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Maram Khamaiseh: Communication in Intercultural Online University Classrooms:
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Communication in Intercultural Online University Classrooms: An Interview Study

This exploratory qualitative study aims to gain insights into university students' and teachers' views about interculturality and willingness to communicate (WTC) in online synchronous classes where English (as a lingua franca) is the medium of communication, as well as their views on how interculturality and students' WTC may influence each other. Semi-structured interviews were conducted online with fifteen participants, ten students, and five teachers, and thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. Research findings showed that using different online education platforms required previous experience from the participants. As a result, teachers exert considerable effort into class preparation. The responses also suggest that while interculturality has many benefits in the classroom, its advantages appear to be less exploited online than in face-to-face classes. They note that students' WTC is generally low for various reasons; therefore, both teachers and students argue that working with a variety of topics of discussion in virtual classes might encourage students to communicate more.

Keywords: willingness to communicate, interculturality, online synchronous classes, English as a lingua franca, semi-structured interviews

1. Introduction

Recently interest has been shown in exploring the online synchronous classes, especially when it comes to interaction and participation in the classroom (Nieuwoudt, 2020). Participation in this sense involves a willingness to communicate (WTC) and share ideas with the other members (MacIntyre et al., 1998). According to Harasim (2000), education is most effective when it is combined with collaboration, conceptual development, and engagement. This desire to communicate can be affected by interculturality inside the classroom with the new online setting (Liu et al., 2010; Yildiz, 2008).

The concepts of WTC and interculturality, in most cases, have been researched separately in previous literature; however, in this study, the two concepts will be investigated together, as previous scholarship (e.g., MacIntyre et al., 1998) has suggested, that intergroup relations could have an effect on WTC, but so far no studies have been conducted investigating the nature of those groups. In particular, a need has been intensified with the increased reliance on online synchronous classes during the COVID pandemic (McMurtrie, 2021). Hence, the

study aims at exploring how WTC and interculturality are perceived by teachers and international students interacting in online classrooms.

To achieve this, the following research questions were formulated to guide the study: according to students and teachers,

1. what are the most important advantages and disadvantages of online education?
2. in what ways is interculturality in the classroom affected by university online synchronous classes?
3. in what way is students' WTC affected by interculturality and the online setting in synchronous online intercultural university classes?

1.2. The Review of the Literature

1.2.1 Online Education

Recently, institutions have relied on the existence of online education platforms due to the pandemic. Therefore, a need has been voiced to investigate the qualities of virtual classes, especially in comparison with traditional classes. Researchers have started studying it using different research tools such as observations, interviews, and questionnaires (McMurtrie, 2021; Morgan, 2019; Robin, 2021). According to McMurtrie (2021), the fact that student cooperation was one of the advantages of having virtual classes. One teacher among McMurtrie's interview participants reported giving students credits for such cooperative efforts and referred to it as an "unseen-work recognition portal" (McMurtrie, 2021: 10). Similarly, Morgan (2019) found that the tools and features of virtual classrooms, such as screen sharing in Zoom, increased the interaction between students and teachers. Furthermore, the breakout rooms feature facilitated group work in addition to the use of chat, emoticons, and screen sharing (Martin et al., 2012).

Other studies have highlighted several issues concerning synchronous virtual classes such as structuring discussions, internet connection, and workload stress for instructors, among others (Besser et al., 2020; Flaherty, 2020; Simpson, 2005). In his study on synchronous computer-mediated communication, Simpson (2005) noticed that several features of online educational discourse are different from traditional settings, such as turn-taking. He noted that turn-taking cues were less salient to the participants compared to face-to-face communication; as Simpson puts it: "The participants themselves are denied the range of visual and aural feedback cues" (Simpson, 2005: 345). Moreover, turn-taking among speakers online is slower than in face-to-face communication due to internet connection speeds; as Murray remarked: "The sender may make a second move before receiving a response to the first and a message may interrupt a turn" (Murray, 1988: 10).

In brief, online education has started to be one of the main channels that many members of classrooms for teaching and learning. It has many benefits for students and teachers, such as that students tend to help each other by using online tools. Nevertheless, in many studies, concerns have been voiced regarding

groups' talk and the pressure felt by teachers in managing the online classes. Some of these classes have international students whose cultures are different from each other.

1.2.2. Interculturality

Intercultural communication entails that culture is not confined within the person, but is rather present in shared interactions with others (Geertz, 1973). When an individual is engaged in *intercultural communication* with others, they are involved in intercultural interaction. Therefore, intercultural communication can be defined as the interaction between individuals from different cultural backgrounds (Jandt, 1995). These cultural differences lead to varied patterns of communication with other interlocutors, including turn-taking (Gollick & Chinn, 1998). Participants in some of the intercultural communications also express their commonalities or differences in intercultural communication through ELF whereby English is the “communicative medium of choice, and often the only option” between non-native speakers (Seidlhofer, 2011: 7). In this context, English is not seen as a language belonging to its native speakers, but as a medium of communication that all speakers in the interactive situation use, changing and adapting it in different settings to suit their communicative needs (Baker, 2015).

Several studies have exposed how students perceive interculturality (Liu et al., 2010; Yildiz, 2008). For instance, Liu et al. (2010) conducted a case study on international students in an online learning context. It appeared that students were content about their interaction with teachers and the experiences they learned. In addition, they expressed their preferences for using more varied methods of assessment. Yildiz (2008) found in his study that students were concerned about being misunderstood in online classes due to a lack of visual and vocal expression. The advantage, however, was that they were less anxious about disagreeing with a classmate's opinion and grammar issues while communicating with their international classmates online. Thus, interculturality added positive experiences and skills to students despite concerns about the quality of online discussions.

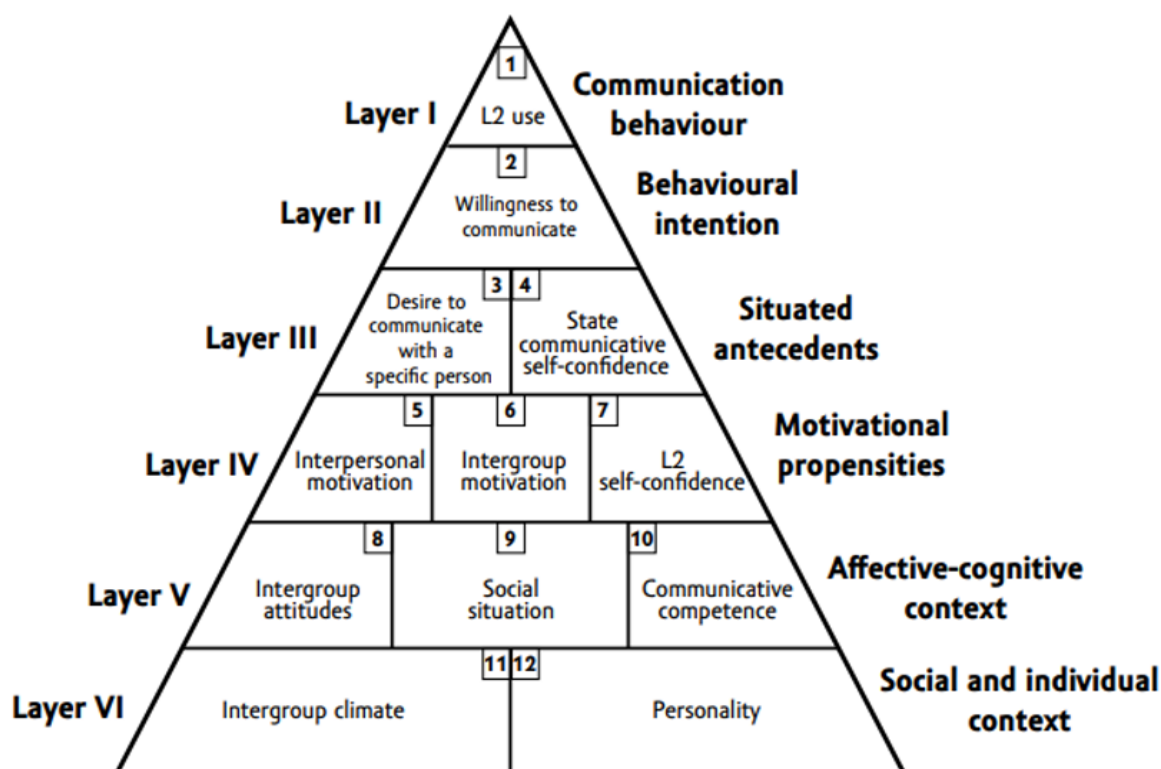
1.2.3. Willingness to Communicate

Yashima defines WTC as “the probability of engaging in communication when given a choice” (2012: 120). The concept has been broadened to include communication in the second language, referring to the use of the L2 inside and outside of the classroom (Kang, 2005). This led many researchers to investigate WTC, and the factors influencing it (Freiermuth & Jarrell, 2006; Kissau et al., 2010; MacIntyre, 1994; MacIntyre et al., 2001). Early research into WTC was widely carried out using quantitative research methods. Later researchers looked into other methodologies as they recognized that this would allow them to observe additional influencing factors involved in WTC (Yashima, 2012).

MacIntyre et al. (1998) suggested a model of situational WTC. The model (see Figure 1) depicts six layers divided into two parts: the top first three layers

represent the situation-based influences, whereas the last three layers include enduring personality factors. The model offers insight into the complexity of WTC as a construct. To illustrate, the students' desire to speak is not always translated into action due to incidents that may interfere with the communicative process (Ajzen, 1988). In brief, MacIntyre et al. claim that “Thinking about communicating in the L2 is different from actually doing it” (2001: 377).

Figure 1. Heuristic Model of Variables Influencing WTC (from MacIntyre et al., 1998: 547)



Research also revealed that the topic of discussion, anxiety and perceived competence (Kissau et al., 2010; MacIntyre, 1994) also proved to be significant predictors of students' WTC. To illustrate, Kang (2005) conducted a qualitative study using interviews, stimulated recalls, and videotaped conversations. The findings revealed that if the topic of the discussion was relevant to participants, such as talking about their culture or ideas they are interested in, they would be more willing to share what they know with their classmates. Kissau et al. (2010) also found that online education decreased anxiety levels and increased perceived competence. Thus, willingness to communicate was generated by higher levels of perceived competence and lower levels of anxiety (MacIntyre, 1994).

2. Research Methods and Design

A qualitative research methodology was chosen for this study to gain deep insights into the concept of WTC and interculturality in synchronous online university classes. To examine the phenomenon from multiple perspectives, both students and teachers were interviewed.

2.1. Context

As the study intended to examine WTC in an online intercultural setting, the participants were asked about these concepts. Data collection was conducted during the first wave of the pandemic (end of 2019-beginning of 2020) when reliance on online education was at a peak. Although there are many types of online education, synchronous online classes were the focus of the current research because the synchronous type entails immediate interaction between the members of the classroom, thus, it is related to the WTC concept. Online platforms were used to collect data in the study since face-to-face meetings proved difficult during the pandemic.

2.2. Participants

Purposive sampling was used due to the research criteria which necessitated choosing participants who had experiences in both onsite and online education, and who had members from different cultures in their classes. Altogether the sample included 15 participants: 13 females and 2 males. They were divided into two groups: students (10), and teachers (5). According to self-reports, their English language proficiency ranged from B2 to C1. The students' nationalities were Jordanian (7 students), Ukrainian (1), Yemeni (1), and Saudi Arabian (1). Teachers were teaching in the United States (1), Saudi Arabia (2), Turkey (1), and Hungary (1). The range of different nationalities and regions represented by the participants was due to finding and contacting participants to volunteer to take part in the study through the use of online platforms.

2.3. Instruments

For each group, semi-structured interviews were used to understand students' and teachers' perspectives about online education, interculturality, and willingness to communicate. Thus, the interview guides were divided into three sets of questions. First, they started with guiding questions to understand the participants' views towards online synchronous classes. The second set of questions focused on the interculturality resulting from having international students, and the communication between them using ELF. The interview protocols of the students' group had more items in this section in comparison to the teachers' group because students work with their peers in projects or small activities, so more details were needed from them. The final set of questions gathered information regarding WTC. Two pilot interviews were conducted with students and one with a teacher

in order to assess the validity of the instrument. The piloting revealed that some questions were too complicated, so they were modified to make them more understandable.

Both guides had the same structure and set of questions. The semi-structured interviews conducted with the students (see Appendix A) started with personal background questions about their age, nationality, field of study, place of study, and English language proficiency. However, the semi-structured interview guide intended for teachers (see Appendix B) included questions about their native language, years of teaching experience (onsite, online), place of teaching, courses (names, number), and the number of students in their classes.

2.4. Data Collection Procedures

The semi-structured interviews were conducted through Skype. The participants gave their consent to be recorded. To preserve their anonymity, they were told that they would later be identified by pseudonyms. They were informed about their right to opt-out of the study at any point in the interview. Due to the diversity of the participants' languages and their high English language proficiency, the interviews were conducted in English. However, they were allowed to use Arabic sentences, words, and expressions, because in several cases it was the native language of both the interviewer and the interviewees. The duration of students' and teachers' interviews was between 25–36 minutes and 35–49 minutes, respectively.

2.5. Data Analysis

After recording and transcribing the interviews for both groups of participants, the students' transcribed recordings resulted in 52,901 words worth of data, whereas the teachers' transcribed recordings were made up of a total of 23,568 words. Then, thematic analysis was used to analyze the data, a method widely used when dealing with verbal data in qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Through following the six phases of analysis recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006: 5), meaningful patterns (themes) emerged from the data. These six phases were applied to both groups:

Phase 1: Becoming familiar with the data through listening to the recordings and transcribing them

Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes: The most frequently repeated words and phrases are searched for across the data; repetitions were labeled, and patterns were taken note of in the data.

Phase 3: Searching for Themes: By highlighting the overlaps and similarities among the codes, similar codes were combined to form themes.

Phase 4: Reviewing Themes: Themes were analyzed for the whole data set. Some themes were grouped together (e.g., Low interaction, Body language, Human relations).

Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes: In this phase, the themes that emerged in the previous phase were given names that reflected their characteristics.

Phase 6: Producing the Report: Themes were written up in a logical, coherent order. Quotes from the interviews were provided to explain each theme, and previous research findings that align or differ from the findings were discussed.

2.6. Quality Control

Four main principles of quality control were followed throughout the study: creditability, confirmability, dependability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Although triangulation was not possible in the study since interviews were the sole instrument for data collection, the aim to investigate the perceptions of both teachers and students was pursued to ensure the representation of different viewpoints; in addition, after transcribing the interviews, the transcripts were sent to the participants who were asked to indicate any inaccuracies in them. Participants' statements from the transcripts were used as evidence when describing the research findings. Furthermore, an audit trail was established by keeping the record of the data collection and analysis thoroughly documented. Finally, thick descriptions were provided from in connection to the results from both groups of participants and the research context.

3. Results and discussion

In this section, the results of the thematic analysis from the two groups will be discussed and linked to previous research findings. Findings will be presented according to the order of the research questions.

3.1. Experience

The theme of experience was mentioned by most of the participants from both groups, who indicated that online education required previous experience. It was suggested that familiarity with online classes could better facilitate engagement with different digital platforms and tools. This was demonstrated through the recollections of the participants: when face-to-face classes were moved online during the first wave of COVID, students found the transition troublesome and confusing; however, with time both students and teachers were able to adapt to the new circumstances.

The realization of the flexibility of the online classroom setting came when teachers and students noticed that they could attend the morning or evening classes without wasting time on transportation. For instance, one student praised online learning by saying that it “makes it easier for me to attend classes that are early in the morning that I usually struggle to wake up for, so, I never miss my class now” (student Sally 6:15). In addition, a teacher also described online by saying “Online learning is more convenient: anytime, anywhere. it is flexible...yes, convenience and flexibility are the words for sure” (Ellen 15:07).

Teachers specifically discussed teaching experience in connection with online education. For instance, one of them stated: “We don't have experience in online teaching, especially in practical courses like pharmacology” (teacher Peter 1:00). However, this was not the case for all interviewees, as two teachers had taught online classes in the past, so the transition was not a burden for them. As one of the educators explained: “Again, I'm experienced in this. So, I feel very comfortable teaching online. I started before all this. So, I think you know, virtual learning is very convenient, easier. There are so many tools to do it” (Ellen 2:47).

The expertise of participants with e-learning tools changed with time, which played a significant role in helping participants cope with the technology and the new digital setting. Thus, time played a role in developing these skills. To put it another way: “At the beginning, everything was more difficult than now. Because it was a new thing for us and students” (teacher Julia 2:06). In this regard, a teacher suggested that teachers should be aware that not all students had the same ability in using computers or internet platforms: “I teach older students and younger students, my younger students were very tech-savvy, for them it was where easier to go online versus my older generation, who found it difficult” (Ellen 17:46).

3.2. Teachers' effort

All participants noted that more effort was invested in online synchronous classes in comparison with onsite ones. Students stated that teachers were “creating channels or group chats, and divide us [students] into groups and we have like special rooms to discuss topics... most of them [teachers] are coping and trying to make it the best way possible” (student Lili, 8:33). It is interesting to note here that all students used the word “try” when describing their instructor's efforts towards online classes. In their interviews, teachers recalled using different online tools and teaching methods to deliver information which sometimes makes them exert more effort to make it work (also in Martin et al., 2012; Morgan, 2019). However, teachers also doubted if students were understanding the ideas being discussed during the online classes. Consequently, teachers had to follow up with their students as to whether their explanations were obvious or not.

Additionally, students confirmed that instructors made laborious efforts for their online classes since they had to convert the materials into digital formats to be able to display them in front of the class; this was elaborated on by one student who stated that:

The teacher has more workload to do, a lot of work to do, more than the onsite teaching... They do have to transform the written material for example, or the book the content of the book into software or electronic version. (Nada 20:30)

In addition, teachers expressed that providing feedback to students in an online setting presented a higher workload for teachers compared to onsite teaching. All teachers confirmed receiving more emails from students in their online classes

compared to their traditional ones, As one teacher Julia explained, she received “many messages from them anytime. Anytime even during weekends” (13:33).

Some teachers attempted to use new methods online to interact with their students and encourage them to talk. For instance, six students noticed that their teachers attempted to follow a certain sequence to give students a chance to participate if possible; one student reported that “The teacher let us participate by the order of our names” (Nada 20:36). Teachers were not simply carrying out their usual teaching duties in clarifying points and delivering the lesson content, but they also had additional responsibilities such as encouraging their students to interact during online classes; the previously-mentioned teacher Julia recalled that “I tried to push them to participate, to speak to them if they want to share something about themselves, about their interests or if they have any worry or hardship” (9:21).

3.3. Online Intercultural Classroom

Participants agreed that interculturality in online classes was a positive experience as it provided students with opportunities to exchange ideas and broaden their world knowledge. The presence of international students in the classroom led classroom members to be cautious while expressing their opinions, not to offend any culture. In a similar to the study of Liu et al. (2010), students declared that they gained considerable knowledge about the world while communicating with students from different cultures. To give an example, one student described participating in online conversations, saying that it “enhances the experience... especially in my field, the nature of some of our discussions is very personal and you get to explore the experiences of actual people in different cultures or different settings...So it's eye-opening” (Sally 13:38).

Teachers remarked that classes were more enjoyable and fruitful when there were students from different cultures, with one teacher explaining that “different cultures mean students having even different scientific or knowledge backgrounds which means different questions will be asked from teachers” (teacher Julia 23:50). Seven students also noted that having international classmates added to their learning in a positive way. For instance, a student who was studying psychology found that discussions with people from different cultures enriched her understanding of the course content.

Despite the positive aspects of interculturality, all fifteen participants reported that such aspects were less noticeable in online settings compared to face-to-face encounters. The perceived reason behind this was the lack of students' participation in remote classes, which meant less interaction between classmates; as a result, they did not feel that they benefitted from the intercultural setting as much as they did during offline courses. To illustrate, a respondent commented that “There is not that kind of communication [intercultural], it is missing. It is not obvious, and it's not clear, and it will not be like face to face” (student Victoria 20:16).

Within this broad theme, English as a lingua franca was viewed positively by most students. They believed the presence of international classmates forced them to use the English language, which they found beneficial. Furthermore, they felt higher levels of confidence when speaking with their international classmates without being afraid of pronunciation or grammar mistakes, because as one student pointed out: “Everyone is using English because they use it to communicate so you're in like you're not judged for, for your, like, the way you speak English...if you have mistaken. So, I think it's much more comforting” (Eliza 13:35). Such findings reflect Baker (2015), who describes English as a lingua franca as a tool to deliver and receive the meaning of messages between interlocutors. Accordingly, the use of English was flexible and not complicated.

3.4. Low WTC

Students expressed their unwillingness to speak during their online classes. Low levels of interaction did not always mean that students were not eager to communicate; instead, the presence of other factors might have interfered and deterred them from participating. To demonstrate, raising students’ hands was mentioned in MacIntyre et al. (1998) as a sign for students’ WTC; however, in online settings such as Microsoft Teams the icon shown when using the hand-raising function was sometimes not seen by the teacher, or it was not a true indication of the student’s willingness to communicate, often being raised by mistake. This was explained in detail by the student Sam relayed said the following:

In the Online platform, sometimes I raised my hand in Teams, for example, that I want to answer the question, but the professor does not see that raising of my hand. So, I don't want to interrupt. So, like, I keep the answer to the question for myself. (10:13).

This finding is in line with what was stated in the literature by Ajzen (1988). The author explained how circumstances can interfere between the intention to speak and the actual action. This is also further reflected in Macintyre and colleagues’ model (1998), which contains are two separate layers: one represents the behavioral intention of the individual while the other represents the actual communicative behavior displayed.

Examining this from another angle, such an incident as described above by Sam could potentially demotivate students from participating again. The student Sam explained that if the professor asked a question and the student raised a hand, but the teacher did not see it after a certain amount of time, the student would feel “ashamed to go back to the previous slide and answer a question that has already been answered by someone else” (36:00). The issue related to the hand-raising function on online platforms is only one issue that can impact a student’s WTC; other themes which appeared in connection to WTC are discussed in the sections below.

3.4.1. Lack of Body Language

It was mentioned by all fifteen of the participants that body language was one of the most vital factors that played a role in successful communication. In accordance with Yildiz's (2008) research, participants in both groups confirmed that online education lacks gestures, eye contact, and other body language signs. The significance of body language in communication was studied extensively by researchers such as Simpson (2005), who indicated that body language was an important source of feedback in conversations between participants.

Students' lack of gestures and eye contact had a perceived detrimental effect that was described by the student Sally, who shared that in online settings students have to put in more effort "to understand people because sometimes you have like contextual clues that are physical...so you know, body language" (1:57). This made them less willing to share their ideas due to a fear of being misunderstood. For example, one student complained that "People may not get me, may not get the point that I am I try to deliver it because there is no body language or facial expression" (Mary 27:38).

For teachers, body language was part of knowing how their students feel and how the lesson was going, and it was also a tool for tracking students' understanding of a topic or instructions in class. However, in online classes, such cues provided by body language were absent. One instructor explained this by saying, "you need to see if the students really understand or not which could be seen in the expression on their faces...especially here [Saudi Arabia], we don't use the camera." (Julia 2:06).

3.4.2. Internet and Technology Issues

All participants reported that technical issues and the reliability of technology impacted the extent of students' participation in virtual classes. Teachers in this study listed poor internet connection as one of the reasons that led some students to not attend classes; one teacher claimed that "Not all students can have like proper internet, proper speed of the internet. So, if some students do not have proper speed, then he cannot, or she cannot attend the courses" (Ruaa 5:05). It should be noted that because they joined the classes from different locations, the type and speed of internet connection were not the same for all members. This has also been found in Flaherty's (2020) study, where participants express the issue of the reliability of internet connection.

In addition, technical issues impacted turn-taking as one of the main features of spoken discourse. Concerning this issue, one student described in detail how turn-taking occurred in online classroom discussions:

Because of the internet connection, someone speaks faster, someone slower, like starts the conversation...this time between someone stops and someone starts talking, I want to speak my idea or to tell the answer. So, it's hard for me to speak out during online classes. (Lili 3:53).

To add, sometimes connection issues made it difficult for students to follow what their teachers were saying to them during a discussion. In some cases it was reported that when a student asked a question they would be interrupted or not heard; one student observed that he had occasional difficulties following the answer to his questions, either because someone else was talking during the teachers' answer or "because of the of the internet connection maybe" (Sam 7:26).

3.4.3. Anxiety Factors

Unlike previous studies where remote classes were effective in lowering the anxiety levels of the participants (e.g., Kissau et al. 2010), in this study ten participants, six students and four teachers, asserted that the desire to participate and speak during virtual classes was impacted by psychological factors, specifically anxiety. This anxiety appeared via many aspects: one of them was related to world news about COVID 19 which was encountered outside the classroom, or sitting for a long time "four to three classes a day in the same place in the same corner in front of the laptop which makes my desire less to talk in the class" (student Amal 6:21).

In the interview data from the teachers, participants reported having an understanding of the current situation in relation to the pandemic and quarantine, so they tried to consider students' psychological burden while leading their lessons. One lecturer commented on the situation faced by students in the following interview excerpt:

During the online teaching, there was a lockdown, they cannot go out. This is maybe affecting their psychology...Always in the home! Tension, stress, they are always in the home just listening to lectures and the news at the beginning of COVID. (Peter 23:24)

There was only one teacher who did not report such instances of anxiety compared to the four other teachers. However, this might be due to the fact that she was lecturing only seven students and held class only half an hour each day. In general, students perceived high levels of anxiety, and teachers expressed their compassion and understanding in regard to the situation.

3.5. Topic effect

All participants in the student group reported that the topic of the discussion, within the intercultural online classroom setting, was the key motive for them to communicate, particularly if the subject was related to their background, country, or culture. As one of them said: "You want to represent yourself in a good way, your country in a good way" (student Amal, 32: 42). In line with Kang's (2005) findings, such feelings of responsibility led some of them to share their ideas about the topic. The findings show that students participated if they knew about the subject; as a participant explained: "When we have to talk about something personal, something about our feelings or something about differences among our

cultures, I feel I want to participate and I have become really active” (student Amal 34:03).

Seven students mentioned that their teachers were strict with lecture content to save time as technical issues, setting up the next class, or checking students’ comments in the chat-box tended to take time away from the actual time of the class. Therefore, there was limited time for everyone to comment about their personal experiences or share something with the group. Only one lecturer mentioned that the topic of the discussion was important to encourage students to be active and participate because “maybe there are some topics that interest them or trigger them, they will express their opinions depending on the topic of the discussion topics.” (Ruaa 29:12).

Instructors in the interviews also reported that shy students were more able to comment or offer personal examples during online classes compared to what they normally contributed in their onsite classes. A teacher provided the following example: “I have some students, a girl actually who was shy in class and became more confident to participate and answer questions online even if the answer is wrong” (Julia 30:00).

4. Conclusion

This study aimed at exploring how WTC and interculturality in an online educational setting were perceived by students and teachers. The findings indicate that the online educational setting, in general, requires experience from participants in order to become efficiently used. Moreover, teachers report doing more in online classes in comparison with their workload in onsite classes. They teach in Intercultural online classes, which have many advantages, that are not as fully exploited as they can be in traditional learning and teaching. Additionally, there is a low WTC in online classes for many reasons, such as the fear of being misunderstood because of the lack of gestures/signs, internet and technical issues, and anxiety factors. However, the findings also showed that varying the topic of discussion can play an important role in encouraging students to speak, especially if the subject relates to their personal background.

The research is expected to yield benefits to institutions’ administrators, teachers, and students. As a result of globalization, the number of international students at universities around the world increases every year (OECD, 2021); therefore, it is important for administrators need to consider how their institutions could benefit from increased diversity. Moreover, policymakers in different institutions should consider the presence of new international students. To cater to these students’ needs, admonitors could arrange online gatherings whereby students could talk about themselves and meet other students.

Teachers could encourage students to be more independent in online learning to alleviate the workload. They may also consider using activities that bring international classmates together, such as breakout rooms, to encourage more

communication among students. Moreover, instructors should raise their students' awareness regarding different varieties of communication styles.

Concerning limitations, most participants were from Jordan; however, individual participants were also included in the sample from each of the following countries: Ukraine, Macedonia, Hungary, Turkey, and United States. The sample forms a nearly homogenous group, with most participants coming from Arab countries, which might have impacted the findings of the study. Additionally, the presence of mostly females in the study, and only two male participants, may have also had an impact on the findings.

Further studies should concentrate on investigating the relationships between internationality and interaction in online classes among other teachers and students population comprising different nationalities. Moreover, researchers should study how the shortcomings of online classes in connection to WTC could be compensated for or resolved.

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