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Since early 1990s, the advancement of computer-mediated communication technologies has impressed language researchers and practitioners with the potential for supporting language teaching and learning, such as lowering anxiety level, fostering participation in class discussions (Kern, 1995; Sullivan & Pratt, 1996) , increasing language production (Beauvois, 1992; Kelm, 1992; Kern, 1995), and enhancing cultural awareness (Warschauer, 1997). Among the myriad of technologies now available, networked technologies such as email, discussion boards, and chat rooms are the most pervasive in the current foreign language curriculum.

Amid numerous issues facing foreign language educators and researchers, there is an urgent need to integrate intercultural learning into regular foreign language classes. Since the 1990s, foreign language education stakeholders in the United States (e.g. Belz, 2002; Kramsch, 1998) have realized that culture and language are inseparable. Culture is even emphasized as the core of foreign language curriculum, which yielded the publication of National Standards for Foreign Language Education: Preparing for 21st Century (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 1996). Despite the wide acknowledgement of the inseparability of language and culture, sound pedagogical plans for the culture and foreign language learning are still lacking.

Responding to the call for pedagogical solutions to culture learning and considering the advantages of networked technologies, many research projects (e.g. Belz, 2002; Belz & Müller-Hartmann, 2002; O'Dowd, 2003) have been launched in recent years to investigate the application of networking technologies to language acquisition and intercultural

learning through building telecollaboration between foreign language learners and native speakers of the target culture. However, the findings obtained in these studies are controversial and by no means exhaustive. First and foremost, it is still barely known whether and to what extent networked intercultural learning is helpful to improve students' intercultural competences. Some studies (e.g. Furstenberg, Levet, English, & Maillet, 2001) affirmed positive results-- such as helping students develop an insider's view of other culture--at the end of networked intercultural learning, while other studies, e.g. Belz's (2002) as well as Belz and Müller-Hartmann's (2002), cautioned about pitfalls, such as communication breakdown caused by technological discrepancies, which are inherit in networking technologies used in intercultural learning. O'Dowd (2003) discovered both advantages and disadvantages of email-based intercultural learning.

In addition, the majority of the recent intercultural telecollaboration projects (e.g. Belz, 2002; Furstenberg et al, 2001) focused on telecollaboration between foreign language students in the United States. and native speakers in France or Germany. Very few studies have been conducted to explore students' intercultural learning in less-commonly-taught foreign language classes. Having noticed this gap, Belz (2003) pointed out the need for more projects on telecommunication between foreign language learners and native speakers of less commonly spoken languages, such as Chinese and Russian. This chapter reports on an exploratory study investigating the impact of a commonly used synchronous communication tool, instant messenger (IM), on university-level Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) students' intercultural learning. The study was intended to investigate two issues: (a) whether instant messaging interaction (IMI) is useful in CFL students'

intercultural learning, and (b) the characteristics of IMI in CFL students' intercultural learning.

Theoretical Frameworks

Culture and Intercultural Communication Competences

Much literature on culture and intercultural communication competences exists from a variety of disciplines, e.g. anthropology and sociology. Scholars have different understandings of intercultural competences because of the different definitions of culture in different disciplines, for example, Hofstede's (1994) "iceberg" and "onion" models, and Seelye's (1984) "big C" (i.e. cultural products) and "little c" (i.e. behaviors and beliefs held by people from a certain culture). The current study adopted a more comprehensive definition of culture developed by Kaikkonen in 1991 (cited in Kaikkonen, 1997),

"Culture is a common agreement between members of a community on the values, rules, norms, role expectations and meanings which guide the behavior and communication of the members. Furthermore, it includes the deeds and products which results from the interaction among the members."(p.49)

This definition also sheds light on intercultural communication competences, that is, how people should behave and what knowledge they should have in order to carry out successful intercultural communication. Intercultural learning researchers (e.g. Bennet, 1993; Risager, 1998) have argued that learners should develop an understanding of how each behavior is understood in a particular cultural context, and that it is neither necessary nor possible to withdraw one's native culture during intercultural communication. In other words, developing intercultural sensitivity and critical views of intercultural differences,

and consequently sensitive intercultural communication behaviors, is the goal as well as competences that learners should be expected to develop.

O'Dowd (2003) suggested that Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communication competences is a representative model of the above-mentioned goal. The model explicitly explains the attributes of intercultural communication competences and provides discrete objectives of intercultural learning. The rational objectives for intercultural learning include knowledge, skills, and perspectives that foreign language learners should develop, based on the five intercultural communication competences identified in the model (Byram, 1997), which are presented as follows:

1. "Attitudes of curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own." (p.57)
2. "Knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction." (p.58)
3. "Skills of interpreting and relating: ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one's own." (p.61)
4. "Skills of discovery and interaction: ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under constraints of real-time communication and interaction." (p.61)
5. "Critical cultural awareness/political education: an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own culture and other cultures and countries." (p.63)

This model indicates that learners are expected neither to develop appropriate attitudes toward the target culture nor to become native-like, thus the native culture is not replaced by the target culture. Instead, learners are expected to find the third place between the native and the target culture (Crozet & Liddicoat, 1999; Kramsch, 1993) where learners can critically view and analyze various social phenomena with a distance from both their native culture and the target culture. With an attempt to help CFL learners to achieve this third place, the researcher, while helping instructor of the class to develop class activities throughout the semester, incorporated the five intercultural communication competences into the course materials and activities. In particular, all tasks employed in the IM-mediated intercultural communication were developed based on the five intercultural learning objectives proposed by Byram (1997). O'Dowd (2003) suggested that it is easier to witness the changes in learners' sensitivity of intercultural differences than to assess learners' development of intercultural communication knowledge and skills in a short period of time. Because the current study lasted only 8 weeks, the focus of this project was placed on learners' development of attitudes toward intercultural differences as well as their ability to interpret and relate phenomena in both cultures.

Intercultural learning and Networked Technologies

According to Lave and Wenger (1991), "learning is an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice" (p. 31). Culture educators (e.g. Allan, 2003; Kaikkonen, 1997) particularly agreed that culture is learned in and through communication with people. A human learns his or her native culture by being a member of a community. Thus, intercultural learning can occur through intercultural communication. In different intercultural communication settings, the process of intercultural learning varies. Allan

considered intercultural learning as a dynamic spiral process with a continuum expanding from learners' awareness and understanding of other cultures, to acceptance and respect for cultural differences, and ultimately to learners' appreciation and valuing other cultures, which leads to multiculturalism. In contrast, Kaikkonen (1997) argued that intercultural learning is a process of widening the learner's cultural scope, which is comprised of two sub-processes. In the first sub-process, learners gain awareness of the foreign cultural environment, learn the foreign language as well as develop acquaintance with foreign cultural standards. At the same time, in the second sub-process, they introspect and reflect on their own cultural identity by constantly comparing and contrasting their home cultural environment, language, and cultural standards with the counterparts in the foreign culture. These two sub-processes are intertwined and influence each other throughout the period of foreign language learning, which leads to the widening of students' understanding of culture (see Figure 1 for an illustration).

[Put Figure 1 about here]

With the consideration of the goal of intercultural learning delineated earlier, the researcher employed Kaikkonen's model to guide the understanding of the intercultural learning process that was presented during the current project, as well as to design the intercultural communication tasks that would create a learning environment for facilitating students to widen of their cultural view (e.g., tasks using word associations and reactions to situation in which learners were required to learn about Chinese culture as well as reflect on their native culture).

The ideal intercultural learning environment as identified in various models (i.e. total immersion in a foreign cultural environment) is not accessible to all foreign language

learners who are learning a foreign language in their home country. However, Internet technologies make it possible to connect foreign language students directly with native speakers of the target language. Recent years have witnessed an increasing number of intercultural learning projects in which learners are connected with native speakers of the target culture through telecollaboration (Belz, 2002; Belz & Müller-Hartmann, 2002). It is expected that through the telecollaboration with native speakers of the target culture, language learners have authentic intercultural interaction experience, which hopefully yields successful intercultural learning as well as language acquisition.

Currently, research in the area is focused on investigating the characteristics of telecollaboration. Some studies (Belz, 2003; Belz & Müller-Hartmann, 2002; O'Dowd, 2003) have identified the elements of email exchange that lead to both successful and unsuccessful intercultural learning. O'Dowd found that learners who had "a receptive audience for the expressions of their own cultural identity" (p.138), and who were sensitive to their partners' needs and able to produce "engaging, in-depth correspondence" (p.138) could build up a successful intercultural partnership through email exchange. Müller-Hartmann (2000), employing three case studies on email exchange, suggested that an effective task-based structure could promote intercultural learning through networks and provide an opportunity for students to analyze and reflect on their computer-based investigation with their teachers' help and guidance.

The technologies used in recent telecollaboration projects were mainly asynchronous tools such as email (e.g., Belz, 2002, 2003; O'Dowd, 2003) and discussion forum (e.g., Hanna & Nooy, 2003). Less research has been conducted on using synchronous computer-mediated communication tools, especially instant messenger (IM),

in intercultural learning. IM is a real-time communication technology that has been embraced by the younger generation of the information age. Software, such as AOL Instant Messenger (AIM), Yahoo! messenger, or MSN messenger, allows the creation of buddy lists, searching for message partners through interest groups or by the home country, and on-line/off-line status alerts. According to Wikipedia (n.d.), registered users of instant messaging tools, such as AIM, Yahoo! messenger, and MSN messenger collectively had more than 400 million registered users in February, 2007. The number of IM users is continuously increasing every year.

Although there is not yet a consensus on the usability of IM in education, the real-time interaction enabled by the use of various IM tools has attracted many educators and researchers. Students in some countries make frequent use of IM but probably less commonly for educational purposes. However, quick and informal discussions with native speakers may well prove useful in tandem or classroom exchanges. In a telecollaboration project on foreign language learning connecting American and French students, Thorne (2003) found that compared to email interaction, IM could provide an authentic conversational environment and thus enhance authentic personal engagement into the telecollaboration tasks. By allowing real-time discussion similar to face-to-face conversations, IMI helped learners move relationships to a more intimate level compared to asynchronous communication tools (i.e. email, discussion board).

Despite researchers' strong interest in IM technology and its many advantages, very few studies have been conducted to investigate whether IM is a viable tool in intercultural learning. This chapter reported on a study intended to explore the viability of

IM use in a foreign language setting for developing students' sensitivity and openness to intercultural differences. Two research questions were asked in this study:

1. Is IM an effective tool for intercultural learning?
2. What are the characteristics of IM-mediated intercultural learning in which CFL students in the United States were connected with native speakers of Chinese?

The Study

This study was conducted in an entry-level Chinese as a foreign language class at a public research-oriented university in southeastern U.S. in fall, 2004. The class goal was to enhance students' knowledge of Chinese language and culture as well as their skills in communicating in simple Chinese. The instructor of the class was a native speaker of Chinese with over 10 years of CFL teaching experience. The researcher was a facilitator of the class. The facilitating duties included collecting and designing class materials, answering students' questions, and being a substitute when the instructor was out of town. Twelve students volunteered to participate in the study.

The project lasted 8 weeks from the first week of October to the last week of November. Taking into account Byram's model (1997) of intercultural communication competences, a series of tasks were designed to serve as a spring board for learners' interaction. The tasks were adapted from the CULTURA project (Furstenberg, Levet, English, & Maillet, 2001), the Tandem Network, and the Spanish-English-Email-Exchange project (O'Dowd, 2003) by borrowing the task types, such as participants' reactions to different situations, while incorporating topics that have high possibility to cause intercultural conflicting viewpoints, such as family and police. Students were provided an intercultural learning task each week. The detailed task types and schedule are displayed in

Appendix A. Facilitative information and worksheets in each task were distributed via email to each participant and his or her partner at the beginning of each week. CFL learners were not mandated to use Chinese as their chat language due to their limited proficiency in Chinese. Students who were able and willing to chat in Chinese were encouraged to use Chinese.

Participants

There were two groups of participants: 7 American university-level students who were enrolled in the entry-level CFL class (NNSs) and volunteered to participate in the study, and 7 native speakers of Chinese, 6 of whom had been residents in the United States for less than 5 years (NSs) and 1 Chinese native speaker who was a doctoral student in a university in Wuhan, a metropolitan city in central China. All Chinese native speakers volunteered to help American students in this project with the understanding that all data would be only collected from the American students and that they would not be required to do the tasks unless they wanted to know more about the chatting topics. Prior to the study, each CFL learner was randomly paired with one Chinese native speaker. All participants' background information is shown in Appendix B. All names are pseudonyms.

Data Collection

Several ethnographic techniques (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) were employed to collect information needed to answer the research questions. The research techniques included a presurvey, which was administered at the beginning of the project and intended to collect information about participants' prior experience with intercultural communication; transcripts of each dyad's chat, which were saved and submitted through email to the researcher by each NNS after each IM chat session; a questionnaire adapted from the

Intercultural Sensitivity Scale developed by Chen and Starosta (2000), which was administered after each IM chat session; two rounds of interviews with each American participant, one in the middle and the other at the end of the project; and the researcher's reflective journals kept throughout the project. The detailed data collection schedule was provided in Appendix A.

The presurvey and interview questions were developed by the researcher. The presurvey was used to find out participants' prior experience with intercultural communication, particularly with native speakers of Chinese. The interview questions were developed to elicit information from each participant regarding his or her reflections on what had taken place during the IM-mediated intercultural learning and his or her perception of this learning experience. The number and the type of questions in each interview varied slightly, based on the information obtained from each participant's IM chat transcripts and the results of the questionnaire. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by two native speakers of English.

The adapted Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (see Appendix C) contained 21 Lickert-scale questions, each of which was an attitudinal statement about intercultural differences and intercultural communication. Learners were required to choose from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Questions were divided into three groups: intercultural interaction engagement and attentiveness (questions 1-10), intercultural interaction confidence (questions 11-15), and respect for intercultural differences (questions 16-21). A descriptive statistical analysis was used to analyze participants' scores on the questionnaire. The researcher also used the constant comparison method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994) to identify and further categorize emergent themes from interview

transcripts and chat scripts with regards to CFL learners' perceptions of IM use in intercultural learning and the characteristics of IM communication during the process of CFL intercultural learning.

Findings and Discussion

To investigate the effectiveness of IMI as a pedagogical tool for intercultural learning in a foreign language class, the study took into account both the participants' scores on the intercultural sensitivity scale and their perceptions about the use of IM in intercultural learning . It was hoped that the analysis of learners' affective changes throughout the process of intercultural learning and of their changes in perceptions of the IM technology used in that learning could illustrate whether the IM interaction helped learners attain the goal of intercultural learning in the foreign language class. As for the characteristics of IM interaction during intercultural learning, a constant comparison method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994) was used to first identify and then categorize the emergent themes from chat scripts and follow-up interview transcripts in terms of students' perceptions about IM use in intercultural learning and the characteristics of IM-mediated intercultural learning. This section contains two parts. The first reports on the effectiveness of using IM in intercultural learning based on the results from the questionnaire and those of learners' perceptions; the second presents emergent themes of characteristics of IMI.

Effectiveness of IM in Intercultural Learning

By administering the questionnaire at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the project, the researcher obtained the scores of the CFL participants for intercultural interaction engagement and attentiveness, for intercultural interaction confidence, and for

respect for intercultural differences. To calculate participants' scores in the three aspects respectively, the researcher first summed up their answers to questions in each category and then divided them by the number of questions in each category. Each participant's averaged scores in the three aspects of intercultural sensitivity are presented in the Table 1. Dyads Bill and Zhao as well as Cathy and Shan dropped out in the middle of the study. Thus, their scores were not included in the table.

[Place Table 1 about here]

Besides these scores, each participant's reflection and explanations of his or her changes, reflected in the follow-up interviews after the second and third questionnaires, were identified and further compared with the scores by the researcher. By connecting each participant's score changes with his or her own explanations, the researcher analyzed each participant's development of intercultural sensitivity throughout the study. The following section contains detailed discussions about CFL learners' development of intercultural sensitivity during the IM intercultural learning experience.

Intercultural Interaction Engagement and Attentiveness: Steadily Increasing,

Regarding their interaction engagement and attentiveness, the results show that all participants became increasingly engaged with intercultural interaction during the two-month interaction process. The majority of the participants (Mark, Sandy, Mike, and Jason) felt they were more attentive to their intercultural interaction compared to before they were involved in the intercultural learning. One participant's (Nancy) scores showed some fluctuation during the learning period. She felt she was less sensitive to her partner's subtle meanings during the intercultural interaction, compared to before she participated in the study. In the follow-up interview after the third questionnaire, she explained that she found

that her Chinese partner had been very well acculturated in the American culture, which caused her to pay less attention to any possible culturally subtle meanings that might have been conveyed in her partner's messages.

Byram (1997) argued that students need to develop curiosity and openness to other cultures before they can achieve profound knowledge of the target culture and intercultural communication skills. In this case, the reason that Nancy became less sensitive is that she assumed her partner would not express culturally different opinions because he had been acculturated so well. However, she consciously realized that there was supposed to be some cultural differences between her and her partner, which in fact indicates her awareness and sensitivity to intercultural differences.

Intercultural Interaction Confidence: Fluctuating.

As for participants' level of intercultural interaction confidence, the comparison of their scores at the beginning and end of intercultural learning showed that 3 out of the 5 NNSs (Mark, Sandy, and Nancy) became less sure of what to say when interacting with people from other cultures. Of the 5 participants, 2 (Mike and Jason) felt surer of themselves at the end of the project, compared to at the beginning. When the scores obtained in the middle of the project were taken into account, an interesting phenomenon was revealed. Among the 3 participants who felt less confident about intercultural interaction, 1 male participant, Mark, felt uncertain in the middle of the project whereas he felt strongly confident about himself at the beginning and moderately confident at the end of his intercultural learning. On the other hand, although both Mike and Jason experienced uncertainty about intercultural interaction at the beginning and became more confident throughout the intercultural learning, it seems they experienced different learning

processes, which is reflected in their score changes throughout the study: Jason felt increasingly confident while Mike's confidence level remained stable in the second half part of the intercultural learning process

Despite the fact that 3 out of 5 participants did not develop more confidence throughout the intercultural learning process (shown in the scores obtained through the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale), the follow-up interviews revealed that these participants still developed a certain level of intercultural communication confidence during the IM-based intercultural learning. In the follow-up interviews, Mark, Sandy, and Nancy revealed that they had become more aware of intercultural communication and more self-reflective during their intercultural interaction experience. Nancy said: "cause I felt intercultural communication was not so easy as I thought earlier. I never talk to a person from other cultures before... But I am now more aware of the cultural differences." Mark explained that "My wife is an American and I am a Trinidadian. I thought I already understood intercultural communication. But when I chatted with my Chinese partner, I felt I was still not sure how to communicate" The ethnographic information shows that none of the participants had exposure to Chinese culture prior to this study. However, given that most of them grew up in a so-called multicultural environment in the United States, they felt quite confident in their behaviors in intercultural interaction at the beginning of the project. In other words, students tended to overestimate their intercultural interaction ability. During the real-time encounter with their Chinese partner, the participants realized that the intercultural communication was not as they imagined. Feeling out of control, Sandy and Nancy experienced uncertainty about their role and their reactions in intercultural interactions.

In addition, whereas Sandy and Nancy's confidence levels stayed unchanged, Mark gained some confidence at the end, compared to in the middle of the project. These changes further illustrated that learners went through different developmental paths during intercultural learning. There were mainly two types of learners. The first type over-estimated their intercultural communication competences, such as Mark and Sandy. They did not realize the complexity of intercultural communication until they interacted with people from other cultures, which caused uncertainty as to how diverse situations should be handled. With accumulated experience, the learners developed competence and felt more certain of appropriate responses during intercultural interactions. The second type of learners, such as Nancy, over-estimated the difficulty of intercultural communication. They tended to assume that intercultural communication would be too complicated to handle prior to their involvement. However, once they participated in direct interaction with people from other cultures, they discovered that people from different cultures shared similar feelings in some aspects, which increased their confidence in intercultural interaction. These learners also tended to generalize their experience to all intercultural communication situations, which yielded a blind confidence.

Respect for Intercultural Differences: Moderately Increasing

Comparing learners' attitudes toward intercultural differences at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the project, the scores show that all 5 participants had a moderate increase (usually from level 4 at the beginning to level 5 at the end) of respect for cultural differences. One participant, Mark, experienced some uncertainty in the middle of the project while staying at level 5 both in the beginning and at the end. In the follow-up interview, Mark explained that "in the middle, I felt that I didn't know so much about

Chinese culture. I felt I might not have enough respect for cultural differences. But the more I talked to my partner, the more I felt I had respect for the differences between Chinese culture and my own culture.” According to Kaikkonen’s (1997) intercultural learning process model, this result clearly shows that Mark was experiencing a period of “widening his picture of culture.” (p.49). He started to gain consciousness of knowledge about the target culture. He thought respect for cultural differences was connected with knowledge about the difference between two cultures. Although this perspective is not necessarily true, it illustrates that Mark became more open and curious about the target culture as the IM exchange continued.

Overall, despite some negative data, the analysis of the questionnaire responses and the follow-up interview transcripts indicated that all NNSs developed certain level of intercultural sensitivity throughout their IMI with their Chinese partner. They became more certain about their roles and appropriate responses during intercultural interactions. Their awareness of the differences between the target culture and their native culture grew and more critical reflection upon their native culture was undertaken. Their attitudes toward intercultural differences turned positive. They even thought more critically and became more self-reflective about the intercultural differences, which is a significant intercultural communication competence contended in Byram’s (1997) model.

Learners’ Perceptions about IM use in Intercultural Learning

The CFL participants’ perceptions about IM also were taken into account to analyze the effectiveness of IM as an intercultural learning tool. The interview data with all 7 participants throughout the study were included during this analysis. By using the constant comparison method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994), the

researcher first conducted a comprehensive review of all interview transcripts. Emergent themes about participants' perceptions about IM in intercultural learning were tentatively identified. Next, themes that are relevant to one another were grouped into distinctive categories. Lastly, themes in and across each category were constantly compared and contrasted to eliminate redundancy. The final categories are displayed in Table 2

[Insert Table 2 about here]

As shown in Table 2, all 7 participants revealed that IM was a very convenient communication tool for them. For example, Mike said, "I am online 24/7. Instant Messenger is the most convenient tool for me to keep in touch with my friends." They used it to communicate with their friends, family, and even strangers they met online. All expressed that the use of IM did not cause extra burden to their regular language learning. For example, Jason said, "I am online anyway. I leave my messenger on even when I am not using my computer." Of the 7 participants, 3 mentioned the relaxing atmosphere inherent in IM chat even the first time they talked with their Chinese partner. In IM chat, there were few constraints on the completeness of sentences and the content to be discussed. For example, Nancy said laughingly, "I don't have to type the complete sentences. My partner understood me anyway. I even misspelled a lot. He didn't mind." One participant, Sandy, compared the IM chat with public chat rooms. She said, "I got lost easily when chatting with people in a public chat room. But in IM chat, I have a more private space to share with my partner. This helped me follow through and concentrate on what my partner said."

All participants revealed that instant responses from their partner enabled by IM chat made their conversations fun and evoked more and further interaction. Of the 7

participants, 3 expressed their excitement about the quickly established friendship with their Chinese partners although they never had face-to-face meetings. Despite her ultimate failure in contacting her Chinese partner, Cathy praised her first intercultural chat, “We became instant friends. He said he would help me with everything.” This finding is consistent with the IM interaction feature that Thorne (2003) discovered in an intercultural telecollaboration project connecting students of French in a university in the U.S. and engineering students in France. He observed that intercultural synchronous communication fostered “hyperpersonal engagement” (p.47) in the tasks which led to the establishment of “authentic interpersonal relationship”(p.48) Participants also encountered inconveniences inherent in IM chat.

Participants also noticed the disadvantages of IMI in intercultural communication. Bill complained that his partner was barely online. Sandy explained the reason that she used email rather than IM to contact her partner by saying that “I had to work the first two weeks of the semester. I really didn’t have time to use IM. Email made things easier.”

Although there are a plethora of studies on identifying advantages and disadvantages of IM use in workplaces and general educational settings (e.g. Cohn, 2002; Farmer, 2003), there are very few well-established studies with interest in investigating benefits and drawbacks inherent in IM for language acquisition and intercultural learning. There is scarcity of research on setting standards for technology integration in intercultural learning as well as on students’ attitudes toward using certain types of technology in their learning (e.g. Thorne, 2003). The interview data in this study reveal that learners held primarily positive attitudes toward the use of IM in their intercultural learning, despite their recognition of the inconvenience inherent in IM. In other words, the pleasure and

convenience that learners felt while using this technology in learning overrode the inconvenience they may have encountered. Learners' motivation may bolster their consequent cognitive development. Hence, at the level of affective acceptance, it can be proposed that IM is a promising tool for intercultural learning.

Four Main Features of IM-mediated Intercultural Learning

The constant comparison method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1995) also was used to identify main features in IM-mediated intercultural learning from the interview transcripts and IM chat transcripts. To investigate the main features of IM-mediated intercultural learning, the researcher undertook several steps. First, the researcher did an overall review of all interview data. Important features that were mentioned by interviewees were grouped into distinct categories. Then, the categorized features or themes were constantly compared and contrasted to ensure that none of the categories were redundant. The IM chat transcripts from each dyadic interaction were first divided into episodes based on the focus of discussion (i.e. the topics during each IMI session). Then, the line numbers were marked in front of each IM turn. Each participant's conversation features, such as the content of discussions and the way participants talked to each other, were identified. Finally, the features identified from the interview transcripts were triangulated with those from the IM chat transcripts. The conflicting features were further reviewed and debriefed with the participants until consistent features were identified.

Based on the analysis, four features of IM-mediated intercultural learning were identified: use of meaningful tasks, formation of hyper personal relationship, negotiation of language and culture, and reciprocal learning. Examples and further discussions about each category are presented in the following sections.

Meaningful tasks as conversation focus

The IM chat transcripts throughout the study showed that most CFL participants overwhelmingly relied on the tasks assigned for each week's intercultural interaction. For most learners, these tasks provided topics in their conversations with their Chinese partner. The analysis of interview transcripts confirmed this finding. For example, in one interview, Mark said, "Sometimes I didn't know what to talk about. Then I just asked my partner what he thought of the assignment for that week." In addition to using the tasks to initiate and maintain conversations, both learners and their Chinese partners consciously and subconsciously used them to keep their conversation on-task. The following conversation episode was taken from the fifth interaction between Nancy and Mu (typos during the chat were not revised to present the original conversation flows). Nancy and Mu spent 30 turns greeting each other and talking about recent TV shows, summer plans, Spanish-version MSN, and foreign language learning experience before Mu finally directed the conversation back to the task by asking whether Nancy received the task topic that the researcher had distributed earlier. In the follow-up interview, Nancy confessed that "if Mu didn't mention our task, I would have spent the whole chat time talking about my life, haha..."

1 Mu (Mu): did XXX (the researcher's name) give you any new topic?

2 Nancy (N): yeah suta sec lemme look at it

3 N: i think it's something you need ot think over so we can discuss it some other time if you like i 'll type it up for you

4 Mu: ok

5 N: respond to the following hypothetical situations, saying how you would react, state the first thing you would think/feel or do.

The assigned tasks not only guided participants' conversations, but also served as prompts for self-reflection. In the following conversation, Sandy and Qun were comparing the different phenomena in the United States and China, which was the task assigned in week 4.

1 Qun (Q): but I observe one thing about Americans

2 Q: They are surely getting heavier and heavier! No offense here, just a fact.

3 Sandy (S): true

4 S: all of the sugar in our food

5 Q: they need to do something about fast food industry

6 S: there are restaurants everywhere

7 S: something I agree with from the website though is the idea of change

8 Q: ok

9 S: Americans are always buying new cars

10 S: always buying things

11 S: if it's broke there are surely many more to be bought at a store

12 Q: I noticed that when I first came here: you just keep buying stuff and throwing them away.

13 S: yep

14 Q: and China is helping this in a big way! just look at Walmart.

15 S: I think Americans even view their relationships that way...that's why we have such high divorce rates.

As shown in the above episode, when her partner Qun gave his observation about American people's increasing body size; Sandy explained that factors causing American people to gain weight might be eating more sugar and going to restaurants more frequently. Having noticed that the underlying desire for change was driving people's social behaviors, she extended the topic to a brief analysis of Americans' ever-changing relationships.

As for Mark, it seems he used the assigned tasks as conversation guidelines as well as self-reflection prompts. In the interview, he reflected that "I think tasks are very important. I can go back to check if I did what I was expected to do. They made me think more."

At the outset of the study, participants were informed that the tasks assigned for each week served only as the springboard from which they could extend to more interesting and diverse topics about Chinese culture. In other words, a task-based approach was not initially adopted in this study. However, most learners opted for sticking to preset topics due to the reasons disclosed above. Thus, accomplishing the task pre-assigned in each week was considered an important goal of most intercultural interactions undertaken throughout the study.

Reviewing Bredella's (1992) study (cited in Müller-Hartmann, 2000) on intercultural learning process, Müller-Hartmann (2000) observed that tasks can initiate possible negotiation of meaning, which is central in a dialogic intercultural learning process. Candlin (1987) also affirmed that the exchange between self and others can be enhanced by tasks that allow learners to grow awareness of their own personalities and social roles as well as those of their peers. With a focus on negotiation of meaning in intercultural learning, Müller-Hartmann identified and emphasized that four task properties

(activity, setting, teacher and learner roles, and learners' personal interaction) are essential for successful intercultural learning through asynchronous email exchanges.

The eight tasks (see Appendix A for a list of the tasks) employed in the current study were developed based on Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communication competence. In this model, the objectives of intercultural learning include curiosity and openness to intercultural differences, knowledge of social behaviors and cultural products in different cultures, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical awareness of intercultural differences. The first and fifth tasks were designed for learners to gain awareness of their native culture and cultural identity. The second task was for them to gain awareness of the target culture. The third, sixth, and eighth tasks were intended to help learners gain awareness and knowledge of discrete cultural interpretations of similar cultural phenomena in both cultures. In the fourth task learners gained sensitivity about how their own culture was perceived by people from other cultures. The seventh task was for learners to gain awareness of how Chinese people perceive their own culture and to be able to reflect on how people interpret their own cultures. Providing real-life scenarios from both the target culture (Chinese) and the native culture (American), these tasks were intended to yield interesting and thought-provoking interactions between the learner and their Chinese partner. A great amount of meaning negotiation occurred between each dyad, which will be further discussed later as another significant feature of IM-mediated intercultural learning.

Besides thoughtful development, another essential attribute of successful intercultural learning is the particular IM environment. IM enabled simultaneous message exchange between the learner and his or her Chinese partner. According to Werry (1996),

synchronous interaction maximally imitates face-to-face immediate communication in terms of the quantity and quality of information exchanged. Considering the fact that these Chinese learners were still beginners and most Chinese counterparts were advanced English users, the researcher suggested that all participants use English as the exchange language with a purpose to lower participants' anxiety level. However, with lack of prior experience in intercultural communication, especially in an electronic setting, most learners drew on the task assigned for the first week to initiate the conversation. For some learners, the lack of familiarity with both the target culture and the online intercultural interaction mode resulted in a reliance on topics provided in tasks to maintain their conversations throughout the semester. In addition, in the interview, participants also revealed that the provision of meaningful tasks reduced their anxiety in the online intercultural interaction. Gudykunst (1995) asserted that the wider the cultural gap between two interlocutors, the greater the level of anxiety and uncertainty. Chinese and Anglo-Saxon American culture are distinct in many aspects, such as the perception of friends and social interaction. The availability of pre-assigned topics and tasks helped reduce learners' anxiety, which in turns encouraged more negotiation of meaning and critical thinking during intercultural learning.

Establishment of Hyperpersonal Relationship

Reanalyzing the study on intercultural learning between French learners and their counterparts in France, Thorne (2003) discovered that the authentic communication between foreign language students and native speakers enabled in synchronous (i.e. IM) fostered students' "hyperpersonal engagement"(p.47) in the tasks, which consequently moved the relationship from task-related collaboration to "authentic interpersonal

relationship” (p.48). This relationship also appeared in the intercultural interaction between CFL learners and their Chinese partners in the current study. Derived from Thorne’s terms, the relationship is called hyperpersonal relationship in this chapter, which particularly refers to the friendship quickly established over synchronous communication. Because the relationship was established even before the dyads knew each other profoundly, it was usually fragile and transient, compared to regular interpersonal relationship established in face-to-face conversations.

The hyperpersonal relationship particularly existed between Cathy and her Chinese partner, Shan, who was located in China. During the very first intercultural interaction between Cathy and Shan, Shan explicated their friendship at the 13th turn,

1 Cathy (C): “I would like to visit China sometimes in the future”.

2 Shan (S) : “because we are good friend, I hear you are a viet girl?”

3 C: “yeah, I’m from Vietnam”

4 S: “Wellcom you, i will introduce our everything to you.”

After hearing Cathy express her interest in learning Chinese and visiting China in the future (line 1), Shan immediately extended his cordial welcome to Cathy. In the follow-up interview, Cathy confirmed their friendship, “We are friends. We’ve become friends since the very first chat.” Given this friendship was claimed in a very short time, it is distinct from regular personal relationships. In Thorne’s study, the hyper personal relationship between an American female student who was learning French and a French male student who was learning English was described as between a common pen-pal friendship and male-female flirtatious relationship. As for Cathy and Shan, there was no direct or indirect hint of any unusual flirtatious exchanges although this was also a male-

female conversation. However, their relationship is still considered a hyper personal relationship because of the short span of time (merely one-hour online chat) taken to establish the unusually close relationship, especially from the traditional Chinese cultural perspective. The fast-established connection between Cathy and Shan created certain illusions about each other, that is, finding a cross-cultural soul mate.

However, fast-established friendships also may cause potential problems that unexpectedly erupt under center situations due to the lack of profound mutual understanding and unrealistic expectations for each other. Both Shan and Cathy were excited about having a close friend in another culture. They were eager to know more about each other. But before long, Cathy's mid-term week was approaching. As an undergraduate, Cathy had to take many midterms. So she cancelled several prearranged online chat appointments with Shan. After several cancellations, Shan became furious about Cathy's unfriendly behavior. Having no knowledge of the stress and anxiety that an American undergraduate might feel during midterms, Shan, a doctoral student in a Chinese university, thought Cathy was intentionally avoiding him. So he refused to reply to all later email from Cathy in which she requested to set new chat times.

Many intercultural learning studies (e.g. Thorne, 2003; Ware, 2005) have investigated underlying cultural and linguistic factors during intercultural communication that cause communication breakdown. The communication breakdown that occurred between Cathy and Shan is more than an interaction discontinuity. It is rather a relationship discontinuity. Through a follow-up personal communication with the researcher, Shan confessed that he had very high expectations for his friendship with Cathy because this was the first time he had a cross-cultural friend. But Cathy's cancellation, which is a

typical strategy used by Chinese girls to avoid a man, made him upset. Feeling hurt and offended, Shan decided to withdraw from the friendship. Therefore, this relationship discontinuity is caused by both intercultural misunderstanding and inappropriate expectations in online communication.

Negotiation of Language and Cultural Meaning

Many computer-assisted language learning (CALL) researchers (e.g. Chun, 1994; Kern, 1995) have discovered that in electronic discussion settings, second language learners are more active in terms of language production and feedback provision than they are in class. In other words, learners conduct more negotiation of meaning (Long, 1996; Ortega, 1997) in a CMC environment than in face-to-face interaction. Researchers (e.g. Long, 1996; Pica & Doughty, 1985) working within an interactionist approach to SLA agree that second language learners' strategies of negotiation of meaning include clarification requests, comprehension checks, confirmation checks, repetitions, and recasts. In this study, the same behaviors in terms of negotiating language meaning were observed. Given that the goal of this class was to develop students' intercultural understanding, these students placed more focus on the negotiation of cultural meaning. For example, in the following episode, Mark and Ling were talking about Chinese characters:

1 Ling (L): we have rule for each character.

2 Mark (M): you mean which strokes are to be made first right?

3 L: yes

4 M.: XXX(the researcher's name) told us about this - she said that her father told her if you cannot follow the order of the strokes then you are not chinese

5 L: this is exactly what i mean.

In line 2, Mark did a confirmation request in order to ensure his understanding about Chinese character writing rules was correct. In another episode as shown below, Mark and Ling were talking about some special cultural phenomenon in China: In the episode, Ling made a confirmation request (in line 3) to make sure what Mark was asking in line 2.

1 L: there is one thing which is the most famous in Fujian is human smuggling.

2 M.: what exactly is that?

3 L: u mean human smuggling?

4 M.: yes - smuggle them to where?

During the intercultural interaction, negotiation of language meaning occurred as well. In this project, CFL learners and their Chinese partners mainly used English to communicate. Thus, some Chinese native speakers were not sure if they delivered the information about Chinese culture correctly in English, which resulted in frequent comprehension checks. For example, in the following episode, Shan was not confident in his English proficiency. He checked whether his American counterpart could understand what he had talked about.

1 S: sorry, my english poor, can you understand my writing?

2 C: yeah I understand.

Some patterns of negotiation of meaning, such as overwhelming use of confirmation checks and comprehension checks, were observed in synchronous dyadic interaction-based intercultural learning. Most of the negotiations focused on cultural meanings of words and phrases. The findings resonate with Kötter's (2003) findings of negotiation of meaning in online tandem environments, which indicates that a synchronous

one-to-one interaction environment supports negotiation of cultural meaning and thereby enhances intercultural learning.

Reciprocal Learning

This characteristic of IMI is interrelated to an earlier identified important characteristic of IM-based learning—hyperpersonal relationship. As discussed earlier, instant response, one-to-one interaction, and the casual chat environment nourish the establishment of a fast, intimate relationship between the cross-cultural interlocutors. As for the purpose of learning, CFL learners did not treat their cultural counterpart as merely cultural informants, but as a learning buddy. For example, in the follow-up interview at the end of semester, Nancy said, “We learned from each other. I don’t think this is just a one-way knowledge-delivery.” In addition, during the intercultural interaction, CFL students were not content with just being a cultural knowledge recipient. They turned increasingly conscious about their own cultural identity, which was shown particularly in the task of cultural idiom sharing. CFL learners were willing to share their own knowledge with their cultural counterparts. For example, Mark shared a stark amount of slang and idioms from his culture. The following episode shows one idiom sharing between March and Ling.

1 M.: " a corbeau cannot eat sponge cake"

2 L: why?

3 L: (no data)

4 M.: that is a saying!!

5 M.: corbeau is a french word that we use in our language

6 M.: it is a carrion eater - a bird that eats dead things

7 L: is it a kind of bird?

8 L: i c

9 M.: and sponge cake is a light cake usually made with frosting

10 M.: so the saying means that people with no class cannot appreciate certain things

11 L: i guess so

12 M.: i think that this one is a mean saying

Recent years have seen a proliferation of integrating telecollaboration in foreign language education (Belz, 2002). A growing body of research has focused on the learning process and products through online interaction. Many researchers (e.g. Belz, 2002; Müller-Hartmann, 2000; O'Dowd, 2003) agree that online interaction benefits foreign language learners' language and intercultural learning through negotiation of meaning. This study provided one positive example of learning that occurred through synchronous dyadic intercultural interaction.

However, one crucial difference between this study and other intercultural learning projects lies in CFL learners' cultural counterparts. This group of interactants was informed at the outset of the project that they were expected to serve as Chinese cultural informants for their respective IM interlocutors. In addition, since the majority of the NSs had been in the U.S. for a while, none of them intended to act as a learner of American culture. CFL learners also shared this vision of the roles that were played by their Chinese interlocutor during the intercultural learning process. Despite the shared vision, reciprocal or mutual learning occurred in IM interaction, as shown in the conversation between Ling and Mark discussed previously. The CFL learners were rather willing to share their own culture with their Chinese partners. This willingness can be considered an intent to reinforce friendship by exposing oneself to a friend, which is a peculiar characteristic of

IMI. The learner's growing awareness of self and native culture during intercultural interaction was reflected as well in the conversations. However, CFL learners' willingness to sharing thoughts and feelings is also reinforced by the interest in other cultures on the part of some Chinese interlocutors, such as Ling who kept asking for more details about the idioms Mark provided.

In sum, four major features (meaningful tasks as conversation focus, hyper personal relationships, negotiation of language and cultural meaning, and reciprocal learning) emerged from the analysis of the IM-mediated intercultural learning in the current study, which was developed based on Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communication competences and on Kaikkonen's (1997) model of culture widening in foreign language learning. Researchers (e.g. Werry, 1996) investigating online interaction have pointed out that the absence of visual cues and other paralinguistic information in text-based CMC might bring extra pressure to online interactants. Research (e.g. Maynor, 1994; Werry, 1996) has identified several strategies that people use to accommodate inconvenience in online chat, such as reduplication of letters or punctuation marks to imitate pitch and use of underlining, italics, and bold print to emphasise important information. The current popularity of smiley features provided in various online communication tools enables optimal imitation of physical communication. However, very limited smiley use was observed in the chat transcripts. Despite myriad types of smiley features provided in various IM tools, the most frequent smiley features used by CFL learners and their Chinese interlocutors was a simple smiling face. Other features, like excitement, frustration, or surprise, were rarely used. This reduced amount of use might be attributed to intercultural interactants' precaution about intercultural misunderstanding of smiley use. The use of

smiley faces in IM-based intercultural communication would be a very interesting future research topic.

Research on IM use in foreign language practice is still in its infancy. The application of this new technology to intercultural learning in a foreign language setting, even to a broader second language learning context, merits closer investigation. Due to the limited number of participants in the current study, the findings reported in this chapter may not represent all CFL learners' cognitive and affective changes in IM-mediated intercultural learning. More longitudinal studies, both quantitative and qualitative, are needed to explore further whether the use of IM is viable and effective in foreign language classes with learners of different languages and at different proficiency levels. More attention needs to be focused on the process of IM-mediated intercultural learning to determine what exact factors influence learners' learning and development in this environment. With the ever increasing number of users, IM application in education, particularly in foreign language education, is very promising in terms of the theoretical and pedagogical contributions.

Conclusion

O'Dowd (2003) argued that simply throwing students into networked intercultural interaction did not necessarily lead to intercultural learning. CALL researchers (e.g. Chapelle, 2001; Salaberry, 2001) warned that a sound pedagogical plan should be integrated with technology use. To evaluate whether IMI is a viable tool for intercultural learning in a foreign language class, it is inevitable to take into account the goal of the CFL class and the students' affective attitudes toward the use of technology. Given that this was an entry-level CFL class and students' proficiency in Chinese language and culture was

very limited, the goal of the intercultural learning was to provide alternative opportunities for students to have authentic encounters with the target culture as well as to enhance their sensitivity to intercultural differences.

Chapelle (2001), a pioneer in setting evaluation standards for CALL tasks, proposed that technologies used in a CALL task should be practical to allow the task to succeed. The findings of the exploratory study showed that learners involved in the IM-mediated intercultural learning became increasingly sensitive to intercultural differences and engaged in critical thinking and self-reflection. Learners also expressed positive commentary about the use of IM in intercultural learning. Despite the fact that the findings may not reveal the full picture of IM-based intercultural learning due to the limited number of participants, the researcher believes that it is helpful and welcomed by students to use IM in intercultural learning with the goal of increasing students' intercultural sensitivity of intercultural differences and their awareness of own cultural identity. It is hoped that the four features of IM interaction for intercultural learning identified in the study will help broaden researchers' and educators' understanding of applications of IM in second or foreign language learning environments.

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Appendix A

Overview of Tasks and Schedule

Timeline		Activities	Description	Aims
Sep	4 th week	Participants choosing	Participants volunteer to join the study.	Participants are chosen.
		Pre-Survey	Participants are asked to fill up a presurvey.	Getting information about the participants
		Questionnaire	Intercultural Sensitivity Scale	Getting to know learners' intercultural awareness level.
Oct	1 st week	In-class discussion	American students use IM to have an in-class discussion about the image of the United States and Americans abroad.	Students become familiar with using IM to exchange ideas for academic purpose and reflect on their culture.
	2 nd week	Introductory interaction	Students introduce themselves with their Chinese partner. Then they discuss with their partner what their life is like in America and what may be different if they visited China.	American students and their Chinese partners get to know each other and exchange each other's perspectives of the other culture.
	3 rd week	Word Association	Students write the associations of the words provided in the task sheet from a perspective of an American. They then discuss their answers with their Chinese partners who have their answers from a perspective of a Chinese.	American students become aware of the different interpretations of cultural practices and products members of two cultures have.
	4 th week	Text extracts 1 and IM Discuss	Students read text extracts taken from various foreign writers about the United States and Americans. Then students exchange their ideas with Chinese partners.	American students become aware of different perceptions about America from members of other culture.

		Questionnaire	Intercultural Sensitivity Scale	Getting to know learners' intercultural awareness level.
		Open-ended Interview 1	Based on students' IM conversation recordings, the researcher interviews each student.	The researcher asks American students' feeling about the exchange and the intercultural learning.
Nov.	1 st week	Situation reaction	Students complete the situation reaction, and discuss with their Chinese partner.	Students become aware of the different interpretation of practices by members of different cultures.
	2 nd week	Explaining Idioms	American students explain in Chinese the meanings of various idioms from American culture.	Students look at the link between idioms and cultural values in both cultures.
	3 rd week	Text extract 2 and IM discussion	Students read text extracts taken from American journals or books about China and Chinese and have in-class discussion about their own view of China and Chinese. Then they discuss these with Chinese partner.	Students get to know how others and Chinese themselves look at China and Chinese culture.
	4 th week	Points of view	Both American students and their Chinese partners compare their reaction to a fictitious story that brings up issues of morality.	Discussion of the story leads to comparison of moral values in both cultures.
		Questionnaire	Intercultural Sensitive Scale	Getting to know learners' intercultural awareness level.
Dec.	1 st week	Open-ended Interview 2	Based on students' IM conversation recordings and the results from questionnaires, the researcher interviews each student.	The researcher asks students' perception of the exchange and the intercultural learning and explores reasons why students have those perceptions.

Appendix B

Participants Background

NNS	Age	Sex	Home language	Country born	NSs	Age	Sex	Years in the U.S.
Mark	25	M	English/	Trinidad	Ling	32	F	4
Sandy	23	F	English	U.S.	Qun	32	M	4
Nancy	21	F	English	U.S.	Mu	29	M	4
Mike	22	M	English/Korean	U.S.	Yang	26	M	3
Cathy	21	F	English/ Vietnamese	Vietnam	Shan	29	M	0 in China
Bill	25	M	English	U.S.	Zhao	28	F	4
Jason	23	M	English/Cantonese	Canada	Li	34	F	2

Appendix C

Questionnaire: Intercultural Sensitivity Scale

(Adapted from the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale developed by Chen and Staresta, 2000)

Below is a series of statements concerning intercultural communication. There is no right or wrong answer. Please work quickly and record your first impression by indicating the degree to which you agree or disagree with the statement. Thank you for your cooperation.

5 = strongly agree 4 = agree 3 = uncertain 2 = disagree 1 = strongly disagree

(Please put the number corresponding to your answer in the blank before the statement.)

- ___ 1. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.
- ___ 2. I tend to wait before forming an impression of culturally-distinct counterparts.
- ___ 3. I am open-minded to people from different cultures.
- ___ 4. I often give positive responses to my culturally different counterpart during our interaction.
- ___ 5. I don't avoid those situations where I will have to deal with culturally-distinct persons.
- ___ 6. I often show my culturally-distinct counterpart my understanding through verbal or nonverbal cues.
- ___ 7. I have a feeling of enjoyment towards differences between my culturally-distinct counterpart and me.
- ___ 8. I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.
- ___ 9. I try to obtain as much information as I can when I interacting with people from different cultures.
- ___ 10. I am sensitive to my culturally-distinct counterpart's subtle meanings during our interaction.
- ___ 11. I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.
- ___ 12. I feel at ease to talk in front of people from different cultures.
- ___ 13. I always know what to say when interacting with people from different cultures.
- ___ 14. I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.
- ___ 15. I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures.
- ___ 16. I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.
- ___ 17. I don't like to be with people from different cultures.
- ___ 18. I cannot tolerate the values of people from different cultures.
- ___ 19. I cannot tolerate the ways people from different cultures behave.
- ___ 20. I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.
- ___ 21. I think my culture is better than other cultures.

Table 1

Intercultural Sensitivity Scale Results

Participant	Interaction Engagement and Attentiveness			Intercultural Interaction Confidence			Respect for Intercultural Differences		
	<i>B</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>E</i>
Mark	4	5	5	5	3	4	5	3	5
Sandy	3	4	5	5	4	4	5	5	5
Nancy	5	4	5	4	3	3	4	5	5
Mike	1	3	4	3	4	4	4	5	5
Jason	3	4	5	3	4	5	4	5	5

Note. *B* means at the beginning of the study, *M* in the middle, and *E* at the end of the study.

Table 2

Perceptions about IM Use

Perceptions	Access Convenience	Casual Chat	Private chat	Instant Interaction	Hyper- personal Relationship	Schedule Inconvenience
Participants	7/7	3/7	1/7	7/7	3/7	2/7

Figure 1

Kaikkonen's (1997) Model of Widening of the Picture of Culture

