

Chapter 4

Intercultural Computer– Supported Collaborative Learning: Theory and Practice

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ABSTRACT

In the absence of an equitably distributed method for providing immersive intercultural learning experiences, teachers have used digital technologies to personalize domestic learning experiences that cultivate intercultural competence and collaborative skills. This chapter provides a review of intercultural computer-supported collaborative learning, discusses the main issues that students and teachers encounter, and provides a summary of research supporting teacher integration of this instructional approach.

BACKGROUND

A broad range of forces are transforming professional landscapes and requiring new capacities and dispositions from individuals in the 21st century (Mansilla & Jackson, 2013). For example, globalization has driven demand for individuals to develop intercultural competence, collaborative skills, and computer-supported communication skills. As a result, these topics have become a major focal point in education (Yildiz & Palak, 2016; Reimers, 2014). However, a wide variety of socioeconomic factors still divide student opportunity by prohibiting large segments of individuals from participating in face-to-face intercultural collaborative experiences through study abroad.

This critical issue of education equity emphasizes the necessity of improving the personalization of computer-supported teaching approaches. Over the past twenty years, institutional capabilities for teaching intercultural and collaborative skills has greatly increased through the policies and practices of interna-

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tionalization in higher education (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Although despite many improvements, the dilemma of how instructors can leverage digital technologies and instructional design to deliver students more personalized computer-supported intercultural and collaborative learning experiences still remains an important ongoing issue of educational research.

Chapter Objectives

The readers will be able to:

1. Understand what is meant by intercultural computer supported collaborative learning.
2. Recognize the typical challenges that exist for students and teachers in this teaching approach.
3. Identify strategies to enhance the personalization of student learning experience through the intercultural computer-supported collaborative learning approach.

INTERCULTURAL COMPUTER-SUPPORTED COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

There is not a clearly agreed upon term or definition describing the teaching approach of intercultural computer-supported collaborative learning (iCSCL). Generally speaking, this approach refers to the joining of geographically distant teachers and students from differing cultural backgrounds in an effort to provide personalized computer-based intercultural and collaborative learning opportunities. This teaching approach may be used in either substitution, or in addition to international study abroad opportunities. Furthermore, this approach typically describes small group arrangements in the context of formal education settings. Existing literature discusses this teaching approach from the perspective of three main research domains, which describe slight variations in the purpose of iCSCL implementation. These three research domains may be described as (1) language learning, (2) intercultural awareness, and (3) intercultural teamwork. Table 1 further describes the three proposed research domains and provides examples of common terms that appear in the related literature. The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of iCSCL based on the synthesis of these somewhat disparate streams of information.

Table 1. Key iCSCL research domains

Description	Purpose	Suggested Search Keywords
Language learning	Intercultural communicative competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Network-based language teaching• Online intercultural exchange• Telecollaboration / telecollaborative exchange
Intercultural awareness	Intercultural awareness within non-language learning domains	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collaborative online international learning• Cross-cultural online collaborative learning• Multicultural online learning
Intercultural teamwork	Collaborative skills development and team effectiveness research	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Multicultural student group work• Global virtual teams• Internationally distributed student teams

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