

# “Intercultural Virtual Exchange as An Alternative to Develop Global Citizenship: A Review of Weaknesses and Effectiveness”

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## Abstract

Online interaction exchange and intercultural issues have developed rapidly in the last century. As part of global citizenships, nations have several ways to build transnationalism, which can be seen in many countries collaborating, including in global education. The online interaction exchange has been mentioned as telecollaboration (Guth, S., & Thomas, M., 2010; Belz, 2002; O’Dowd, 2018), e-tandem or tele-tandem (O’Rourke, 2007), Virtual Exchange (Lenkaitis, 2020, 2022), and intercultural virtual exchange (Dooly, M., 2021) is a part of the digital transformation of education. Parallel learners that consist of students and teachers from different countries and cultural backgrounds are integrated into one line through synchronous and asynchronous media (Belz, 2003; Dooly, 2017; O’Dowd, 2018; Lenkaitis, 2022). This article begins by reviewing intercultural virtual exchange (IVE) to develop global citizenship and analyzing the effectiveness and the weaknesses of IVE through several previous studies. Global citizenship is defined as acceptance, awareness, and sympathy for cultural differences while socializing universal values and sustainability integrated with others. However, several studies found that IVE has often been criticized for failing to produce the intended learning outcomes (O’Dowd, 2018), artificial and based on phatic interaction between students who lack curiosity about other cultures (Kramersch, 2014), and uncondutive to genuine interaction and learning (Hanna & de Nooy, 2009). Compared with this, the effectiveness of IVE showed that learners could engage in authentic interaction with native speakers or with learners from other countries (O’Dowd, 2018), to give them first-hand experience of real intercultural communication (Hanna and de Nooy, 2009), and to gain global awareness development (Lenkaitis, 2018).

Keywords: Intercultural Virtual Exchange (IVE), Global citizenship, parallel learners, universal values

## Introduction

Globalization is marked by the ease and rapid development of technology and information in the World (Kopish & Marques, 2019). The World is becoming increasingly interconnected (Reysen & Miller, 2013); people are becoming easier to travel across countries, communicate without limitations of time and place, and access various kinds of information across countries quickly (Ospina & Lopera, 2021). It is becoming increasing that individuals around the World can work and live together (Degens et al., 2016). According to various studies, globalization greatly impacts various aspects of human life, such as social, political, economic, cultural, and educational. Several things

drive changes in education due to globalization focusing on the impact of globalization on education. Learning strategies that involve technology as a learning medium is one of the advancements in education, for example, the use of digital media, Virtual Reality, and Augmented Reality. On the other hand, globalization also increases interaction, communication, and international mobility (Lenkaitis, 2022).

In the 21st century, Student exchange and international education activities according to the impact of globalization. Along with increasing international mobility in business, politics, and trading, the international community considers it important to establish cross-country, cross-cultural, and cross-ethnic

relationships. Through education at the school level and higher education, educators include multicultural issues in the curriculum to increase student's intercultural sensitivity. Hamburger (1990) suggests that intercultural learning over-emphasizes foreignness and the differences between cultures and therefore risks reinforcing stereotypes and ethnocentrism among learners (As cited in O'Dowd, 2003). Various intercultural exchange programs that bring together cross-country students in an activity to introduce culture and diversity are held, for example, AFS. This program aims to increase students' understanding of cultural diversity across countries. This is also important because intercultural exchange can be used as an alternative to introduce and improve global citizenship in the younger generation's mindset.

In its development, intercultural exchange is not only carried out on-site at the campus or host school but also online, known as Intercultural Virtual Exchange (IVE). Moreover, during the Covid-19 pandemic, several virtual learning platforms are used to support online learning, for example, Zoom, Google meet, Voov, WhatsApp video. Online learning environment provides benefits for international students to reflect upon the learning process that might occur during face-to-face classroom interaction without technology (Han et al., 2022). Moreover, digital intercultural training tools play an important role in helping people to mediate cultural misunderstandings (Legend et al., 2016, abs) and to develop global citizenship.

In the brief of history, intercultural exchanges in education have been pioneered by Freinet (1994) in the global learning networks in France and Italy (O'Dowd, 2003). Intercultural learning is often assumed to be an automatic benefit between groups of learners in different countries. However,

more research is needed on whether online intercultural collaboration does develop learners' understanding of the other culture's perspective and worldview (O'Dowd, 2003). Several tools can be used to support IVE, such as email (O'Dowd, 2003), web-based message boards and video conferencing (O'Dowd, 2007), augmented reality (Hadjistassou et al., 2019), teletandem (Cavalari, 2019), Facebook (Fuchs, 2020), Virtual Reality (Ondarra et al., 2020; Shadiev et al., 2020), Zoom (Allen et al., 2021), Virtual Mobility / WhatsApp (Catalano & Barriga, 2021).

The cultural backgrounds and experiences in online learning affect the quality of learning, particularly among international students, potentially further aggravating educational inequalities (Han et al., 2022). The aim of IVE is in line with the development of global citizenship. Reysen & Miller (2013) defined global citizenship as awareness, caring, and embracing cultural diversity while socializing social justice and sustainability, coupled with a sense of responsibility to act. There are so many concepts of global citizenship, as written by several scholars in cross disciplines. Golmohamad (2008) mentions transnational citizenship or international citizenship, and Haugestad (2004) mentions world citizenship and earth citizenship. On the other hand, the indicators of global citizenship are: prosocial values of intergroup empathy, valuing diversity, social justice, environmental sustainability, intergroup helping, and a felt responsibility to act for the betterment of the World (Reyzen & Miller, 2013). In this article, the researchers analyze several indicators of the effectiveness and weaknesses of IVE to develop global citizenship through a systematical review.

## Method

This article is based on a systematic review of previous studies of intercultural virtual exchange. A systematic review responds to a specific research question that is relatively in-depth in scope and provides a detailed analysis and summary of the best available evidence in response to this topic (Sharma et al., 2014). Some criteria and procedures would be guided in selecting and processing the articles. The ERIC Database and Emerald are selected to find articles about intercultural virtual exchange (IVE). The total number of articles is 264 regarding the keyword “intercultural virtual exchange. After checking the abstracts, there were 50 articles filtered due to relevance to this study. The criteria and procedures for selecting the article will be presented below.

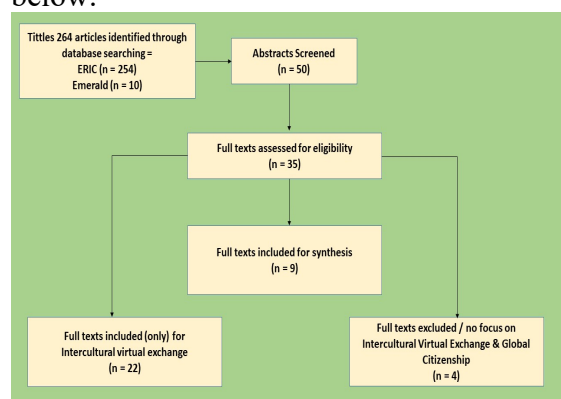


Figure 1. Selecting Article Processes

## Data Analysis

In a systematic review, the researcher should conduct an in-depth analysis to produce or write the study result. Kolm et al. (2022) stated that the researcher should follow an inductive approach to analyze the competencies emerging from the literature and assign them to themes, grouping competencies that seemed to be similar and writing. In this study, the researcher labeled the content regarding four themes, including

the definition of intercultural virtual exchange (IVE), global citizenship, the effectiveness of IVE, and the weaknesses of IVE. After grouping the content regarding the themes, the conclusion will be displayed as the result of the study.

## Result and Discussion

### *Global Citizenship is not issue, but “Demand”!*

The complexity of today’s mobility and globalized world forces teachers to educate their students to become global citizens (Lenkaitis&Loranc-Paszyk, 2020). Schools and colleges are required to prepare students to attract the challenges and opportunities of a global workforce to face the demands of globalization (Kopish & Marques, 2019). Boix-Mansilla & Chua (2016) suggested global competence as the ability to understand and act on global significance issues. Moreover, they argued that educational institutions should contribute to providing students facing global competence through several instructions, including investigating the world beyond their immediate environment, recognizing the perspectives of others and their own, communicating ideas effectively with diverse audiences, and taking action to improve conditions. Leask, as cited in O’Dowd (2019) explained that universities also have responded by undertaking to internationalize their curricula and by introducing competence sets of intercultural competence and global citizenship in the description of their graduate attributes. Hence, Intercultural Virtual Exchange can be an alternative to developing global citizenship for students.

In the last decade, intercultural and global competence concepts have been supplemented by intercultural citizenship and global citizenship, which carry separate, but related connotations and

objectives (O'Dowd, 2019). Zong, as cited in Lenkaitis and Loranc-Paszylk (2020), also agreed that It could be interesting to describe how IVE encourage global citizenship through intercultural and global learning. Moreover, a study has been piloted by Lenkaitis et al. (2020) indicated that six themes depict students' understanding of global education, such as the means to learn about diverse cultures, the need to the acknowledgment of multicultural points of view, the need to learn about essential global issues and challenges, the need for conducting corporation across countries, the need for peaceful living and tolerance each other, and the need to develop critical thinking on published news and global issues.

### ***The Effectiveness of Intercultural Virtual Exchange***

Most studies argued that IVE could contribute to developing intercultural communication competence (O'Dowd, 2003, 2007; Wang et al., 2017; Shadiev et al., 2020; Catalano & Barriga, 2021; Fondo, 2021; Su et al., 2021; Lenkaitis, 2022), particularly improve students' confidence (Ismailov, 2021; Roarty & Hagley, 2021) and improve intercultural sensitivity (Roarty & Hagley, 2021). Chen and Starosta (2000) suggested that intercultural sensitivity is an effective aspect of intercultural communicative competence, defined as a person's ability to develop a positive emotion toward understanding and appreciating cultural differences that promotes appropriate and effective behavior in intercultural communication. On the other hand, further research should be piloted to investigate the correlation between IVE and intercultural sensitivity.

Shadiev et al. (2020) stated that IVE could boost the skill of students and teachers in order to engage successfully in the complexity of online learning (Shadiev et al., 2020). I can develop a critical perspective on texts while they also create

an international identification, different from their national/regional identifications (Porto, 2014, abs; Ferreira-Lopez et al., 2020), and the majority of students interested in participating in the different tasks (Ferreira-Lopez et al., 2020). The exchange helped to shed light on several perennial issues in English language teaching methodology and offers a feasible model for future sustainable virtual exchanges in EFL teacher training (Allen et al., 2021). Moreover, It can raise positive attitudes (Ferreira-Lopez et al., 2020), valuable experience (O'Dowd & Dooly, 2021), cultural awareness, and cultural knowledge (Gomez, 2017; Ferreira-Lopez et al., 2020; Hadjistassou et al., 2021; Roarty & Hagley, 2021) and cultural exchanges (Fuchs, 2020; Shadiev et al., 2020; Arndt et al., 2021), in particular, to discuss the course themes during the study. Even though the participants perceived the social and physical presence afforded by the VR environment positively (Liaw, 2019). IVE has the potential to address empathy among learners in IVE through meta-cognitive tasks, which are learners can describe, share, and evaluate emotions (Golubeva & Guntersdorfer, 2020; Lenkaitis & Loranc-Paszylk, 2021)

The effectiveness of IVE also contributes to promoting 21st-century skills to today's learners based on the world language map (Lenkaitis, 2020). Students established personal connections and shared responsibility in addressing local and global concerns (Szobonya & Roche, 2021; Lenkaitis, 2022). In the teaching and learning process, IVE provides a new perspective on teaching strategies (Lenkaitis, 2022). IVE creates additional chances for realizing the dialogue principles of participation, coherence, awareness, and unfolding (Maele, 2020) and methodological innovation (O'Dowd & Dooly, 2021). Furthermore, IVE can contribute to

improving multi-literacies related to linguistic competence (Su et al., 2021).

### ***The Weaknesses of Intercultural Virtual Exchange***

Several benefits of IVE have been described above according to previous studies from 2003 to 2022. However, some studies found the weaknesses of IVE as a platform for cultivating and developing intercultural skills. International students experience challenges in online learning related to English language proficiency, instructor unpreparedness, and isolation (Karkar-Esperat, 2018) (as cited in Han et al., 2022). It can be seen that social interaction is meaningful but missing components of successful online learning environments (Crosta et al., 2016). Furthermore, online learning environments, especially in moments of transition, require different instructional strategies than in-person settings, and serving international graduate students in such environments requires considerations (Han et al., 2022). There is little flexibility in the choice of tasks shown in all cases, which avoids promoting students' autonomy and responsibility, one of the features of intercultural learning in virtual environments.

The practice of IVE still needs to gain knowledge about curriculum design, especially concerning the consistency between the objectives, content, methodology, and evaluation. It is necessary to train teachers in intercultural education and topics such as curricular design and educational technology (Barreto & Haydar, 2012). Some experts also detected the need for implementation guidelines and specific resources that guarantee excellence in language learning (Ramirez-2010). Student attitudes toward such VE in the FL classroom still need to be fully understood (Hagley & Cotter, 2019). In order to overcome these weaknesses, it is necessary to train teachers in intercultural education and

topics such as curricular design and educational technology (Barreto et al., 2012).

O'Dowd (2003) mentioned that models of intercultural learning in IVE attributed to changing students' attitudes, behavior, and perspectives had been the cause of much criticism in the literature. Intercultural learning emphasizes foreignness and cultural differences (Hamburger, 1990). Therefore, the risks led to a reinforcement of misunderstanding or even conflicts among students. If such problems keep occurring, they may eventually create negative stereotypes, which may influence future interactions with people from those cultures due to labeling them (Degens et al., 2016).

### **Conclusion**

There were three main points of conclusion in this study, including several studies suggested Intercultural Virtual Exchange is critical to developing Global Citizenship, Intercultural Virtual Exchange has an immense contribution to improving Intercultural communication competence, which is part of Global competence skills, and There is a need for guidelines for teaching Intercultural Virtual Exchange to regulate curriculum design and strategy in online learning.

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