester	Teacher aide in a special education school
Linda	MA	Female	White/American	Third semester	Not currently working as a teacher; has a part-time job
Angela	MA	Female	White/American	Third semester	Professional aide in an elementary school
Gloria	MA	Female	White/American	First semester	Spanish teacher in a high school
Ashley	MA	Female	White/American	Third semester	5th grade teacher

Tina	MA	Female	White/Arab	Third semester	Housewife
Grace	CA	Female	White/American	Last semester	Substitute teacher in an elementary school and teacher in a private language school

Sophia was originally from South Korea and moved to the United States when she was 21 years old. Her bachelor's degree was in nursing and this was her last semester in the TESOL program in a university in Missouri. She was excited to learn about the Afghan culture and people. She said she applied for a U.S. Army nurse position in Afghanistan years ago and was recruited, but her parents did not let her go because of the safety concerns. This was her first online tutoring experience.

Emily was born and grew up in Massachusetts. She was working in an elementary school as a bilingual ELL (English Language Learner) tutor and just starting the TESOL master's program. She spoke Spanish fluently. Even though she said she knew many people from different places, this would be her first interaction with someone from Afghanistan. She had previously taught on Blackboard, an online learning management system that did not require her student to be online at the same time. This was her first face to face online tutoring experience.

Olivia, also from Massachusetts, was teaching workplace and job readiness to adults in a nonprofit organization. This was her first semester in the TESOL master's program. She was also teaching English for Advancement, a program in which students learn interview skills, prepare resumes, and improve their English to find jobs. She spoke French and some German. She had

never taught English online before and this was going to be her first experience with someone from Afghanistan.

Carol was from Massachusetts and this was her first semester in the TESOL master's program. She had taught English to adults for six years and, at the time of this study, also worked as an aide at an alternative special needs school. She studied Spanish in her undergraduate program and attended a study abroad program in Spain. She did not have any experience working with students from Afghanistan or with online teaching.

Linda, from Massachusetts as well, worked part-time in another field but she had no teaching experience aside from the tutoring she did years ago. She was halfway through the MA TESOL program and she was going for licensure through this program. Her second language experience was with Spanish. She took a course in high school and college but was not fluent. This would be her first time tutoring online and working with Afghan students.

Angela was originally from Connecticut but living in Massachusetts at the time of the study. This was her second semester in the TESOL master's program. Her bachelor's degree was in public relations, but she had worked as a study abroad advisor for three years. At the time of the study, she was also a professional aide at an elementary school. Other than English, she could speak basic Spanish. She did not have experience with people from the Afghan culture or with teaching online.

Gloria was also from Massachusetts. She had been teaching for twenty-seven years but this was her first semester in the TESOL master's program. She had been a certified Spanish teacher since 1991, and she was teaching Spanish in a private school at the time of this study. She had not known anyone from Afghanistan before and never tutored anyone in an online environment.

Ashley was also from Massachusetts and it was her third semester in TESOL master's program. She taught fifth grade in an elementary school. She had many ELL students whose first language was Spanish and she spoke Spanish fluently. She had no experience with students from the Afghan culture until this tutoring opportunity. She had taken online classes as a student but this was her first time in teaching English online.

Tina was originally from Iraq but had lived in the United States for a long time. She was a stay-at-home mom, so she was not working at the time of the study. She had some volunteering experience tutoring ten Afghan refugees between the ages of 16 and 40 in the United States. Besides English, she spoke Arabic fluently. Like Ashley, Tina also had taken many online classes but this was going to be her first time teaching online.

Grace was from California and it was her last semester in the TESOL master's program. She worked as a substitute teacher in an elementary school before she started her graduate studies. After she started the TESOL program, she taught English to adults at a private English language school. She studied French for years and she speaks in as a second language. Before this study, Grace had worked with an Afghan refugee in the United states for three and a half years.

Emergent Themes

Research Question 1-a: To what extent are pre-service ESL teachers open to explore another culture?

During the pre-interview and in their initial reflection journals, all but two of the participants expressed openness to learn about Afghan culture and people. The first question in the pre-interview (Appendix D) and the journal questions of 1-2-5-6 (Appendix B) offered insights into the research question 1-a. Deardorff (2004) described the theme "openness" as

“openness to intercultural learning and to people from other cultures and withholding judgment” (p. 196). Accordingly, in the data, the researcher searched for the participants’ statements that directly related to this definition. Certain statements found in the reflection journals and the interview questions indicated this openness. The two participants who had prior experience with Afghan culture did not mention it explicitly. One said she was already familiar with the culture; the other focused on more specific things to learn such as what educational resources would be available to them.

Openness to intercultural learning and to people from other cultures

Their exploration of the Afghan culture occurred through asking questions, listening, and observing throughout the six tutoring sessions. Two participants had concerns about “how” and “how much” they should explore the culture of their students.

For Sophia, it was a great opportunity to develop not only teaching skills but also cultural understanding. She said, “I want to not just learn how to teach but at the same time I want to learn something about a different culture, a different place that I’ve never been to” (Sophia, pre-interview, June 2018). In the post interview, Sophia mentioned that she learned so much about Afghan culture and people that she considered it an eye-opening experience. She said “Having sessions with my tutee completely changed my whole perspective on people in Afghanistan and what I believed was happening over there” (Sophia, post interview, August 2018).

Similarly, Emily emphasized that she wanted to learn about the Afghan culture. “Right now,” she said, “I don’t really know a lot about the people in Afghanistan, so actually I’m really looking forward to that” (Emily, pre-interview, June 2018). Emily was able to build such good rapport with her student that she mentioned her student as her “friend” in the post interview; “Obviously I felt like we became friends and that was great to me because we could just have

regular everyday conversations” (Emily, post-interview, July 2018). Like Emily, Olivia knew little about the Afghan culture and saw this as an opportunity to explore more:

I consider myself a curious globetrotter and relatively well-read, but Afghanistan has been left off my radar. I am fortunate to partake in the tutor experience, so I can learn more about a country we all should know more about. (“Olivia journal reflection 1,” 2018)

After completing the six sessions with her student, she said she learned more about Afghanistan than she had thought she would in her post interview.

Likewise, Linda said that she expected to learn about her student’s culture and his learning style so that she would plan her lessons accordingly. She emphasized that she did not really have an idea about what an Afghan looked like so she said she was “relatively open”. In her first journal, she also indicated that she was interested in her student’s culture and asked many questions about the food, language, and education.

Carol, who was also excited to explore the Afghan culture, said she believed it would be different from what she had heard about Afghanistan:

I’m excited to . . . learn more about how it is like to live in Afghanistan, how their school structure is different than the school structure here, and what their goals are for their future. I really don’t know what it is like to live in there other than what I’ve heard which a lot of it is probably not correct because of the stereotypes. (Carol, pre-interview, June 2018)

Carol stated in the post interview that she was a little bit surprised by what she found from her student because “there was so much that we shared even though we live in such different environments. So, I think that was really cool!” (Carol, post interview, July 2018).

For Angela, learning more about the Afghan culture was part of her teaching method. She asked questions at the beginning of each session about things outside of school. Angela explained, “It’s important that we share personal experiences in order to get a better perspective of our cultures and that can ultimately segway into the lesson topic” (“Angela, journal reflection 4,” 2018). In the post interview, Angela stated that it was really interesting for her to “learn about and to really kind of understand the values that my student has” (Angela, post-interview, July 2018).

Even though the other participants were excited to learn more about their students’ cultures, some of them were not sure about the way they should approach to their students. Two participants had concerns about what kind of questions they should ask to prevent student misunderstandings. For example, Gloria mentioned this concern in one of her initial journals: “I was careful not to get personal with Azzami, but am I right in thinking this way? How do I know what is personal?” While she wanted to learn more about her student, she did not want to pry. She asked, “How do I navigate this?” (“Gloria journal reflection 1,” 2018). In the post interview, Gloria stated in her post interview that she felt more comfortable sharing personal information after the fourth or fifth session.

A similar concern was stated by Ashley, but she was more concerned about the appropriateness of the communication than the disclosure.

I didn’t want to sound presumptuous or ask anything inappropriate about his culture until I felt like I had a better opportunity to get to know him. Now that I’ve done that I am planning on trying to hear more truths about his country. (“Ashley journal reflection 2,” 2018)

She seemed to manage this concern after she got to know her student after few sessions. She said, “As I began to feel more comfortable and get to know my student, I became more comfortable in my interactions with him” (“Ashley journal reflection 5,” 2018).

Tina, who was originally from Iraq, did not express a desire to learn about the Afghan culture. She said she was already familiar with the culture since she had previously worked with ten Afghan people. Likewise, Grace, who had experience working with an Afghan refugee in the United States, mentioned she wanted to learn more about the student’s educational needs instead of indicating any eagerness to learn more about the Afghan culture.

Withholding Judgements

The participants’ answers to the first question of journal 1 shed light into their pre-judgements and perceptions of Afghan students and culture. Six of the participants admitted that they had some pre-judgements about their students. The others did not.

Grace said she withheld judgements because she always did that until she interacted with other people. Emily highlighted the regional differences despite the general picture in every culture: “It was always helpful to ask questions, as opposed to assuming anything. After all, even if you do read about a culture, there are always nuances that are unique to different villages/families etc.” (“Emily reflection journal 1,” 2018). Likewise, Angela said she did not make pre-judgements except for assuming that Hamdullah was a girl’s name. Linda acknowledged having some “subconscious” preconceptions that were “perhaps due to media influence,” but she tried to keep an “open mind” and “was pleasantly surprised” when she spoke with him (“Linda reflection journal 1”, 2018).

However, other participants did mention some pre-judgements about their students. Ashley said:

I did not know anything about him going into this and did not expect to be so impressed by his level of intelligence and successes. I hear so much negative media about the Middle East that I made an assumption about my student based on this- even when trying not to! I am truly blown away by this student--almost intimidated because he is so accomplished and smart for such a young man with limited opportunity. (“Ashley reflection journal 1,” 2018)

Tina did not write about any assumptions, pre-judgements, or discomfort in the first journal. However, in the post interview, she acknowledged having fears about the Afghan culture even though she had initially expressed being familiar with the culture. She said, “It was not about the student personally, but rather the culture.” She felt “unsure how accepting he would be working with an American,” and when he asked where she lived and what college she went to, she said she “was fearful to answer these questions and did not give him specifics”. Later on, however, she regretted this judgment, and said she “learned that he is just like me, a human! (Tina, post-interview, July 2018)

Gloria and Olivia also overcame some initial preconceptions. Both said being paired with a male student was shocking for them because of their perception of the Afghan culture. Gloria admitted that she was expecting to work with a female tutee and that she was disappointed when she found out that her tutee was a male, “I thought in Muslim culture I wouldn’t be able to tutor a male. I struggle with male dominated culture found in Afghanistan” but she also concluded that this presumption was based on books she had read that were “written by Muslim women that depict a misogynistic society (“Gloria journal reflection 1,” 2018).

Like Gloria, Olivia also indicated how uncomfortable she felt based on her prior knowledge about Afghan culture. She said that initially she worried her presence would make

him uncomfortable, “As Afghanistan has such a separation between men and women, why would it be okay to be face to face virtually?”. However, after realizing her student did not have problems working with a female teacher, she felt quite comfortable. She continued, “Perhaps I had judged Asadi based on information I had heard before and had been uncomfortable for no reason” (“Olivia reflection journal 1,” 2018).

Carol also admitted that even though she tried to withhold assumptions, she could not help making some based on her students’ work, education, and place of origin. In the post interview, Carol said she was surprised to find they had so many things in common and that her student was more educated than she anticipated. Lastly, Sophia stated that she had pre-judged Afghan women’s educational opportunities and how they treated in general. Like Carol, Sophia found this experience eye opening.

Summary of Research question 1a: Openness to explore another culture

Table 4

Participants’ openness to explore another culture

	Sophia	Emily	Olivia	Carol	Linda	Angela	Gloria	Ashley	Tina	Grace
Openness	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Withholding judgement	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓

Note. Meanings of Symbols: ✓=demonstrated ✗= not demonstrated ○=no data

The data revealed that eight of the participants were open to explore the Afghan culture, while the two did not mention any interest to learn about the culture in their interviews or reflection journals. The participants who indicated eagerness to learn more about their students’ culture also stated that their knowledge of Afghanistan and Afghan culture was limited. Although eager to learn, some participants indicated they were not sure how to approach their

students or what kind of questions they should ask. This concern was based on being misunderstood or culturally inappropriate.

Even though the majority of the participants were open to explore the Afghan culture, only four of them started this journey withholding judgements or pre-judgements. For the others, the things they heard in the media or read in books impacted their prior knowledge about the gender issues in Afghanistan. Still, at the end of the six-week tutoring sessions, the final journals and the post interviews demonstrated that they all overcame these prejudgments.

Research Question 1-b: To what extent are pre-service ESL teachers able to tolerate ambiguity?

While Deardorff did not define “tolerating ambiguity” in detail, she used the words curiosity and discovery to describe intercultural interactions. In one of the debriefing sessions, “tolerating ambiguity” was discussed in detail, so the researcher decided not to limit the definition but instead to expand it to Peng’s (2018) definition, which is “the ability to tolerate differences between new information and old information” (p. 82) as well as Budner’s (1962) definition, which is “the tendency to perceive (interpret) ambiguous situations as sources of threat” as opposed to the ability to tolerate ambiguity as in “the tendency to perceive ambiguous situations as desirable’ (p. 29). Budner (1962) also described ambiguous situations as lacking “sufficient cues” but also having “novelty, complexity, or insolubility” (p. 30). When a person responds to a new situation with repression and denial, anxiety and discomfort, destructive or reconstructive behavior, or avoidance behavior, claimed Budner (1962), then it can be inferred that s/he is threatened by the ambiguous situation and therefore unable to tolerate ambiguity.

These definitions of ambiguity helped the researcher search for related themes. Themes like uncertainty, comfort zone, curiosity, and discovery were categorized and then coded to

answer this study's central question. Because online teaching was an unknown area for each participant, it created some ambiguity as well. Thus, online teaching became an emergent theme.

The fourth questions in both interviews (Appendix D, E) and the journal questions of 2 and 3 (Appendix B) offered insights into this (research question 1-b). The data revealed that the participants handled the uncertainty well and their communication was not impeded by ambiguity.

Ambiguous situation 1-Gender of the student: The gender of the students created some ambiguity. The female tutors anticipated that they would be paired up with female students because they assumed that Muslim people could not work with the opposite gender. This issue was brought up in the reflection journals and in the interviews. For example, Olivia said she was shocked to be paired with a male student at first because she did not want to make her student uncomfortable. When everything went well, she realized she felt uncomfortable for no reason. Similarly, Tina mentioned how the gender of her student created some ambiguity and nervousness but she handled it because of her student's positive manners:

I didn't know that me being a woman speaking to a male student in Afghanistan...I didn't know how culturally appropriate that would be for them. I didn't know how he would take it, but he actually took it very professional. I was really nervous. (Tina, post interview, July 2018)

She added that the more she spoke with her student the more she felt comfortable.

Linda was also expecting to work with a female student in Afghanistan because she thought Afghan women would not always go to school and that few would become teachers. When she learned she would be paired with a male student, she said, "I just worried about maybe if he felt uncomfortable that I was female teaching him. Because I know that gender dynamics

are different there” (Linda, post interview, July 2018). However, like Tina and Olivia, she found this situation did not create any problems.

So although Olivia, Tina and Linda initially responded to having a student from the opposite gender with discomfort, as they got to know their students, they felt more comfortable.

Ambiguous situation 2- Culturally appropriate communication: Not knowing about the cultural behavioral norms of their students created some ambiguity for some participants. A few participants raised concerns about offending their students by saying something wrong or being misunderstood. Similarly, some participants were nervous because they did not know how much to disclose in conversations with their students. For example, Gloria stated that she knew he would ask her about her family and she was not sure how much information she should share. She described her initial concerns in the post interview this way:

How personal do I get? Am I going to offend him . . . and why should I worry that he's offended by my culture. I certainly shouldn't be offended by anything in this culture....

How soon do I come out with the fact that both my daughters are gay?” (Gloria, post interview, July 2018).

Gloria added that it took three to four sessions for her to feel comfortable enough to get into talking about these things. In her words, as she “created the connection” with her students, she shared more about her family. A similar concern was brought up by Carol who said that not knowing what was right or wrong to say and the possibility of offending her student created some uneasy feelings for her, “I feel that Americans have a lot of misconceptions about Afghanistan, so I am afraid of offending my student if I say the wrong thing, which makes me feel a bit like walking on eggshells (“Carol reflection journal 2,” 2018). As a solution to this, she

tried to learn more about her student's culture by asking questions. She said these kind of "creative solutions" helped her make "better connections" with her student.

For Ashley, this situation even caused some anxiety on her end because she said she did not know what to expect from speaking to somebody from Afghanistan. Ashley's solution to this situation was reading more about the culture before she started tutoring, "I don't wanna say anything that might be offensive, that might seem normal in our culture and might be offensive in their culture because I don't know Afghani culture." At the same time, she developed her cultural competence by negotiating this cultural ambiguity, saying, "I'm learning, just by reading but I definitely am nervous" (Ashley, pre-interview, June 2018). In her last journal she said that as she got to know her student, she became more comfortable in their interactions.

Another participant for whom the ambiguity of cultural norms created nervousness was Sophia. She said she did not want to "make weird" or "stupid mistakes" since she believed "very small things can be very big for students." She worried these mistakes could create the "wrong impression" and "influence" her relationship because she wanted to build a "really good rapport" with her student (Sophia, pre-interview, June 2018). However, like Ashley, in the post-interview, Sophia said this concern was not even an issue. In fact, she said, "Building rapport was very easy with her because she was so open-minded on everything and she wanted to learn" (Sophia, post interview, July 2018).

Grace indicated her awareness about the possibility of misunderstanding in intercultural communications but she did not mention any discomfort or any perception of "threat" about this "complexity."

Ambiguous situation 3- Background information of the student: Not having enough information about the students' backgrounds did create some ambiguity for some participants.

However, contrary to other ambiguous situations that created anxiety and nervousness, this lack of information did not cause negative feelings for the tutors. Instead, they leaned toward curiosity and discovery.

While Emily did not mention any discomfort or nervousness about the gender difference or about culturally appropriate communication with her student, she was concerned about not knowing her student's English proficiency. She said she would like to get a better understanding of what language level of her student had and added, "He told me he's low intermediate, but I'm not exactly sure what that means for him, as not every school system has the same levels" ("Emily reflection journal 1," 2018). Angela also wanted to know her student's educational goals and motivation "to come to the tutoring sessions at 7 am in the morning," since she couldn't do it herself, "So just kind of understanding" she added, "why are they doing this" (Angela, pre-interview, June 2018). Grace felt "a little bit more background information" would have helped her be "better prepared for the first session in terms of preparing the lesson of what we're going to do." Instead, she said she "kind of just changed it up on the fly. (Grace, post interview, August 2018). Still, unlike the other situations such as gender difference or navigating culturally appropriate communication, the lack of information about the students' background did not prompt uncomfortable feelings among the participants. Instead, the participants seemed to approach this ambiguity, or lack of "sufficient cues," with, as Deardorff (2004) would describe, as curiosity and discovery.

Ambiguous situation 4- Online Teaching

Another element that created some ambiguity for the participants was technology. Even though there were no reflection or interview questions directly related to their online teaching

experiences, all of the participants mentioned their experiences with technology and online teaching. For the majority, synchronous online tutoring caused some discomfort and uncertainty.

Even though Linda emphasized the advantages of using technology for online teaching by saying, “It is amazing to be able to use digital technology to teach people who are far away” she was also aware of its challenges. She explained, “It can be frustrating to be confined to sitting in front of a screen, limited by how well our networks are working, and unable to write things down by hand on paper” (Linda, reflection journal 3, 2018). She said she learned to be flexible when teaching online because of network outages or technical difficulties. Still, in the post interview, she seemed more used to online teaching since she found the digital chalkboard and screen share features of Zoom “really helpful” but “still limited in some ways.”

Olivia also had some concerns about teaching online at first, saying, “I feel like things might get weird” because “it’s just constant ‘look at my face all the time.’” (Olivia, pre-interview, June 2018). Like Linda, Olivia figured out the best ways of teaching online after a few sessions, saying, “I did learn that face to face tutoring online is doable and the power of sharing your screen is fundamentally the same as sharing a piece of paper” (“Olivia journal reflection 5,” 2018). She also said her “expectations were kind of unknown” and made her nervous but that it was “definitely” a “positive experience.” (Olivia, post-interview, August 2018).

Because it was her first online class, Carol was also concerned about the frustrating part of technology and wondered how it would work out. Nevertheless, like the other participants, she managed to deal with the online portion of this experience, “Teaching online was more difficult than I thought it was, but I think we managed all right” (Carol, post interview, July 2018). Similarly, Gloria expressed her concern about online teaching in her pre-interview, especially how it might affect the language teaching, “It’s gonna be challenging to teach somebody via the

internet via the screen where you tend to lose so many things, body language that come into play when you are teaching a language.” She felt those elements “might be hard to transfer that via the computer” (Gloria, pre interview, June 2018). When she was asked about her challenges in the post interview, she said technology because at times they “had a poor connection.” At the same time, because she did not name this as the basic challenge of her teaching experience, she showed she could deal with unknown components.

Similarly, in the pre-interview, Angela said online teaching might be a challenge since she is a hands-on interactive teacher and she worried that being on a computer screen would prevent her from giving an effective lesson (Angela, pre-interview, June 2018). Still, in her final journals or in the post interview, she never mentioned this as a challenge.

Grace did not see the online environment as impeding her ability to teach, but she was more concerned about “technological challenges,” such as like spotty Wi-Fi especially on their part” (Grace, pre-interview, June 2018). However, in the post interview, she brought it up as a significant challenge, “It took me a while to learn how to do the screen sharing and how to play the videos for her that I was trying to play in that lesson was a challenge sometimes.” She added that sometimes her student couldn’t see her “comments in Word” and so she would share her screen and then they couldn't see each other (Grace, post interview, August 2018).

A similar concern about the functionality of online teaching was brought up by Tina. Even though Tina did not mention online teaching as an anticipated challenge, she later said she missed many hands-on activities. “Although we are provided a digital whiteboard,” she said, “it’s not the same as an in-class whiteboard.” She also said she wanted her “tutee to write his answers” but instead he had “to transfer what he wrote in the chat” (“Tina reflection journal 3,” 2018).

Technology was less intimidating for other participants. Ashley seemed the most comfortable person with the online teaching component since she approached it not as a threat but as a new experience. While she said it was “hard not being in a classroom” she “learned that a different experience isn’t always a bad one.” In fact, she said, “I’m really enjoying trying something new” (“Ashley reflection journal 4”, 2018).

As opposed to other participants who had not taught online, Emily had taught in a different, asynchronous (not simultaneous way) online setting in which she could not see her student. Like Ashley, she was open to this new experience. She said she “didn't really like the format of the other one,” so she was “excited to learn about using this format especially with the face-to-face interaction” (Emily, pre-interview, June 2018). She even had a sense of humor about her challenges in her post-interview, saying, “I'm just somehow inept in that department and we actually started making jokes about it . . . I mean zoom is straightforward and somehow I still managed to mess it up [Laughter]” (Emily, post interview, July 2018). Similarly, except for some spotty internet connections, Sophia did not describe online teaching as a challenge.

Summary of Research question 1b: Tolerating ambiguity

Table 5

Participants' tolerance for ambiguity

	Sophia	Emily	Olivia	Carol	Linda	Angela	Gloria	Ashley	Tina	Grace
Student's gender/ Cultural Interaction/ Students' background	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Online Teaching	○	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗

Note. Meanings of Symbols: ✓=demonstrated ✗= not demonstrated ○=no data

The interviews and the reflection journals helped narrow down what created ambiguity for the participants. Some “threats” for the participants before they started were “lack of sufficient cues” about the gender, culture, and background of the students they would tutor. While this initially caused some nervousness and uneasiness, after six weeks, they all stated that they managed to deal with the uncertainty successfully.

Still, even when there were no specific questions, online tutoring emerged in the data. Except for one, no tutor had experience with online teaching, and this created some ambiguity. Some participants mentioned online tutoring as challenging and less effective than teaching in person. However, later on, they all highlighted that they felt more comfortable teaching online. At the same time, even though online teaching was not described as a challenge for two participants at the beginning, they mentioned it as a challenge in the final stages. Two other participants described online teaching as “desirable.”

Research Question 1-c: How and to what extent do pre-service ESL teachers become culturally and linguistically aware during the tutoring process?

The third question in the pre-interview (Appendix D) and post-interview (Appendix E), and the journal questions of 4-9 (Appendix B) offered insights into the research question 1-c by shedding light into the tutors' linguistic and cultural experiences. The data revealed that all participants had linguistic and cultural awareness to some extent during their six-week online tutoring sessions. Linguistic awareness and cultural awareness were the pre-set codes to answer this question.

Linguistic awareness: The curriculum that was uploaded on the Schoology platform integrated different aspects of language teaching, including grammar, vocabulary, speaking, listening, and writing skills. This curriculum was also open to adjustments based on the needs of the students. The data indicated that the linguistic awareness of the preservice ESL teachers occurred mostly during the teaching of grammar, vocabulary, and speaking.

Linda said she became aware of the difficulty of teaching English grammar because, according to her, even if you know the correct form of something, explaining it to someone else can be “tricky.” She said, “I may know why something ‘sounds’ or ‘seems’ right, but I may not know how to explain the rule for it” (“Linda reflection journal 3,” 2018). It seemed that as a native speaker, Linda implicitly knew what was right or wrong but could not clearly explain the reason behind it.

Similarly, Gloria emphasized her years of experiences as a teacher but she still increased her awareness about her first language, English, throughout this experience. She pointed out the implicit and explicit knowledge of a language for native speakers:

I came into this with an extensive background. And yet, I have learned so much. I have always believed that just because you speak the language, it doesn't mean you can teach it. And even though I have learned (and relearned) so much about my first language these past few weeks, it has made me realize how much more I need to learn. ("Gloria reflection journal 5," 2018)

Sophia shared this awareness of the implicit and explicit aspects of language and described how it was hard to logically explain how the language was used in a rational way. "What they're saying is not wrong but that's not how it's being said in the United States." (Sophia, post-interview, August 2018). She realized that people who learned English outside the United States apply their own first language structure into English. Sophia also highlighted how culture shapes our world view and described the semantic awareness of the language. For example, when she and her student were working on compound-complex sentences, she said they were separating the parts of sentences based on their meaning but had really hard time on deciding on how to separate it because of the different perceptions of the word "flooding". She said:

You're not sure which end you should cut it or separate it and sometimes it makes complete sense even though you did it wrong way. . . It's hard to even explain it because how she sees it is grammatically correct . . . I think we're talking about flooding. So when I say as a flooding word by itself it cannot be anything good it's a negative all the time but in the sentence she sees flooding as something good. It is how she cut it. It was a weird paraphrasing. We spent like 30 minutes on arguing where to cut it so that was a little difficult. (Sophia, post interview, August 2018)

Emily also mentioned how different it is to know a language and to know *about* a language. She said, “I have realized that there are far more specific points to explain the many nuances of the English language, than I ever imagined,” and she realized she understood these nuances because she’s a native speaker (“Emily, reflection journal 3,” 2018). She also emphasized the importance of explaining these nuances, especially to older students. In fact, her awareness extended beyond the English language to other languages as well. She made comparisons between Dari, Arabic, Spanish, and English based on what she learned from her student:

I learned that my tutee’s language, Dari, is very different from Arabic, despite the fact that nearly the same alphabet is used. When you think about it, this makes perfect sense. For example, Spanish uses nearly all the same letters as English, but that does not mean that a Spanish speaker would automatically understand English or vice versa. (“Emily reflection journal 5,” 2018)

Similarly, Olivia explained how she searched for the native language of her student and compared it to English to understand the difficulties he had with relative clauses. She said relative clauses were a continuous problem because of the interference of his first language, “So it was kind of interesting to see the correlation between the issues he had with English was corresponding with other speakers of his language have had” (Olivia, post interview, August 2018).

Linguistic awareness also showed itself for Ashley in her daily use of language. She said she realized how often she was using slang and idioms and tried to reduce them so she did not confuse her student. So she could be more clear, she began to focus on reducing her “use of idioms, phrases, and slang” because she would “use these a lot!” (“Ashley journal 4,” 2018).

Tina also realized how hard the language grammar was, especially English grammar, “I’ve never thought of the details that exist into forming a grammatically correct sentence (“Tina reflection journal 3,” 2018). On the other hand, Angela, Grace, and Carol did not mention any linguistic awareness in their reflections or interviews.

Cultural awareness: Even though the term cultural awareness is used in many intercultural competence contexts, it is not clearly defined in the literature (Osula & Irvin, 2009). So it seems helpful to define cultural awareness before presenting the results under this theme. Osula and Irvin (2009) described three different levels of cultural awareness: a) general cultural awareness b) cultural self-awareness and c) situation specific awareness. Below are the definitions they adapted from other scholars.

- a) General cultural awareness: “the basic ways of learning that behavior and ways of thinking and perceiving are culturally conditioned rather than being universal aspects of human nature” (Hoopes & Pusch, 1981, p. 7).
- b) Cultural self-awareness: “Cultural self-awareness is an individual’s metacognitive understanding of culture’s influence on the self” (Lu & Wan, 2018, p. 823)
- c) Situation specific awareness: “awareness is the ability to accurately judge a cultural situation from both one’s own and the other’s cultural viewpoint” (Pedersen, 2000, p. 4).

The data showed that except for one participant, all participants mentioned the cultural awareness for at least at one of the three levels stated above.

For example, Olivia stated that the topic of the first session triggered discussion about the comparison of the personal space in Afghan and American culture. She said they had many discussions based on the topic of “Greetings,” and she learned how this behavior was culturally conditioned; she also learned “how the Afghan concept of respecting personal space is different

than how we see it in the United States” (“Olivia reflection journal 1,” 2018). After completing the six sessions, she indicated being aware of her lack of cultural knowledge and wanting to learn more about the Afghan culture:

I feel like I definitely have a severe lack of knowledge of that region of the world, even now. But having that relationship and having this knowledge I do have makes me feel slightly less embarrassed, but makes me aware that it’s a thing I have to continue to be curious about. (Olivia, post interview, August 2018)

Emily also developed cultural awareness by realizing how the family structures are culturally conditioned and distinct from the United States. She found it is a more common thing that men in the family hang around or go for a trip together rather than doing these activities with female members of the family. She noticed the “men would go and do something together as a group” and that it “didn't- even within families- seem to be as mixed as it is ” in the States (Emily, post interview, July 2018).

By comparing American culture with Afghan culture, Carol was surprised to find out so many similarities. She said she was “grateful” to “meet a person from a culture that was so different” and yet to “find common ground (“Carol reflection journal 5,” 2018). Tina, who had experience with Afghan immigrants in the United States, was surprised to discover that women’s role in Afghan society was different than she imagined, “The people that I met here don't have education and they never worked, so I always thought women are not allowed to work and they're supposed to stay home but that was not the case (Tina, post interview, July 2018). Like Tina, Grace indicated that she realized that Afghanistan has changed culturally for the last decades, and she compared her student’s circumstances with the Afghan refugee woman she had worked with:

I can see there is more opportunity for girls at least in Kabul than there was 15-20 years ago even. Clearly the educational opportunities for girls have gotten better and I wasn't really sure how much. She's very fortunate because I think there's a lot more opportunity and a lot more freedom. (Grace, post-interview, August 2018)

Similar to Carol and Tina's experiences, Sophia acknowledged that all the things she learned about Afghan culture and people contradicted her prior knowledge, so the whole experience was eye-opening, "Having sessions with her completely changed my whole perspective on people in Afghanistan and what I believed was happening over there . . . it was totally opposite actually. It was amazing" (Sophia, post-interview, August 2018).

Linda similarly said she learned about the perception of punctuality in Afghan culture when her student was late to the first and second session. When she was confused and not sure if her student would show up to the session, the assistant manager of Pax Populi in Afghanistan told her that it was normal to be a little late in Afghan culture. She said, "This reassured me, because I had been concerned about my student not being ready on time" ("Linda reflection journal 2," 2018).

Contrary to participants who mentioned their general cultural awareness and cultural self-awareness above, others had more situation-specific awareness. For example, according to Angela religious practice in Ramadan was very interesting to her and she was impressed by her student's commitment to his religious and cultural traditions:

The fact that they fast for hours and then they wake up by like 2:00 in the morning to eat is mind blowing. I don't think I could wake up at 2:00 in the morning to eat a bunch of food after being hungry for so long. What was more interesting to me was the fact that he was just so passionate about it and that was something that he just truly like genuinely

looked forward to. I would not have happy feelings about that, but he was very genuine and it just shows how much he values his religion and these cultural traditions. (Angela, post-interview, July 2018)

Tina discovered that listening to songs were not appropriate for some people in Afghanistan during Ramadan. When she mentioned that she was doing one of the exercises on the Schoology in which the student listens to the song and fills in the blanks, she said, “I wish I had not done the song activity.” She thought it would not be a problem for her student but he was against it because it was Ramadan. She continued, “Once I saw he was uncomfortable, I asked him the reason and stopped the song and focused on sentence practice” (“Tina reflection journal 2”, 2018). Tina negotiated this ambiguity because she did not expect this but was respectful to her student’s culture and religious practices.

Likewise, Grace gained awareness of how some specific topics were perceived differently in different cultures. She said that in one of her sessions she and her student had a discussion about the impact of plastic pollution and the proper role of government is in this, “I was truly curious to know more about what she thought. I find that different cultures see the responsibility of government or individuals for solving these kinds of problems quite differently sometimes (“Grace reflection journal 2,” 2018).

The other participants did not mention any specific awareness, but they did comment on learning about more specific things like Afghan scholars and the school system. For example, Emily said that she learned that in Afghanistan, “those who attend high school, typically finish around age 19! Despite all the unfortunate turmoil that is ravaging the country right now, many still have the same aspirations as high school students elsewhere” (“Emily reflection journal 5,” 2018).

Gloria also talked about being educated by her tutee, “I really knew nothing about Rumi . . . So we talked a little bit about his poetry and I had no idea such an enlightened man came from that... you know” (Gloria, post interview, July 2018). However, she still wanted to learn more about the gender issues in particular, “I learned a little bit more of course by talking with him about Afghan culture, but still I don't really know what's going on with women in that country and it still concerns me” (Gloria, post interview, July 2018). In other words, although Gloria developed some cultural awareness, she was not completely satisfied with the things she learned about Afghan culture, especially about the women’s status in society.

Impact of Online Teaching in Linguistic and Cultural Awareness

Before ending this section, it is important to mention the influence of online teaching on the cultural and linguistic awareness of the pre-service ESL teachers. The data of the participants indicated how online interaction might be different from the face to face interaction.

For example, Olivia believed she could understand her student’s behavior better if he was in a classroom with his other peers. As she explained it, “As you are constantly face-to-face it’s hard not to actively observe, yet, this situation also keeps subtle nuances hidden.” She elaborated that during the tutoring sessions, her student made no facial change when he did not understand something and instead asked for clarification later on. She reflected, “I am sure if he was put in a classroom dynamic with peers I would be able to read his body language better as he interacts with peers and is surrounded in a comfortable setting” (“Olivia reflection journal 3”, 2018). Moreover, she felt that face-to-face interaction during the online sessions did not “encourage freedom of expression, as much,” which might have impacted their intercultural interaction and understanding. Olivia attributed this situation directly to the online aspect as opposed to the cultural behavioral norms of her student, even though it might have been either one.

Emily also touched on how body language can be lost in online communication and she believed in-person interaction is more comfortable than the online interaction. She noticed “some nuances of body language that can be lost online.” She also emphasized how poor audio quality made it hard to hear her student from time to time, “which is very important for what we are doing” (“Emily reflection journal 3,” 2018).

Like Emily, Angela highlighted the importance of hearing the student clearly, especially while teaching a language. She said “When it comes to learning a new language you want to be able to hear each other clearly and speak clearly and doing that over a computer that's thousands and thousands of miles away is not always as efficient” (Angela, post interview, July 2018). Sophia mentioned a similar concern saying she had hard time interpreting the facial expressions because of the bad connection, “First, I was trying to read her facial expressions but because of the bad connection, her face was frozen on my screen” (“Sophia journal reflections 3,” 2018).

Summary of Research question 1c: Linguistic and Cultural awareness

Table 6

Participants' linguistic and cultural awareness

	Sophia	Emily	Olivia	Carol	Linda	Angela	Gloria	Ashley	Tina	Grace
Linguistic Awareness	✓	✓	✓	○	✓	○	✓	✓	✓	○
Cultural Awareness	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	○	✓	✓

Note. Meanings of Symbols: ✓=demonstrated ✗= not demonstrated ○=no data

The data showed that seven of the participants experienced linguistic awareness on grammatical, lexical, or semantic aspects of the English language. This linguistic awareness showed itself as 1) the implicit and explicit knowledge (awareness of the distinction of knowing

a language versus knowing about a language), 2) daily language awareness (awareness of the frequency of slang and idioms) and 3) cultural semantic awareness (awareness of how the perception of a word might change based on the culture).

Except for one, each of the participants mentioned some sort of cultural awareness or cultural learning in their journals. Some participants were surprised to find so many similarities, some became aware of their own lack of knowledge about the Afghan culture, and some had conflict with the stereotypes they had in mind and found the experience very eye opening. Even though two participants did not specifically mention an increased cultural awareness, they certainly increased their knowledge of Afghan culture, scholars, or school systems.

Eight of the participants acquired linguistic and cultural awareness and specific knowledge by asking questions and listening. Three of the participants said they tried to observe the behavior of their students but online teaching was not convenient for acquisition of knowledge through observation.

Research Question 1-d: To what extent do pre-service ESL teachers develop their empathy skills and become more flexible after completing a six-week online tutoring?

The second questions in the pre-interview and the post interview (Appendix D, E) and the journal questions of 4-7-8-10 (Appendix B) provided data that helped explore the tutors' empathy and flexibility skills. The data revealed that some tutors developed their empathy and adaptability skills to some extent during their six-week online tutoring sessions. Empathy and adaptability/flexibility were the pre-set codes under the theme of internal outcome.

Empathy: According to Zhu (2011), "The empathy in foreign language learning and intercultural communication is what we call intercultural empathy, which means placing himself into the cultural background of the target language and being able to effectively communicate his

understanding of that world” (p. 116). Zhu (2011) also added, “Empathy leads us not only to experience the feelings of another but also to reflect on those feelings and compare them to our own” (p. 117). Based on this definition, the following paragraphs offer important insights into the participants’ data.

Emily’s feeling of empathy showed itself more in understanding the challenges of speaking a foreign language, “I shared some of my own personal experiences with my tutee about my own struggles while learning to speak a second language and stressed the fact that making mistakes is the only way we can learn new things” (“Emily reflection journal 5,” 2018). Since some of the tutoring sessions overlapped with Ramadan weeks in Afghanistan, participants like Olivia felt empathy for being hungry and thirsty all day in summer time. She said in one of the sessions her student was wiping his face with a handkerchief. When she asked what was wrong, her student said the air conditioner was broken. She explained how she felt for her student when he learned about this situation, “That must be such an uncomfortable thing on top of that fasting and everything” and added that her student did not bring it up as an issue or problem “...but I imagine it would have, even if he didn’t admit it like being in an air unconditioned room sometimes not having water or anything that is like not the best situation” (Olivia, post-interview, August 2018). Olivia tried to understand her students’ feelings when he was fasting on a very hot day when the air conditioner was not working.

Grace also wanted to understand more about her student’s feeling during the fasting practice by asking questions such as religion, “It was Ramadan and I asked her if she was tired, hungry, etc. I asked her if she found it hard to concentrate on her studies when she is fasting” (“Grace reflection journal 2,” 2018). Grace also believed it was crucial to ask about her student’s health and safety considering the chaos in Afghanistan, “I always begin each session asking

about her week and about her family. I think that this is especially important given the unstable and unsafe living conditions for most people in Afghanistan (“Grace reflection journal 4,” 2018).

When Sophia learned her student spent the whole year with only one pencil, she tried to feel empathy and started thinking critically as she described the inequality of opportunities in the United States and Afghanistan:

I felt really bad about it like because we see a lot of pencils just thrown away rolling everywhere. A lot of kids in here like ‘I want a cute pencil I don't want like yellow ones’ and some students don't have even a single yellow pencil. They have to keep it for a whole year to study. I mean it is just weird (Sophia, post interview, August 2018).

Likewise, Gloria was impressed by her student’s commitment to the tutoring sessions because he did not want to miss a session even during the Eid holiday, which is a very important religious celebration in Muslim world. She said, “I respect his work ethic and his goal of helping his country advance. As he told me, ‘it can only happen through education’”. Gloria also believed that as a result of growing up in a conflict zone, her student became more mature compared to her peers. She said, “It was hard to think of him as a teenager, his maturity belies his years. Growing up in a war-torn country will force you to grow up fast (“Gloria reflection journal 1,” 2018).

On the other hand, Tina, Ashley, and Angela indicated it was hard for them to feel empathy for their students. Tina had some difficulty understanding what these tutoring sessions meant to her student as well as looking at education from his perspective. She mentioned how dedicated her student was to come to classes at 5:00 a.m. every week to learn English and she said, “I would never do that to learn English” (Tina, post-interview, July 2018). Like Tina,

Ashley admitted it was hard for her to really understand what her student had been going through. She said her student has “very strong world view” and he was involved in many peacebuilding and refugee organizations as a passion of his life. She tried to empathize with her student at this point but realized how hard it was for her to put herself in her student’s shoes:

I’ve never been involved in organizations that he’s involved with. I think it’s because this has never been an obstacle for me. A lot of the worries that my student holds are things I have no experience with and barely understand. (“Ashley reflection journal 2,” 2018)

Angela also had a hard time empathizing with someone living in a conflict zone. She was surprised to see that her tutee did not talk about anything related to the war or living conditions in a war zone. She said “I couldn't imagine living in war ridden country and the fact that that wasn't a concern that he felt enough to verbalize, I'm sure it's a concern” Still, realizing that her student could continue his daily life as normal was rewarding: “It made me happy to think that he's still able to go about his daily life and not let that affect him his lifestyle” (Angela, post-interview, July 2018).

Carol and Linda did not mention anything related to making empathy in her journals or interviews.

Flexibility: Deardorff (2004) defined the term flexibility as “selecting and using appropriate communication styles and behaviors; cognitive flexibility” (p. 196). The data showed that participants’ flexibility occurred in two different ways: instructional flexibility (flexibility on the academic content) and flexibility on the behaviors of the preservice ESL teachers.

Instructional flexibility. Most of the participants were flexible enough to make changes to the curriculum based on their students’ needs. For instance, Ashley said the lessons on the Schoology were not suitable for her students’ level of proficiency and she rarely used the

resources in there. She said, “When he mentioned that my test questions were too easy, I immediately went to google and found an alternate website to use that was more credible” (“Ashley, reflection journal 4,” 2018).

Grace also said she did not use the Schoology resources since they did not meet the needs of her student. She said she started the first meeting with the lesson plans provided by Pax Populi but then she realized these lessons were too basic to meet her needs. She said, “After that, I molded our sessions to meet her needs . . . She needs significant help to reach that level in her writing and speaking” (“Grace reflection journal 4,” 2018).

Like Ashley and Grace, Carol showed the flexibility to adjust her lesson plans. For Carol, the reason why she was flexible was not the proficiency level of her student but the learning interests and the “cultural perspective” of her student:

He said he wants to learn grammar and English conversation, specifically for travel and work advancement. I try to keep this in mind when going through our lessons, doing my best to imagine what he might need and how from his particular cultural perspective.

(“Carol reflection journal 4,” 2018)

As in Carol’s situation, Olivia’s student also wanted to improve his English on specific topics like “trade and global business” therefore Olivia thought “finding a TED talk on this topic would be more appropriate” (“Olivia reflection journal 2,” 2018). Angela was another participant that showed flexibility in designing her lessons. She said “As I get to know more about Hamdullah, I want to be able to incorporate any personal interests, hobbies, likes, etc. into our tutoring sessions” (“Angela reflection journal 1,” 2018). Angela wanted to make her lessons more personalized to have more “engaging” and “relevant” sessions that he could “apply his English skills outside of the classroom”.

Linda and Gloria also said that they changed the curriculum based on their students' needs, "I do tend to adjust my approach depending on many factors including personalities, learning styles, cultural backgrounds, abilities etc." ("Linda reflection journal 4," 2018). Likewise, Gloria was ready to make changes on the curriculum even after the first session, "In our next session, I will ask him if he has specific goals. What does he wish to get out of these tutoring sessions with me? What does he want to work on, to practice to learn?" ("Gloria journal reflection 1," 2018). As a result, adapting the content of the lessons based on the students' needs was one form of flexibility that the data revealed.

Behavioral flexibility. In addition to the academic flexibility that was observed in the data, behavioral flexibility resonated in the interviews and reflection journals. For instance, Olivia stated that she expected her student to show more curiosity by asking questions or bringing questions to the session but when that did not happen, she changed her approach, "I didn't expect him to bring anything to the lesson other than something that I asked him to do, which is fine. It was just something I needed to adjust a little bit" (Olivia, post interview, August 2018). Likewise, Carol stated that she was able to go with the flow based on her student's comfort level:

I try to pay attention to how my student responds to me and go with the flow, especially in one-on-one tutoring situations. I think I am pretty good at catching on to my student's communication style and following along, letting my student take the lead so that he/she is comfortable in the tutoring session. ("Carol journal reflection 4," 2018)

Carol was also flexible and adjusted the tutoring session to late at night, "The time difference was also quite challenging, since my brain is not as spry at 10:30 at night than it is during the

day, but I was able to handle it without any significant issues” (“Carol, journal reflection 5,” 2018).

Ashley’s tutoring sessions were very early in the morning and despite the hot weather, she paid attention to dress appropriately for her student’s culture:

In the last few hot weeks, I’ve wanted to just roll out of bed in a tank top for my video conferences; however, I knew that wouldn’t be professionally appropriate and even culturally appropriate so that is one thing I made sure that I didn’t do. (“Ashley reflection journal 5,” 2018)

Linda said she realized that she was speaking quickly and with a lot of animation and her student was “not responding to it in the way that American students might; he seemed like he may have felt uncomfortable, and he certainly didn’t communicate that way”. She said when she noticed this she “made more of an effort to speak more slowly and a little more calmly” because she was not sure about “what his cultural view of that communication style is, or if teachers are expected to speak a certain way”. It seemed like changing her communication style with her student worked since she said “he was more receptive when I changed my communication, though” (“Linda reflection journal 4,” 2018). Similarly, Tina said she adjusted her speech and vocabulary to make the communication easier for her student, “I always remember to speak slowly and speak in student friendly vocabulary” (“Tina reflection journal 4”, 2018).

The teacher-student relationship was different from what Emily was used to, as her student’s manner and even his outfit was very formal. She said “He was dressed like really formally and like his mannerism was very formal”. However, this was not something she expected and she said she tried to “calm that down a little bit” because her approach to this tutoring experience was different than his. She thought her student might be perceiving this

tutoring like “a teacher-student situation where I was kind of like you're just my tutor”. As a solution to this different approach to the tutoring experience, she concluded that “My comfortable space might be different than his. So, I was trying to give him a little room” (Emily, post-interview, July 2018). She explained how they compromised just before she was ready to be flexible and sacrifice her style by being more formal to make him more comfortable. But then she said, “the second or definitely the third lesson it was like the more we talked the more comfortable I could tell that he was” (Emily, post interview, July 2018). It seemed like both sides were flexible to meet half way on this.

Summary of Research question 1d: Empathy and Flexibility

Table 7

Participants' empathy and flexibility skills

	Sophia	Emily	Olivia	Carol	Linda	Angela	Gloria	Ashley	Tina	Grace
Empathy	✓	✓	✓	○	○	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓
Flexibility	○	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Note. Meanings of Symbols: ✓=demonstrated ✗= not demonstrated ○=no data

While two participants did not mention anything related to empathy, five of the participants mentioned how they felt or tried to empathize with their students. The participants tried to understand the feelings of their students based on what education meant to them, living in a conflict zone, their religious practices in Ramadan, limited resources, and the use of English as a foreign language. Three of the participants said that they had difficulty understanding their students' worries and why they were trying so hard for their education despite living in a conflict zone.

But even when they struggled to empathize, the tutors still tried to maintain flexibility. This flexibility was observed mostly on the academic content. Seven participants were happy to make changes on the content of their lessons based on what their students wanted to work on. Seven participants asked their students what they wanted to work on and searched for videos and other resources apart from the curriculum to integrate their students' interests into the lessons. As for the behavioral flexibility, six participants showed behavioral flexibility that appeared in time accommodation (adjusting to the student's time constraints), clothing adaptation (appropriate to the student's culture or sense of formality), and communication style (speaking calmly and slowly). Sophia did not mention any form of flexibility in her reflection journals or interviews.

Summary of the Findings

This study aimed to explore how teaching English to students in Afghanistan for six-week online contributed to the intercultural competence of preservice ESL teachers. The findings of this qualitative research demonstrated that pre-service ESL teachers developed their intercultural competence based on the components suggested by Deardorff (2004) such as openness to explore another culture, feeling empathy, being flexible, becoming linguistically and culturally aware, and tolerating ambiguity. Even though the participants provided more data on some components than the others, considering that intercultural competence development is a continuous progress and individuals can "enter" this process from different stages (Deardorff, 2004), clear themes emerged in the data, suggesting that this online experience enhanced the teachers' cultural competence.

All participants indicated interest and openness to explore the Afghan culture, except for two participant who had prior experience with the Afghan people. Participants explored the Afghan culture through asking questions, listening and observing even though three participants

mentioned the negative effects of online teaching on their ability to observe. Also, two of the participants who were interested in learning more about Afghan culture emphasized their nervousness and concerns on asking culturally inappropriate questions or being misunderstood.

Six of the participants mentioned the negative impact of media on their ability to withhold judgements at the beginning. On the other hand, they stated in their final journals and post interviews that these pre-judgments disappeared by the end of six weeks.

Working with a student from the opposite gender, culturally appropriate communication, not having enough information about the students' background and online teaching created some ambiguity for the participants. The assumption of Muslim people cannot work with someone from the opposite gender and not knowing about the cultural behavioral norms raised concerns about making their students uncomfortable or offending them. The data showed that the discomfort caused by these ambiguous situations disappeared after the initial sessions. On the other hand, lack of information about the students they worked with did not cause any negative feelings for the tutors. As for the ambiguity of online tutoring, it caused some discomfort for the tutors as well.

Linguistic awareness showed itself as implicit and explicit knowledge of the language, comparison of the students' first language and English and sociolinguistic awareness. Likewise, cultural awareness was demonstrated by the participants in different ways; general cultural awareness, cultural self-awareness and situation specific awareness. Four of the participants mentioned that online tutoring interfered the way of developing linguistic and cultural awareness because of the limitation on the freedom of expression, lack of body language and bad audio and video quality that might cause misunderstandings.

The data revealed that participants felt empathy for their students for fasting in Ramadan,

speaking another language, safety and living in a war torn country. Likewise, flexibility appeared in the data in two different forms: instructional flexibility and behavioral flexibility. While instructional flexibility involved lesson and content adjustment based on the students' needs, behavioral flexibility was about communication style (taking the lead), student/teacher roles, appropriate clothing and adjustment of the biological clock.

As a result, the basic components of intercultural competence development were demonstrated by the participants in various forms. The impact of the online teaching on this development was brought up by some participants throughout the six weeks. The following chapter will discuss the emerging themes in relation with the literature in detail.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter Overview

This chapter consists of five sections. The first section summarizes the previous chapters and reiterates the need, purpose, conceptual framework, and methodology that were detailed in Chapter I and III. The second section discusses the findings in chapter IV in relation to the research questions and the review of literature in Chapter II. The third section draws conclusions from these findings. The fourth section includes recommendations for future practice and research before offering concluding remarks.

Summary of the Study

With an increasing number of immigrants and refugees in the United States and all over the world, classrooms are more diverse than ever (Hersi & Watkinson, 2012; Miller, Kostogriz & Gearon, 2009). As they enter mainstream classrooms, students from war zones might be dealing with both traumatic problems and culture shock (Ambe, 2006; Goodwin, 2002). In addition to that, many of these students feel discriminated against by their peers and teachers (Moinolnolki & Han, 2017). Therefore, in order to help these students with the acculturation process, teachers should be capable of effectively reaching out to these students to enable them succeed in the classroom (Friedlander, 1991; Hersi & Watkinson, 2012; Pryor, 2001).

This cross cultural communication becomes more important for ESL teachers who have more culturally diverse students than mainstream teachers (Nelson, 1998). Effective ESL teachers not only provide support to improve the English language proficiency of newly arrived immigrants and refugees but also they help these students transition into the new culture.

However, studies show that most teachers feel nervous before interacting with students who are culturally diverse (Diller & Moule, 2005; Futernick, 2007). Even though a majority of teacher education programs offer courses for intercultural learning at the cognitive level, they often do not provide real life experiences with students from diverse backgrounds (He, 2013; Gay, 2013; Pedersen, 1994). Moreover, studies show that acquiring knowledge about a culture alone does not guarantee successful communication with people of different cultures (He, 2013; Rodenborg & Boisen, 2013; Pedersen, 1994) . That is why experiential learning helps with effective intercultural communication (He, 2013; Jin, Cooper & Golding, 2016; Sinicrope et al., 2007). For example, it is crucial that teacher training programs provide opportunities for hands on experiences with culturally diverse students during the pre-service years (He, 2013; Keengwe, 2010; Sinicrope et al., 2007). Teacher education programs that are aware of this need often introduce different experiential projects to pre-service teachers such as service learning, field projects, and study abroad programs (Wong, Indiatsi & Wong, 2016; Wurr, 2013). However, few of them work with students from war zones, especially since the logistical difficulties and safety concerns make it so difficult to implement these programs.

One option to negotiate these logistical and safety challenges is online tutoring that allows quick and easy access to any part of the world including the war zones. Given the fact that the majority of displaced people are from conflict zones (Beaubien, 2017; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2016), it is inevitable that teachers will have students from war or post war countries in their classrooms at some point. If pre-service ESL teachers have prior experience with people from these countries, they will likely to feel comfortable when they communicate with these students (Medina-López-Portillo, 2014) . Therefore, if online collaborations can offer hands-on experiences in teacher training programs, then pre-service ESL

teacher can communicate with students from different parts of the world before these students enter their classrooms. In other words, this multicultural online experience with diverse students during their pre-service years can initiate the teacher's intercultural competence development (Lazar, 2015; O'Dowd, 2007).

Even though there has been much research about the development of intercultural competence through online interaction and collaboration, most of these studies have looked at asynchronous communication, such as emails, blogs, forums, or social media. For the research studies about synchronous communication, they have mostly been limited to people out of conflict zones, which has also limited the number of studies on this topic. This study, therefore, aimed to fill the gap in the research regarding the development of intercultural competence in pre-service teachers who taught English to students from a war zone in an online environment.

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of teaching English online on pre-service ESL teachers' intercultural competence development through the lens of the process model of intercultural competence framework (Deardorff, 2006b). Data on this six-week tutoring were collected through interviews and reflection journals from ten pre-service ESL teachers. These teachers were all enrolled in a TESOL master's program in three different universities in the United States. Before the teachers started tutoring, the researcher interviewed them to learn about their expectations. Throughout the six weeks, the researcher collected five journals that included some of Berardo and Deardorff's (2012) teacher reflection questions. The researcher received permission from Dr. Deardorff to use these reflection questions for the purpose of this study. After the participants completed the sixth session, the researcher conducted a post-interview with the participants.

The data was collected and arranged according to the following research questions:

1. How does the experience of online teaching English as a foreign language to students from Afghanistan for six weeks contribute to the development of the intercultural competence of pre-service ESL teachers?
 - a. To what extent are pre-service ESL teachers open to explore another culture?
 - b. To what extent are pre-service ESL teachers able to tolerate ambiguity?
 - c. How and to what extent do pre-service ESL teachers become culturally and linguistically aware during the tutoring process?
 - d. To what extent do pre-service ESL teachers develop their empathy skills and become more flexible after completing six-week online tutoring?

After the data analysis, certain themes were recognized. Themes related to openness, tolerating ambiguity, linguistic and cultural awareness, empathy, and flexibility were coded to answer the above research questions. These themes fit Deardorff's (2006b) framework. Deardorff (2004) conducted a Delphi study with 23 experts in higher education to arrive a consensus on the definition and assessment of intercultural competence. From the results of this Delphi study, fifteen components emerged from under four broad categories. Some of these components are attitudes, knowledge, skills, internal outcomes, and external outcomes. Following Deardorff's (2006b) framework, the themes of this study remained within these components of the process model of intercultural competence development. Online tutoring and pre-service teachers' comfort level were the emergent themes that were out of the framework.

For the credibility and trustworthiness of the data analysis, besides checking with the participants by sending the interview transcripts and theme categories for their confirmation, the researcher also worked with two debriefers from two universities who were experienced in the

field. The researcher created an electronic document so they could work together and exchange ideas about the themes. The researcher also had two face to face meetings with the debriefers to clarify how the categories of the emerging themes related to the research questions.

After this qualitative analysis and data verification, the findings revealed that in six weeks, the pre-service ESL teachers developed the skills that necessary for a successful intercultural communication suggested by Deardorff (2004). The data showed that this experience contributed mostly to linguistic and cultural awareness and flexibility of pre-service ESL teachers. It is important to note that emergent themes from the data also revealed that online aspect of this experience had some negative impact on the ambiguity tolerance and observation skill during the acquisition of linguistic and cultural knowledge.

Discussion

Research Question 1: To what extent are pre-service ESL teachers open to explore another culture?

Research question 1 explored how open the pre-service ESL teachers were to explore the culture of their Afghan students. Openness is a term that has been used in intercultural competence frameworks such as Byram (1997), Deardorff (2006b), Hunter (2004), and Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998). Being open to explore another culture is grouped under the umbrella of attitudes, which is considered a prerequisite of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006a). In other words, openness is directly related to attitudes, as it “refers one’s attitudes to new thinking” (Davis & Cho, 2005, p.5).

Before the participants started working online with Afghan students, it was important to identify their initial attitudes about Afghan people and culture. As Lynch and Hanson (1998) states, “After all the books have been read and the skills learned and practiced, the cross-cultural

effectiveness of each of us will vary,” especially by what “we bring to the learning than by what we have learned” (p. 510). Therefore, to learn more about what the teachers brought to the study, the researcher asked questions about their assumptions, pre-judgements, expectations, and eagerness to their students’ background (in the pre-interview and in journal 1). The data revealed that they started this experience with openness to learn more about Afghan culture. Out of ten participants, eight specifically stated that they were excited to learn more about Afghan culture. The two participants who did not express interest in exploring another culture had previous experience with Afghan people in the United states and perhaps thought that they already knew the culture. Tina’s statement in the post interview explains this situation better, “I started off the first session thinking that I knew everything about people in Afghanistan . . . but ending this session now with my student I actually found out I don't know anything about Afghanistan” (Tina, post interview, July 2018).

Three participants also stated that their knowledge of this culture had been limited to the media and the books. Ashley, Linda and Carol mentioned the negative effect of media on their perception of the Afghan culture and how it affected their ability to withhold judgements or avoid stereotyping. This situation supported Liu’s (2012) argument, as explained in the literature review, about the influence of media on the perception and feelings of people towards different cultures. Only four of the participants said they were able to withhold judgements until they got to know their students. On the other hand, six participants said they made assumptions about the Afghan people and culture before meeting their students. The teachers’ candor was interesting to observe since, as Diller and Moule (2005) found, “Often, these feelings remain unconscious and are brought to awareness only with great difficulty” (p. 30). However, most of the participants in

this study had an honest self-awareness about their perceptions, and they felt comfortable enough to share them with the researcher.

By the end of the six weeks, all the participants stated that what they learned through this tutoring experience conflicted with their previous assumptions, which changed their perception of the Afghan culture. The exception was Gloria. She said her student came from an educated household and she believed it was not the typical Afghan family. Diller and Moule (2005) described this kind of situation saying, “Human beings go to great lengths to avoid new evidence that is contrary to existing beliefs and prejudices. First they avoid situations in which old beliefs may be challenged or contrary information found” (p. 34). It was hard for Gloria to question her judgements with only one example which she thought of as an exception.

The researcher found emerging themes while analyzing the data to answer this question. One was the participants’ comfort level while they explored another culture. Some expressed ambivalence. Two participants who were interested in exploring the Afghan culture also felt uncomfortable since they did not know what kind of questions to ask and how to ask them. They worried about being misunderstood or presumptuous. Gloria and Ashley said they were not sure how to approach their students about their culture and worried about being misunderstood. This situation supports the argument that if teachers do not have enough knowledge and experience with a new culture, they will likely feel uncomfortable communicating with diverse students (Diller & Moule, 2005; Futernick, 2007).

Still, Tina’s situation was inconsistent with this argument. Even though Tina stated that she was “familiar with the culture” because of her prior experience with ten Afghan students, she felt nervous when she learned that her student was male, for she feared this would be culturally inappropriate. Gudykunst (2003) theorized that “people may be anxious about possible negative

consequences of the interaction,” so to interact more effectively, they should strive to “manage their anxiety and accurately predict and explain others’ attitudes, feelings and behavior” (p. 116). Predicting and understanding her students’ behavior was what Tina was doing. In the post-interview, she said, “I think that the more I spoke with my student and obviously, then I got more comfortable and I understood that he was just trying be very nice” (Tina, post interview, July 2018). Gloria and Ashley also stated that they felt more comfortable after a few sessions. Overall, the data revealed that majority of the participants started this experience with a mixture of openness, pre-judgement, and nervousness. At the end of the six weeks, each participant expressed an increased comfort level. All but one stated that their prejudgments disappeared.

In conclusion, the data showed that the eight pre-service ESL teachers were open to explore the Afghan culture despite their concerns about how to approach to their students. Some of these concerns included not knowing about the cultural norms such as the extent of disclosure or what questions were culturally appropriate to ask. However, as the teachers got to know their students, this anxiety abated. As mentioned in the literature review, if limited knowledge and assumptions are the reason for uncomfortable feelings, then, opportunities to overcome these feelings during the pre-service years should be provided (He, 2013; Sinicrope et al., 2007). Thus, this study supported this claim, for the participating teachers who mentioned their discomfort at the beginning overcame their discomfort after six weeks of getting to know the students.

Research Question 2: To what extent are pre-service ESL teachers able to tolerate ambiguity?

Deardorff (2004) stated that openness, respect (valuing all cultures), curiosity and discovery (tolerating ambiguity) are viewed as fundamental to intercultural competence (p. 193). Even though the term tolerating ambiguity has various definitions in the literature, the researcher

adapted the most commonly used definition from the seminal work of Budner (1962). Budner developed a scale to measure the responses to the ambiguous situations. He defined tolerating ambiguity as the tendency to interpret the ambiguous situations which lack sufficient cues as “sources of threat” or as “desirable” (Budner, 1962, p. 29-30).

The data indicated four situations that created ambiguity for the participants: difference in gender, culturally appropriate communication, the student’s background information, and online teaching.

The ambiguity for the gender of the students originated from the participants’ assumptions about the gender dynamics in Afghan culture. Before they started, they did not know the gender of the students they would work with but they assumed it would be culturally inappropriate to work with the opposite gender. Budner (1962) would interpret this as a “contradictory situation in which different elements or cues suggest different structures,” and thus a situation that would create ambiguity for the participants (p. 30). Tina, Linda and Olivia’s nervousness about working with the opposite gender indicated that they initially saw this contradictory situation as a “threat.” However, in the post-interviews, they said that everything went well and they felt uncomfortable for no reason. In other words, they seemed to have handled the ambiguous situation well.

Culturally appropriate communication was another dynamic that left the participants feeling they lacked enough cues. Following is the summary of the participants’ concerns in their sentences: “How personal do I get? Am I going to offend him by saying ...” (Gloria); “I have very little reference for what life is like for my tutee. . . I am afraid of offending my student...” (Carol); “I don’t know what to expect speaking to somebody from Afghanistan . . . I don’t wanna say anything that might be offensive...” (Ashley) and “Very small things can be very big for

students...I hope that I don't make weird, stupid mistakes ...” (Sophia). As mentioned in the literature review, teacher personality and perception development is possible only when they become aware of their prejudices and fears about certain groups (Mahon & Cushner, 2002; Ross 2008). This experience increased self-awareness about pre-service ESL teachers' reaction to the unknown situation and it helped them confront their fears about communicating with students from an unfamiliar culture. This situation supported O'Dowd's (2007) argument discussed in the literature review about how online communication can be useful to “confront and deal with the prejudices, stereotypes and myths” about other cultures (p. 29). As mentioned, as classrooms have become more culturally and linguistically diverse, ESL teachers need the tools to work with students from all around the world. So, this kind of self-awareness is crucial during the pre-service years. In this study, all ten pre-service teachers stated that they communicated with their students without any misunderstandings during the six weeks. Moreover, Gudykunst (2004) said that “As the relationships become more intimate, nevertheless, there should be a general pattern for uncertainty and anxiety to decrease” (p. 35). The feedback from these teachers indicated they each developed pattern of decreased anxiety within six weeks.

Another ambiguous situation for the participants was the lack of knowledge about the students' background. Gudykunst and Nishida (1986) stated that members of individualistic cultures search for person-based information about the people they meet for the first time to reduce uncertainty. The participants did not mention negative feelings about knowing little about their students but they did indicate curiosity. Their curiosity was primarily about their students' educational goals, motivations, and level of English proficiency. Also, since the topic of the first session was “introducing yourself” the teachers found more opportunities to ask questions and learn more about their students' backgrounds.

The logistics of teaching online also caused ambiguity. Merz (2016) stated that ambiguity involved “coping” with concepts such as “technology, religion, and law” (p. 37). Online teaching would therefore fit his definition of ambiguity. This study looked more deeply into this category, so it was not analyzing how the teachers negotiated online teaching as an instructional design but how they developed intercultural competence within the online environment.

As stated, only one of the participants had teaching experience online. However, this was her first time teaching synchronously, or face to face, so this created some ambiguity. Some other concerns about online teaching were stated as the unnatural feeling of talking, sound and video quality, poor internet connection, lack of body language, relying on facial expressions, the difficulty of working on different materials simultaneously, and challenges with hands-on activities. Some participants initially perceived online teaching as a “threat” but not later; some did not initially see it as a threat but did so in the final stages. Only two of the participants found online teaching desirable, new, and exciting.

Four participants complained that the video conferencing interfered their interaction with students. One can imagine how the misinterpretations of the facial expressions and the misunderstandings of language can be exacerbated by an unstable online connection. Carol, in her post interview, explained how this impacted her cultural understanding by making it harder to relate to her student:

I hadn't expected about teaching online was the challenge of being able to empathize and sympathize more with my student, I found to be more difficult across a screen instead of like being face to face and also it just kind of took away that automatic cultural understanding that I think happens a little bit better when you're in person and you're in the same place. (Carol, post interview, July 2018)

So it is important to recognize that online intercultural interaction should not be evaluated with the same criteria as in person interaction. All the concerns expressed by the participants can be related to Liu's (2012) statement mentioned in the literature review about the necessity of evaluating online communications different from "traditional cultural boundaries" (p. 274). Factors such as lack of body language, audio and video quality, use of online materials (like digital board, screen sharing), and the "unnatural" feeling described by some participants might hinder successful intercultural communication. As Liu (2012) states further research is needed to analyze the application of "traditional cultural boundaries" to online environment.

Nevertheless, even though various situations created ambiguity for the pre-service ESL teachers, they successfully completed the six-week of session without significant problems. Some situations created some discomfort at first, but the six-week tutoring experience created an opportunity for them to manage their uncomfortable feelings and to tolerate ambiguity, which are key skills in the development of intercultural competence.

Research Question 3: How and to what extent do pre-service ESL teachers become culturally and linguistically aware during the tutoring process?

Linguistic awareness: Haukås, Bjørke and Dypedahl (2018) said that "language teachers should have a well-developed metalinguistic knowledge of language(s) to be aware of their own linguistic choices and able to explain language(s) to their learners" (p. 21). Thus, linguistic awareness needs to be sharpened by language teachers during the pre-service years. The data revealed that seven of the pre-service teachers in this study developed this kind of linguistic awareness. Linda, Sophia, Gloria, and Emily realized they lacked explicit knowledge about their native language, emphasizing that even though they spoke English natively, they had difficulty explaining some of the rules to their students. Linda said, "I have learned that even as a native

English speaker I still do not know everything about English grammar,” and Sophia said, “I noticed that people who learned English outside the United States have a very similar thing”. She elaborated that “what they're saying is not wrong but that's not how it's being said in the United States”. So it was hard for her to explain the grammar rules “logically.” Ellis (2009) noticed the “intuitive” versus “conscious” awareness of grammar for the learner, saying one “may know intuitively that there is something ungrammatical and may even be able to identify the part of the sentence where the error occurs, but may have no conscious awareness of the rule that is being broken” (p. 11). Also, for some participants, linguistic awareness occurred as they recognized the structure of the English language. Gloria said, “even though I have learned (and relearned) so much about my first language these past few weeks, it has made me realize how much more I need to learn” and Emily said, “I have realized that there are far more specific grammar points to explain the many nuances of the English language, than I ever imagined”. Tina also became aware that English grammar was difficult to learn. Since all the participants are the future English language teachers, this kind of metacognition about the English language is essential.

Ashley realized that she was using the idiom and slang very often and tried to minimize them not to confuse her student. Although she was paying attention to the choice of vocabulary to make the language more understandable for her student, according to Trappes-Lomax and Ferguson (2002) this kind of adjustments can lessen the authenticity of the conversation:

The issue of ‘real’ vs artificial communication is one kind of discourse issue that confronts language teachers and language teacher educators — the macro one, we might call it, since it addresses the global question of what kind of communication can or should take place in the language classroom. (p.12)

No matter what decision is made about using the language authentically or artificially based on the goal of the course, self-awareness of the language use during the communication with culturally diverse students is important for language teachers.

Olivia and Emily mentioned that they searched for their students' first language and made some comparisons between their first language and English. Trappes-Lomax and Ferguson (2002) said learners learn a second language both "cognitively and socially," so they are "already 'linguaging' beings, and able to transfer much of the knowledge and skill derived from their experience of their first language to the task of communicating in their new one" (p. 25).

So language teachers need to know if their students' first language interferes with or facilitates the new language. Knowing about the source of the interference can help teachers adjust their teaching methods accordingly.

In addition to linguistic awareness, the participants developed semantic awareness. Language awareness is based not only on grammatical structures and morphology but also on semantics. These semantics are shaped by the culture the language. One participant realized her tutee's perception of the word "flood" was positive and that created confusion while working on a compound-complex sentence structure. Belz and Müller-Hartmann (2003) explained this kind of confusion as a "lack of understanding" that was "not based on deficient lexical knowledge" "but rather on a lack of knowledge surrounding the particular network of culturally specific associations and meanings in which a rich point makes sense to an expert speaker" (p. 73). In other words, language and culture intertwine to shape one's perception of the world. According to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, also known as the Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis, "the structure of anyone's native language strongly influences or fully determines the world view he will acquire as he learns" (Kay and Kempton, 1984, p. 74). In other words, each language has its own

world view, and people's perception of reality varies according to the language they use.

Language teachers should be aware of this to successfully interpret the perception of the student as well as prevent potential misunderstandings. However, according to Byram (1994), very few enter "a career in language teaching with an adequate knowledge of the culture and society of their language" (p. 62). Teaching and tutoring experiences during the pre-service years of language teachers may very well improve this knowledge.

Cultural awareness: The role of cultural awareness in the process of intercultural development is critical. In Deardorff's Delphi study (2004), "cross-cultural awareness was the only component rated important or most important by all respondents (100%)" (p. 127). As stated in the previous section, the data under this category was divided into three sub-themes: general cultural awareness, cultural self-awareness, and situation specific awareness. Although some participants indicated only situation-specific awareness (such as religious practices in Ramadan or knowledge about the school systems and Afghan poets), general cultural awareness and cultural self-awareness were blended in the participants statements. Except for one participant, the data revealed that all participants demonstrated cultural awareness in at least one of the sub-themes.

Carol, Tina and Gloria mentioned that this experience was eye opening since what they learned about the Afghan people and culture contradicted their prior knowledge. Still, it is important to mention that the students in this study were privileged to have been raised in educated families and have access to education contrary to some other people in the same country. Gudykunst (2004) reminded "that strangers may not be typical members of their cultures or we may not actually understand their cultures" (p. 247). One of the participants, Gloria, even mentioned this in the post interview, "I don't think he's the typical Afghan family. You can correct me on that, but he comes from an educated household. He did mention some

cousins didn't really think the way he thought. I thought that was interesting” (Gloria, post-interview, July 2018). As discussed before, since Gloria’s new cultural knowledge about her student contradicted her previous knowledge, Gloria thought her student was an exception. At the same time, realizing that there are exceptions to commonly believed perceptions is also part of cultural awareness. In fact, this realization is where the questioning of prior knowledge begins.

Carol was more focused on the similarities. Gudykunst (2004) argued that since most people do not communicate with strangers often, they may not feel comfortable discussing differences with strangers. She added that understanding similarities at the group level and, most importantly, at the individual level are critical in developing a relationship with strangers. This explains Carol’s situation during her efforts to build rapport with her student.

Whether it is linguistic or cultural, awareness itself has been the scope of many intercultural competence frameworks (Chen & Starosta, 1999; Deardorff, 2006a; Fantini, 2000; Hoopes, 1979; Paige, 1993; Pedersen 1994). Therefore, awareness is integral to the development of intercultural competence. Even in a short period of time like six weeks, the pre-service ESL teachers showed an increase in linguistic and cultural awareness.

Research Question 4: To what extent do pre-service ESL teachers develop their empathy skills and become more flexible after completing six-weeks of online tutoring?

Deardorff (2004) grouped the themes of adaptability, flexibility, and empathy under the internal outcome and said, “The internal outcome which involves an internal shift in frame of reference, while not requisite, enhances the external (observable) outcome of intercultural competence” (p. 194). Therefore, it can be said that, the amount of flexibility and empathy the participants demonstrated directly impacted their overall intercultural competence development.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that, as cited by Deardorff (2004), the consensus of the terms empathy and flexibility do not exist in the literature (Spitzberg, 1989). Therefore, debriefing sessions had a crucial role during the interpretation of the data.

Empathy: Warren (2014) said that “culturally diverse students deserve teachers who understand and appreciate their home lives and personal experiences” (p. 399). This involves empathy. Still, the literature provided various definitions of empathy (Coplan, 2011; Warren, 2013). Even though the concept of empathy has been used in the field of in philosophy and psychology for years (Coplan, 2011), this dissertation has stipulated what it means to educators. Tettegah and Anderson (2007) state, “Teacher empathy is the ability to express concern and take the perspective of a student, and it involves cognitive and affective domains of empathy” (p. 50).

Five of the participants explicitly expressed the feeling of empathy for their students through their reflection journals and interviews. This feeling of empathy manifested itself for different circumstances such as living in a conflict zone, religious practices in Ramadan, foreign language use, and a lack of educational sources. Tina’s statement, “I would never do that to learn English” (about her student’s dedication to 5:00 am sessions every week), initiated discussion in one of the debriefing sessions about whether or not this statement reflected empathy. Coplan (2011) distinguished the “self-oriented” and “other oriented” perspective, emphasizing that knowing “what we would be going through in some similar situation” is the self-oriented perspective, which “does not yield empathy” (p. 56). Therefore, Tina’s statement would not be considered an expression of empathy. Ashley’s statement of “I barely understand” and Angela’s statement “I couldn’t imagine living in a war ridden country” also indicated that they were not feeling empathy for their students.

However, according to Warren (2014), “Teacher preparation programs are where teachers’ development and expertise applying empathy begins” (p. 416). The data of this study showed that, in six weeks, five of the participants expressed empathy for their students in Afghanistan even though the rest of them did not express anything or acknowledged that it was hard for them to feel empathy for their students. Also, three of the participants stated that they could not exactly feel empathy, but they could still reflect on their feelings of their students’ circumstances, such as living in a war zone or being committed to education, which might be regarded as a starting point for empathy. Even realizing that the conditions they come from or how they feel about education might change the teachers’ approach to their newly arrived students in the future. As mentioned in the literature review, the majority of the refugees and immigrants come from conflict zones (Beaubien, 2017), so most teachers will likely to work with students from these regions and that is why it is crucial to feel empathy.

Flexibility: The concept of flexibility emerged in two different forms: instructional flexibility and behavioral flexibility. Seven of the participants clearly expressed how they changed the content of the lessons based on their students’ needs and competence. This is important in culturally responsive teaching. Warren (2013) said, “A primary responsibility of a culturally responsive teacher is to tailor instruction and negotiate interactions that duly consider the intelligence, expertise, and competence students bring to the classroom” (p. 176). Starting from the initial sessions, the majority of the participants adopted different materials from outside resources, apart from the lessons they provided or adapted in the first session. This form of flexibility is essential in classrooms with diverse students who might have different needs than their peers. Zlatković, Petrović, Erić, Leutwyler, and Jokić (2017) flexible teachers “may instantly adapt their lesson if they notice that minority students cannot follow it” (p. 203).

Therefore, providing opportunities for preservice teachers to adapt their lesson plans and respond to the needs of their students is helpful for their future practice in the classrooms.

Besides instructional flexibility, the teacher demonstrated behavioral flexibility during their online sessions. Six of the participants indicated that they changed their approach or adapted their behaviors to situations different from what they were used to.

According to Gudykunst (2004), adaptation and accommodation of behavior is necessary for successful interactions with “strangers” (p. 264). When newly arrived students are struggling to adapt to a new culture as well as learn a new language, a teacher’s flexibility and adaptability is invaluable. Yet, like the other components of intercultural competence mentioned above, flexibility can also be developed by experience.

Conclusion

This study explored the impact of a six-week online English tutoring session to students in Afghanistan on the intercultural competence development of preservice ESL teachers. Intercultural competence, despite being used by various fields, is a complex term that does not have an agreed upon definition in the literature. Even Deardorff’s (2004) Delphi study that was conducted with 23 experts in the field did not provide a consensus on the definition. Deardorff (2004) presented the top-rated definition of intercultural competence as “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 184).

Deardorff’s Delphi study revealed fifteen components that have important roles in the development of intercultural competence, some of which informed the central research question of this dissertation. As Deardorff (2004) stated, “one component alone is not enough to ensure competence” (p. 184). Therefore, the researcher aimed to explore how six week of online

teaching to students in Afghanistan influenced the intercultural competence of preservice ESL teachers by analyzing key components (of the process model of intercultural competence framework) such as openness and tolerating ambiguity (attitudes), linguistic and cultural awareness (knowledge-skills), and empathy and flexibility (internal outcome). Answering the individual questions under these broad categories helped the researcher answer the overarching question: “How does the experience of online teaching English as a foreign language to students from Afghanistan for six weeks contribute to the development of the intercultural competence of pre-service ESL teachers?”. This overarching question also directly related to the last stage of the framework, the external outcome, which is described as effective and appropriate communication and behavior.

This qualitative analysis of the study concluded that pre-service ESL teachers had a better understanding of the Afghan culture and demonstrated some of the components of intercultural competence in their behaviors. In other words, working with students from Afghanistan seemed to develop the intercultural competence of the pre-service ESL teachers. All participants demonstrated ambiguity tolerance, linguistic and intercultural awareness, and flexibility as a result of their six-week online interactions. In the pre-interview and initial journals, the teachers raised awareness about their pre-judgements, assumptions, and stereotypes about the Afghan people and culture. Towards the end of the six weeks, some of them even regretted prejudging their students before getting to know them. Still, unknown situations such as their students’ background, norms, and cultural behaviors as well as online teaching itself created some ambiguity for the ESL teacher. Despite this initial discomfort, except for the online teaching, the participants tolerated this ambiguity effectively. As for online teaching, most of the participants perceived it as a “threat” and only two of them approached it as a “desirable” or exciting to

explore at the initial stages. However, given the fact that all the participants completed six sessions without any major problems, it can be concluded that they all tolerated ambiguity at different levels. Likewise, more than half of the participants felt empathy for their students.

Overall, the findings showed that six weeks of online tutoring contributed to the development of the intercultural competence development of preservice ESL teachers. Still, it is important to remember that intercultural competence is an ongoing process and “not a direct result of solely one experience” (Deardorff, 2006a, p. 259). Therefore, it would not be appropriate to say that this experience with Afghan students made the pre-service teachers interculturally competent. However, close analysis of major components of intercultural competence demonstrated how preservice ESL teachers developed their intercultural competence throughout the six weeks. This development manifested in some components (like linguistic and cultural awareness) more than the others (like withholding judgement, empathy) and it also depended on the person.

Also, the effectiveness and the appropriateness of the communication, as stated in the definition, is open to interpretation. Deardorff (2011) acknowledged this ambiguity, saying, “The learner can indicate to what degree he or she has been effective in an intercultural setting, but it is only the other person who can determine the appropriateness of behavior and communication in the interaction” (p. 73-74). Considering that the “learners” are the pre-service ESL teachers in this study and that the researcher does not have sufficient data, it would not be accurate to make conclusions about the appropriateness of behavior. Therefore, only one aspect, effectiveness of communication can be discussed here. According to Gudykunst (2004), “Effective communication requires that we minimize misunderstandings or maximize the similarity in the ways messages are interpreted when we interact with strangers” (p. 250). Being

misunderstood or saying something inappropriate was one of the concerns that pre-service ESL teachers mentioned in the pre-interviews. Still, this initial nervousness the teachers had about the effective communication disappeared after the first few sessions. All felt more comfortable in time and did not mention any misunderstanding or miscommunication in their journals or interviews. Therefore, it can be concluded that effective communication occurred even though not much can be said about the appropriateness.

Lastly, most intercultural competence theories, including the Deardorff's (2006b) model, were built based on the face to face communication in the same place rather than the virtual communication. Therefore, the impact of technology and specifically the impact of video conferencing should be taken into consideration. As stated by some of the participants, spotty quality internet connection might hinder the process of acquiring knowledge through listening or observing. Some participants indicated that it was difficult for them to read their students' facial expressions because of the video quality. Likewise, the audio quality might also hinder a successful communication and even may cause some misunderstandings. Yet, despite of these technological problems such as bad internet connection, pre-service ESL teacher still described their experiences as positive and eye-opening.

By helping the teachers develop the skills required for effective and appropriate communication, the experience of teaching English to Afghan students online for six weeks contributed to the intercultural competence development of preservice ESL teachers. Some skills seemed to be developed more than the others and the teachers' background might have affected the extent to which they advanced their intercultural communication skills. Hence, similar projects that involve online tutoring, teaching, or communication in any way can be used by many teacher education programs and specifically by TESOL programs. To develop the

teachers' intercultural communication skills, these projects should provide opportunities for pre-service ESL teachers to have experiences with students from diverse backgrounds. This kind of intercultural experience will give them a chance to be aware of their prejudices and assumptions about a certain population and face their fears as the participants in this study did. TESOL programs play an important role to implement projects that encourage pre-service ESL teachers to step out their comfort zones and develop their intercultural competence. In our technological era, using the internet for such a meaningful purpose and creating projects with diverse students is crucial for training globally minded teachers.

Recommendation for Practice

The results of this study shed light on an alternate way of developing intercultural competence with experiential learning and practicum projects for pre-service ESL teachers. This might be inspiring for TESOL and teacher education programs as well as educational policy makers in higher education institutions. There has been a crucial need for the hands-on experiences during the pre-service years of teachers from any field as previously discussed in the literature review. Experience with culturally diverse populations has a positive impact on training globally-minded teachers and on the development of intercultural competence. As concluded in this study, online tutoring to culturally diverse students had a positive impact on the development of intercultural competence of pre-service ESL teachers. Therefore, similar online collaborations with culturally diverse students can be used as an alternative to study abroad programs, practicums, and service learning projects that might be logistically and financially inconvenient for some pre-service teachers. The following recommendations are intended to guide successful implementation of online tutoring projects for teacher education departments including TESOL programs.

The results of this study revealed that most teachers did not feel comfortable using the online materials and Learning Management System (LMS) and videoconferencing tool. Even though the researcher briefly explained how to use these online teaching tools, it did not help teachers to get over their nervousness about the technological part of this teaching. Therefore, for future practice, more intense training about using the LMS and videoconferencing would enable pre-service teachers to focus their energy on teaching and intercultural interaction more than adjusting to this new way of teaching. In other words, pre-service teachers should be given enough time and training to get themselves familiar with the components of online teaching before they start tutoring online.

Also, if an online tutoring project is going to be implemented as part of a course syllabus such as practicum and field projects, creating an online discussion forum where pre-service teachers share their experiences with their classmates would contribute to their critical thinking. Since the participants in this study were from different universities and the dates they began tutoring slightly varied, the researcher could not develop a discussion forum among the pre-service ESL teachers. Online discussion forums can also be beneficial for sharing their concerns, offering ideas, and sharing materials. Still, the course designers should also consider the caveat of these discussion forums that pre-service teachers might be biased by their classmates ideas posted on the discussion forums. Therefore, course developers can best determine whether online discussion forums should be added as a constituent based on the goals of the course.

Moreover, it is important to have a syllabus that addresses the needs of the students. In this study, since the English proficiency levels of the students varied, pre-service ESL teachers needed to refer to other sources based on their students' needs. Even though this situation helped them develop their flexibility skills, the lesson structures differed from student to student. For

future practice, it might be useful to provide a more structured curriculum that will be implemented by all the participants. The lessons in the curriculum can also be designed around the themes that trigger discussion such as gender roles, language, or global citizenship identity.

Recommendation for Research

As previously mentioned, there is a gap in the literature on online collaborations with students from a war zone country like Afghanistan. Even though there have been abundant studies about online collaborations for intercultural competence development of pre-service and in-service teachers and college students, they rarely expand these studies to a war or post-war zone. Therefore, there is a continuous need to explore the online interaction between the pre-service teachers and students not only in Afghanistan but also in any other conflict regions.

Future research should also incorporate the experiences of students by collecting and analyzing the data from the students' side as well. Based on the definition of intercultural competence by Deardorff's (2004) Delphi study, effectiveness and appropriateness are two crucial aspects of a successful intercultural communication. The effectiveness can be determined by the pre-service teachers' side, but only data from the students can tell more about the appropriateness of the communication. Thus, to be able to evaluate the success of the intercultural communication in a most effective way, data from both sides of the collaboration is more useful. Additionally, even though there were no reported misunderstanding between the students and the pre-service ESL teachers in this study, reciprocal data would be beneficial for clarifying the source of misunderstandings if they occur in the future studies.

Moreover, the duration of this study was only six weeks. As mentioned before, some of the participants mentioned that they felt more comfortable two or three weeks after they started.

Longitudinal studies will provide more time for participants to get to know their students well and also to get used to online teaching platforms.

Lastly, although the assessment of intercultural competence was not the scope of this study, future research can use some inventories and scales to assess the intercultural competence before and after the participants start tutoring. Deardorff (2011) claimed that the development of intercultural competence is an ongoing process and, therefore, the “assessment should be integrated throughout targeted interventions” (p. 68). Adapting an assessment tool based on the needs of the study will give a better analysis of the intercultural developments of the participants.

Concluding Remarks

This dissertation is timely considering the urgent need for understanding and respecting people whose background, language, religion and culture are different from ours. Even though the concept of the “other” is becoming a threat for some people because it is different, unfamiliar or unknown, diversity continues to grow in our classrooms. Teachers of multicultural classrooms should create an environment that welcomes every unique feature of the newly arrived student brings to the classroom. This should also be celebrated by their peers. Considering the fact that teachers shape the future generation, their role as global citizens becomes crucial.

After the exposure of negative and incorrect representations of immigrants and refugees in the media, it becomes challenging for teachers to manage pre-judgements or discomfort. As the data in this study also revealed, some teachers feel uncomfortable communicating with students from the cultures they are unfamiliar with. Prior experience with these students during the pre-service years can alleviate that discomfort and augment awareness. This kind of awareness and confrontation of the prejudices are important steps in intercultural competence development.

In the era where technology is embedded in every aspect of our lives, it is time to use it more frequently for the purpose of increasing and enhancing multicultural interactions. Building cultural bridges between the teachers and students from different parts of the world not only provides education to people who do not have access to brick and mortar schools but also contributes to the intercultural competence development of teachers. Therefore, online collaborations can be used to bring a new perspective to the stereotypes of newly arrived refugee and immigrant students.

Integrating online practicum and telecollaborations into a teacher's education is still perceived as a daunting task, but given the logistic and financial advantages of online technologies, this task should be implemented more frequently. As found in this study, making a connection with students from war zones not only creates practicum opportunities for the pre-service teachers but also contributes to the education of the students who had limited opportunities. We need to build cultural bridges among the diverse people and classrooms more than ever before to have a more peaceful world and to understand the "other."

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APPENDIX A

THE CONSENT FORM



Consent Form for the Participants of “Developing Intercultural Competence Through Online English Language Teaching” Research Study

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY: “Developing Intercultural Competence Through Online English Language Teaching”

Below is a description of the research procedures and an explanation of your rights as a research participant. You should read this information carefully. If you agree to participate, you will sign in the space provided to indicate that you have read and understand the information on this consent form. You are entitled to and will receive a copy of this form.

You have been asked to participate in a research study conducted by Didem Ekici, a doctoral student in the Department of International and Multicultural Education at University of San Francisco. This faculty supervisor for this study is Dr. Sedique Popal, a professor in the Department of International and Multicultural Education_ at University of San Francisco.

WHAT THE STUDY IS ABOUT:

The purpose of this research study is to gain a better understanding of the intercultural experiences of TESOL graduate students who are teaching English to Afghan students in an online platform. The focus of this study will not be on the language teaching methods and techniques but on the online interaction and the cross cultural communication of the tutors with their students.

WHAT WE WILL ASK YOU TO DO:

During this study, the following will happen.

If you accept to be a participant in this study, you will be asked to teach English online to a student in Afghanistan between the age of 16-24 for six weeks via a videoconferencing tool, Zoom. All students are registered to Pax Populi, Applied Ethics Inc. The Afghan student will be assigned to you by the program coordinators of Pax Populi based on how long the students have been waiting to be tutored. You are expected to use English as a Second/Foreign Language (ESL) curriculum which is uploaded on the online platform (Schoology) you will be using. Each tutoring session is 90-minute long and they will not be recorded. You will be given a password to have access to Schoology platform where you can have a videoconference with your student in Afghanistan. All the detailed instructions about how to log in to the website will be provided before you start tutoring. As long as you have the internet access you can have your sessions at any location.

Before you start, the researcher will meet you on Skype/Zoom or in person for a 30 minute orientation to provide some information about the tutoring process and the students you will be working with. She will also answer your questions if you have any. Additionally, the researcher will schedule a 10-15-minute pre-interview with you to ask four questions about your expectations and concerns about the tutoring process. This interview can be a part of the orientation or can be scheduled for a different time based on your availability.

You will be asked to write a reflection journal about your tutoring experiences for five times in total. Each reflection journal will include two questions which makes ten questions in total. These questions are intended to guide you for your reflections but feel free to write about other experiences that you want to mention. The main goal of these journal questions is to understand your tutoring experiences in a better way.

After the completion of the six tutoring sessions and the submission of the reflection journals, you will be asked to attend an interview session with the researcher if you are interested. This interview will include four questions in total. If you volunteer to be interviewed, the researcher will share the interview questions with you a few days ahead of the scheduled interview date. The interviews will be conducted via Skype/Zoom and will be recorded on a mobile phone for the purpose of transcription and data analysis later on.

DURATION AND LOCATION OF THE STUDY:

Your participation in this study is expected to last for six weeks. Each week you will meet with your student once for 90-minute online face to face session. In other words, you will have six 90-minutes sessions once a week for six weeks. This study will take place in an online platform. Therefore, you can participate in this study no matter what your location is as long as you have the internet access.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS:

I do not anticipate any risks or discomforts to you from participating in this research. If you wish, you may choose to withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any time during the study without penalty.

BENEFITS:

You will receive no direct benefit from your participation in this study; however, the possible benefits to others include; gaining experience with working culturally diverse students and with online language teaching tools. We also hope that the information obtained from this study may contribute to the literature of intercultural competence development for preservice ESL teachers.

PRIVACY/CONFIDENTIALITY:

Any data you provide in this study will be kept confidential unless disclosure is required by law. In any report we publish, we will not include information that will make it possible to identify you or any individual participant. Specifically, we will keep your reflection journals and your responses to the interview questions secure by keeping them in a locked file cabinet in the personal possession of the researcher and in a digital file that will be secured with a password. I will make every effort to preserve your confidentiality by following these steps:

- a) I will assign code names for all the participants that will be used on all research notes and documents. The names of the universities and their locations will not be mentioned in any document.

- b) Only I (the researcher) and my dissertation committee members will have access to the data.
- c) After the completion of the dissertation defense and the publication of the dissertation, the data will be destroyed even though the consent forms will be kept for three years.

COMPENSATION/PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION:

There is no payment or other form of compensation for your participation in this study.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THE STUDY:

Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits. Furthermore, you may skip any questions or tasks that make you uncomfortable and may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. In addition, the researcher has the right to withdraw you from participation in the study at any time. Not participating or withdrawal from the study will not affect your grade of the course you are taking.

OFFER TO ANSWER QUESTIONS:

Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you should contact the principal investigator: Didem Ekici at (917) [REDACTED] or dekici@dons.usfca.edu. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the University of San Francisco Institutional Review Board at IRBPHS@usfca.edu.

I HAVE READ THE ABOVE INFORMATION. ANY QUESTIONS I HAVE ASKED HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT AND I WILL RECEIVE A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM.

PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE

DATE

APPENDIX B
REFLECTION JOURNAL QUESTIONS

Journal 1

1. Do I make quick assumptions about a student? Do I pre-judge students or situations or do I withhold judgment while I explore the multifacets of the situation? Please explain.

2. Am I eager to learn about different cultures and specifically, am I eager to learn about my students' backgrounds and experiences? Do I make an effort to learn more? Please explain.

Journal 2

3. How much do I know about my students' cultural backgrounds? What information am I missing and how can I get that information? Please explain.

4. How can I incorporate my students' worldviews into my course materials? Please explain.

Journal 3

5. How much do I really listen to my students? Please explain.

6. Do I engage in active observation in my classroom, paying attention to subtle nuances and dynamics among my students? In my interactions with my students? Please explain.

Journal 4

7. Am I able to adapt my behavior and communication style to accommodate students from different culturally-conditioned communication styles? Please explain.

8. Am I able to be flexible in responding to students' learning needs, seeking to understand those needs from their cultural perspectives? Please explain.

Journal 5

9. How culturally appropriate have I been in my interactions with my students? In my teaching? How would my students answer this question? Please explain.

10. Was I able to meet my goals in an appropriate and effective manner? Please explain.

Berardo, K., & Deardorff, D. K. (2012). *Building Cultural Competence : Innovative Activities and Models*. Sterling, Virginia: Stylus Publishing.

Deardorff, D. K. (2009). How do I approach my role in teaching students with very different cultural backgrounds. *Presentation at University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill*.

APPENDIX C

THE CONTRACT BETWEEN THE TUTOR AND THE TUTEE

Provisional Schedule For

_____ (Tutor) and _____ (Tutee)

Date _____

Dear (Tutor) and (Tutee),

I am pleased to connect the two of you as tutor and tutee, and wish you a pleasant time as you are about to work together. I am happy to share the allotted timings with the two of you! Please look at the dates on the schedule very carefully and let me know if there are any dates you will not be available.

Based on input from both of you we are recommending classes that meet once per week with each class lasting for 1.5 hour. Here are the times proposed for you tutoring sessions.

<u>Name of the Tutor</u> (____,USA)	<u>Name of the Tutee</u> (Afghanistan)
Wednesdays: 10.30 am to 12.00 midday	Wednesdays: from 2:00 PM to 3:30 PM

We are planning a 6-week course for the two of you. It will meet once a week, on____, beginning on _____, _____ and will end on _____, _____ .

Provisional weekly schedule:

The provisional schedule appears below.

	<u>Tutor's name</u> Day/Date	Begin Time	<u>Tutee's name</u> Day/Date	Begin Time
1	EXAMPLE	EXAMPLE	EXAMPLE	EXAMPLE
2	Wednesday, April 12	10:30AM	Wednesday, April 12	2:00 PM
3	Wednesday, April 19	10:30AM	Wednesday, April 19	2:00 PM
4	Wednesday, April 26	10:30AM	Wednesday, April 26	2:00 PM
5	Wednesday, May 3	10:30AM	Wednesday, May 3	2:00 PM
6	Wednesday, May 10	10:30AM	Wednesday, May 10	2:00 PM

This would be a total number of hours of 9-hour course.

If both of you fulfill this program in good standing you will be eligible to continue working with us, which we would welcome. Please confirm if this schedule is acceptable to you or suggest changes as needed. We will try to accommodate, but do request that you show flexibility.

I, _____ accept this schedule as is: Y/N Date:

However, I need to make the following changes:

I, _____ accept this schedule as is: [Click here to enter text.](#) Date: [Click](#)

[here to enter text.](#)

However, I need to make the following changes: [Click here to enter text.](#)

APPENDIX D

PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1- What do you expect to learn from this six-week tutoring experience with a student from Afghanistan?
- 2- What kind of challenges do you anticipate by working with a student from Afghanistan?
- 3- Have you had any interaction with someone from Afghanistan before?
- 4- What kind of information would you find helpful about your student from Afghanistan?

APPENDIX E

POST INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1- Do you think this tutoring experience with an Afghan student for six weeks has met your expectations?
- 2- Did you have any challenges that you had not anticipated during the six week tutoring?
- 3- Has this experience changed your perception about the Afghan culture/people?
- 4- What kind of information was useful for you in terms of interacting with your student?

APPENDIX F

PERMISSION FROM DEARDORFF TO USE HER “TEACHER REFLECTION QUESTIONS”

5/9/2018

Students & Alumni Dons Apps Mail - permission request to use ICC Model Questions

Didem Ekici <dekici@dons.usfca.edu>

permission request to use ICC Model Questions

Darla Deardorff <d.deardorff@duke.edu>
To: Didem Ekici <dekici@dons.usfca.edu>

Mon, Apr 9, 2018 at 8:52 PM

Dear Didem Ekici,

Thank you for your email and interest in my work. And yes, you may use these questions (as long as you are not using them to evaluate someone's intercultural competence since they are meant as reflection questions only.) These questions have actually since been published in "Building Cultural Competence" (Stylus, 2012) so it would be best if you could cite this when using the questions.

If possible, please do share more about your research and work - I'd be interested in hearing more. By the way, I've started an online network of researchers on intercultural competence and you would be most welcome to join at www.iccglobal.org (please sign up and then once approved, be sure to post a message introducing yourself and your work - very important!)



ICC Global

www.iccglobal.org

ICC Global is a virtual community worldwide of researchers, graduate students, and practitioners who are interested in furthering intercultural competence (ICC).

Best,
Darla Deardorff

Dr. Darla Deardorff
Executive Director, AIEA
Duke University
Tel: 919-668-1928
Email: d.deardorff@duke.edu

From: Didem Ekici <dekici@dons.usfca.edu>
Sent: Monday, April 9, 2018 12:50 PM
To: Darla Deardorff
Subject: permission request to use ICC Model Questions

[Quoted text hidden]

APPENDIX G
RESEARCH SITE APPROVAL LETTER



Applied Ethics, Inc.

46 Chestnut Street
Marblehead, MA 01945

May 9, 2018

To whom it may concern,

On behalf of Ms. Didem Ekici, I am writing this letter the president and chair of the non-profit organization Applied Ethics, Inc. (AE). Virtually all the work of AE is dedicated to our people-to-people peacebuilding program, Pax Populi®. Applied Ethics is the legal trademark owner of the name "Pax Populi."

Ms. Didem Ekici has been one of our most dedicated and valuable volunteers/leaders and we are delighted and honored that her dissertation research is focusing on our program. We are very happy to authorize her to use the name "Pax Populi" in her dissertation and related work. My only request would be that it be acknowledged in the appropriate location in the document that the name Pax Populi is the registered trademark of Applied Ethics, Inc. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or comments. I can be reached by email at robert@appliedethics.org or by phone at (781) 990-8588.

With my best regards,

Robert E. McNulty, PhD

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'R. McNulty'.

Robert E. McNulty, Ph.D.
Executive Director

APPENDIX H

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

11/2/2018

Students & Alumni DonsApps Mail - IRB Review Not Required - IRB ID: 1041

DonsApps
STUDENT/ALUMNI

Didem Ekici <dekici@dons.usfca.edu>

IRB Review Not Required - IRB ID: 1041

1 message

Christine Lusareta <noreply@axiommentor.com>
Reply-To: Christine Lusareta <calusareta@usfca.edu>
To: dekici@usfca.edu

Tue, May 29, 2018 at 5:23 PM



IRB Review Not Required

To: Didem Ekici
From: Terence Patterson, IRB Chair
Subject: Protocol #1041
Date: 05/29/2018

The protocol **1041. Developing Cultural Competence Through Online English Language Teaching** has been reviewed by the IRB chair and found not to require further IRB review or oversight.

Please note that changes to your protocol may affect its exempt status. Please contact our office to discuss any changes you may contemplate.

Sincerely,

Terence Patterson, EdD, ABPP

Professor & Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

University of San Francisco

irbphs@usfca.edu[USF IRBPHS Website](#)

APPENDIX J

CODING CATEGORIES

A. OPENNESS

- 1- Learn/know about Afghan country/culture /people
- 2- Interest in another culture
- 3- Concern of inappropriate communication
- 4- Withholding judgements

B. TOLERATING AMBIGUITY

- 1-Gender of the student
- 2-Culturally appropriate communication
- 3-Background information of the students
- 4-Online teaching

C. LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL AWARENESS

- 1- Implicit vs explicit knowledge
- 2- Semantics
- 3- Awareness of daily language use
- 4- General cultural awareness
- 5- Cultural self-awareness
- 6- Situation specific awareness

D. EMPATHY SKILLS & FLEXIBILITY

1- Empathy

- a) war country
- b) religious practice
- c) privileges

2-Flexibility

- a) academic flexibility
- b) behavioral flexibility

Data by RQ ☆

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Editing

SHARE D

C) Cultural and linguistic awareness

- As my student has such a high level of English, we did a lot of discussion questions based on our topic of 'Greetings'. These discussion questions were meant to highlight the similarities and differences between American, Afghan and other cultures. Hashim shared how Afghans greet each other, body language they use, and how the Afghan concept of respecting personal space is different than how we see it in the United States. (Participant 1_Cultural Specific Knowledge)
- Throughout our discussion we have talked a lot about his country and our discussions have been enriched by varied cultural perspectives. (Participant 1_Understanding others' worldviews)
- I had to research his native language which helped me prepare for lessons like I think like relative clauses were a continuous problem and that was because of so and so in his native language so it was kind of interesting to see the correlation between like the issues he had with English was corresponding with other speakers of his language have had. (Participant 1_Linguistic awareness)
- I feel like I definitely like I have a severe lack of knowledge of that region of the world, even now. But having that relationship and having this knowledge I do have makes me feel slightly less embarrassed but makes me aware that it's a thing I have to continue to be curious about. (Participant 1_Knowledge)
- I learned about not just culture but people in different subjects on different topics. So, I even told my student that having sessions with her completely changed my whole perspective on people in Afghanistan and what I believed was happening over there and kind of like on the people or culture or everything it was totally opposite actually. It was amazing, actually it's very eye-opening to me. (Participant 2_culture specific knowledgeKNOWLEDGE)
- I kind of noticed that people who learned English outside the United States they have a very similar kind of how do I say a similar thing that they apply their language or their own first language structure into English and whenever I try to explain it. It's, what they're saying is not wrong but that's how it's not being said in the United States. So it's hard to say like oh sometimes it's hard to explain it logically that's how people say it that way. (Participant 2_Linguistic awareness)
- When you see a long sentence that you don't know where to cut it. Like especially with a compound-complex sentence can be like two sentences together, three sentences together. You're not sure which end you should cut it or separate it and sometimes it makes complete sense even though you did it wrong way. It just meaning changes a little bit but it's just those areas very vague and it's hard to even explain it because how she sees it is grammatically correct. It's just a meaning of the word that I think we're talking about flooding. So when I say as a flooding word by itself it cannot be anything good it's a negative all the time but in the sentence she sees

APPENDIX K

EMAIL TO DEBRIEFERS



DonsApps
STUDENT/ALUMNI

Didem Ekici <dekici@dons.usfca.edu>

dissertation debriefing process

2 messages

Didem Ekici <dekici@dons.usfca.edu>
To: "Dietrich, Sarah E" <sdietrich@semo.edu>

Tue, Aug 28, 2018 at 10:05 PM

✉ [View this message in thread](#)

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10/22/2018

Students & Alumni DonsApps Mail - dissertation debriefing process

Dietrich, Sarah E <sdietrich@semo.edu>
To: Didem Ekici <dekici@dons.usfca.edu>

Wed, Aug 29, 2018 at 5:46 AM

Dear Didem-

Thank you for your message. I'm looking forward to the opportunity to work with you again, this time as "peer debriefer."

I agree to the procedures you've outlined and understand the importance of maintaining the confidentiality of the data agree to destroy the documents after we have reviewed them.

All the best
Sarah

/ Sarah E. Dietrich, Ed.D.
Assistant Professor
Department of English, MA in TESOL

T 573-651-2156
sdietrich@semo.edu

From: Didem Ekici <dekici@dons.usfca.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, August 29, 2018 12:05:56 AM
To: Dietrich, Sarah E
Subject: dissertation debriefing process

Dear Dr. Dietrich,

I hope my email finds you well. Thanks for accepting to be my peer debriefer for my dissertation study. As a former student of yours during my master's studies, I am honored to have you in my research study as a debriefer. I am sure you will have invaluable contributions to my research study, especially to the data analysis process.

Before moving forward, I would like to clarify the process of debriefing and what I expect from you as a peer debriefer. First of all, the reason of this debriefing is to improve trustworthiness and credibility of my research. For this purpose, I will ask you to review my coding of the data from the reflection journals and interviews, provide a second opinion for the emerging themes and the coding process and check against the researcher biases in the data analysis.

I will share my data with you and ask you to read them and compare your codes and notes with mine. To discuss the disagreements and conflicting views, I suggest having at least three meeting over Skype/Zoom to discuss our interpretations of data. These meetings will be scheduled based on your availability.

I will share all the interviews and the reflection journals without the names of the participants. Still, because of confidentiality of the data, I will ask you to destroy the data at the end of the debriefing sessions.

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/17ik=ba986b5796&view=pt&search=all&permthid=thread-a%3Ammiai-r-6086112698811182668&dsqt=1&simpl=msg-a%3As%3A-...> 2/3

10/22/2018

Students & Alumni DonsApps Mail - dissertation debriefing process

Amy Jo Minett <aminett@salemstate.edu>
To: Didem Ekici <dekici@dons.usfca.edu>

Tue, Sep 11, 2018 at 9:01 AM

Dear Didem,

It is with pleasure that I will serve as a peer debriefer for your dissertation study. With this email I acknowledge that I understand and accept my responsibilities as a peer debriefer for your work. I look forward to taking part in this process and I am excited to learn from your important research.

Sincerely,

Amy Jo Minett, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, English/Graduate TESOL
Salem State University
Salem, MA 01970

From: Didem Ekici <dekici@dons.usfca.edu>
Sent: Monday, September 10, 2018 6:50:22 PM
To: Amy Jo Minett
Subject: dissertation debriefing process

[Quoted text hidden]

APPENDIX L

SAMPLE LESSON ON PAX ACADEMY SCHOOLOGY PLATFORM

Materials

- Updates
- Gradebook
- Grade Setup
- Mastery
- Badges
- Attendance
- Members
- Analytics
- Workload Planning
- Conferences

Access Code ✕

M43DB-G7FPB Reset

Information

Grading periods
2018, Jan 2018

Lesson 1- Introducing Yourself ⚙️

At the end of the Lesson 1 students will be able to;

1. Learn how to introduce themselves
2. Recognize the stress, intonation and the pronunciation of some words
3. Learn some vocabulary for the daily talk
4. Answer some comprehension true-false exercises about the videos

✔ Must Complete

L2: Success ⚙️

At the end of Lesson 2 students will be able to;

1. Comprehend the function and use of noun clauses
2. Recognize the noun clauses in the text
3. Make sentences with noun clauses
4. Discuss about what success is

L3: Peace ⚙️

At the end of the Lesson 3 students will be able to;

1. learn some vocabulary and use them in sentences
2. recognize some words during the listening activity and fill in the blanks
3. learn how to participate in a discussion and how to express his/her thoughts
4. write an essay about peace

L4: Education ⚙️

At the of Lesson 4 students will be able to;

1. Comprehend the reading passage and search for the specific information in it.
2. Do the exercises about the passage
3. Learn some new words and phrases

L5: Music ⚙️

At the end of the Lesson 5 students will be able to;

1. Be familiar with the famous musician Mozart
2. Learn some basic vocabulary about classical music
3. Present his/her music culture with the famous Afghan songs

L6: Learning English ⚙️

At the end of Lesson 6, students will be able to;

Pax Populi

[Home](#)
[Courses](#)
[Groups](#)
[Resources](#)

Didem Eklid
?

Course Options

- Materials
- Updates
- Gradebook
- Grade Setup
- Mastery
- Badges
- Attendance
- Members
- Analytics
- Workload Planning
- Conferences

Access Code
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Information

Grading periods
2018, Jan 2018

Dawn&Kayanat: Section 1 • Pax Populi Demo Course: Section 1

◀ Prev
Next ▶

Add Materials
Options

- > Pre-Readings ⚙️
- > Readings ⚙️
- > Activities ⚙️
- > Assignments ⚙️
- Week 1: Discussion** ⚙️

Before ending your session, try to spend at least 15 minutes in an open discussion. Here are some questions for you to consider. These questions are for discussion, so try not to give a very...
- Week 1: Quiz** ⚙️

✔ Must score at least 60
- Week 1 - Feedback Survey** ⚙️

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[REDACTED] Section 1 ▶ Pax Populi Demo Course: Section 1 ▶ L2: Success

 Readings

Listening 1: Success

Adapted from www.busyteacher.org

- What do you think success is?
- Do you consider yourself a successful person? Why? Why not?

Which of these terms do you consider important to achieve success?

Have money Observe being wise get on well with partners/customers
Patience Being a good listener good connections Being curious Being lucky
Being good at solving problems focus passion persist work
ideas push improve

Please watch R. St John 's talk "Success is a continuous journey", at ted.com

All these terms appear in the talk. Could you explain their meanings according to the context?

- Pushed myself
- Comfort zone
- Figure out
- To come up with ideas
- A hot shot guy
- Go downhill
- Creative block
- (\$) pours in
- I was floating along
- Outwardly /inwardly
- (Put into) antidepressants
- I couldn't care less
- To drop like a rock
- Let employees go
- To cut a long story short
- It looks like

[Richard St. John Success is a continuous journey.avi](#)

Comprehension questions;

- What were Richard's mistakes, to lose a successful business?
- What happened in Richard's life when he became the president of a successful company?
- What circles of being successful he disliked?

Course Options

Materials

- Updates
- Gradebook
- Grade Setup
- Mastery
- Badges
- Attendance
- Members
- Analytics
- Workload Planning
- Conferences

Access Code ✕

M43DB-G7FPB Reset

Information

Grading periods
2018, Jan 2018