

## Developing Intercultural Communicative Competence through Online Exchanges

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### ABSTRACT

Based on Byram's (1997) definition of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and on specific types of discourse analysis proposed by Kramersch and Thorne (2002) and Ware and Kramersch (2005), this article explores how online exchanges can play a role in second language learners' development of pragmatic competence and ICC. With data obtained from an intercultural exchange between students learning German in an American university and students studying English at a German university, we illustrate how culture is embedded in language as discourse, how "language learners have to negotiate new ways not only of interpreting the content of utterances, but also of navigating interactional pragmatics" (Ware & Kramersch, p. 201), and how advanced learners of German as a foreign language and English as a foreign language employ different discourse styles in their online postings as they seek to understand the discourse genres of their partners.

### KEYWORDS

Telecollaboration, Intercultural Communicative Competence, Pragmatic Competence, Asynchronous Forums, Synchronous Text Chat

### INTRODUCTION

The fields of second language acquisition (SLA) and foreign language education (FLE) both recognize the importance not only of linguistic and communicative competence but of intercultural competence as well. In theorizing about SLA, functionalist approaches focus on how language is used primarily for communication and therefore must incorporate multiple levels of language, including pragmatics (Bardovi-Harlig, 2007). The focus of functionalist theories is on the linguistic resources used to make meaning and entails analysis of how learners' language constructs meaning (Chapelle, 2009). Many scholars have argued that language and culture must be treated as inseparable constructs (Byrnes, 2002; Kramersch, 1993), and recent work concentrates on the pedagogies that seek to develop intercultural competence. Byrnes (2009) examines three documents, the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* (ACTFL, 2006), the *Common European Framework of Reference* (CEFR; Council of Europe, 2001), and the report by the Modern Language Association Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages (2007) entitled "Foreign languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World," all of which indicate a shift in the foreign language profession as it pertains to the role of culture. Each document "assumes that language use must be seen as embedded in diverse social activities in the lives of people and peoples around the globe" (ACTFL, p. 316) and subscribes to the idea that the goal of FLE is to develop speakers who have deep translingual and transcultural competence.

Studies focusing on how computer-mediated communication (CMC) or telecollaboration can contribute to the development of pragmatic competence and ICC are emerging (e.g., Belz, 2007; Kramersch & Thorne, 2002; Schneider & von der Emde, 2006; Ware & Kramersch, 2005). Belz reviews the work on the role of computer mediation in the development of pragmatic competence, stating that "there is a general consensus among scholars that *pragmatics* involves the study of communicative language use in sociocultural context" (p. 45) and citing studies of collaborative interaction that have investigated, for example, variations in conversational style, the performance of apologies, the presentation of opinions, and the negotiation of positive and negative face. The present study examines the discourse produced by second language (L2) learners in asynchronous forum discussions and synchronous text chats and reports on the interactional pragmatic abilities exhibited by the learners in these different types of CMC environments that reflect different levels of ICC.

### REVIEW OF STUDIES ON CMC AND ICC

This section reviews previous work in three areas, first, defining what intercultural communicative competence (ICC) entails; second, documenting how different types of computer-mediated communication (CMC) can be leveraged to help learners develop pragmatic competence and ICC; and third, assessing the acquisition of ICC.

### ICC

The intercultural competent speaker, as defined by Byram (1997), is able to effectively exchange information with members of the target culture and does so by displaying attitudes of curiosity and openness, demonstrating knowledge of how language and culture are related in the target culture, possessing skills of interpreting and relating, and being able to use in real-time an appropriate combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes to interact with interlocutors from a different country or culture. If interlocutors want to maintain conversational involvement, they must be aware of the other's sociocultural background as well as the linguistic practices used to express that background or culture. Successful intercultural communication requires interlocutors to understand the differences in interactional norms between different speech communities and the ability to "reconcile or mediate between different modes present" (Byram & Fleming, 1998, p. 12). In addition, ICC involves an understanding not only of the culture and language being studied but also the readiness to suspend disbelief and judgment about the other culture (Culture 2 or C2) and the willingness to reflect on one's own culture (Culture 1 or C1) and question the values and presuppositions in one's own cultural practices. Through comparing and contrasting, learners can become more deeply aware of their own, often unconscious, belief system and ideological perspectives. They understand how aspects of their own culture are perceived from the other's cultural perspective and how this link between the two cultures is fundamental to interaction.

### CMC to Develop ICC

The use of online telecollaboration between individuals or groups in different locations has been documented with both successful and failed exchanges. For example, Abrams (2002), Furstenberg, Levet, English, and Maillet (2001), and Kramersch and Thorne (2002), to name but a few, show that online exchanges can raise learners' cultural awareness. Other studies (Belz, 2003; Chun & Wade, 2004; Müller-Hartmann, 2000; Wade, 2005) report on successful

development of some aspects of intercultural competence. However, success cannot be taken for granted in telecollaborative exchanges, and even the aforementioned studies discuss a wide range of sociocultural and intercultural pragmatic factors that can hinder success.

In a comprehensive review of existing research on the use of telecollaboration in language and culture learning, O'Dowd and Ritter (2006) list and describe 10 different factors at four levels (individual, classroom, socioinstitutional, and interaction) which help to explain "failed communication" in online exchanges. The fourth level, the interaction level, refers to "the misunderstandings and tension which arise from cultural differences in communicative style and behavior" (p. 634), reflecting a focus on intercultural pragmatics.

Just as in face-to-face communication, internet users bring with them their own culturally specific communicative norms and modes of behavior, and, in an intercultural exchange, they must determine whether their norms and behaviors are compatible with those of their partners. The study by Kramsch and Thorne (2002) investigates the use of synchronous and asynchronous communication between French learners of English in France and American learners of French in the US and finds different discourse styles between the two groups. "Most of the French interlocutors used factual, impersonal, dispassionate genres of writing" (p. 94), whereas most of the American students' postings reflected an "oral style ... full of questions and exclamation marks, [which] suggests a high degree of affective involvement and emotional identification" (p. 95). Different expectations of each group about the relative focus on information exchange versus personal engagement provide "a strong example of the challenges inherent to cross cultural interaction while illustrating little in terms of interlanguage pragmatic development" (Thorne, 2003, p. 45), using Boxer's (2002) distinction between cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics.

Ware and Kramsch (2005) also advocate examining language as discourse, looking at interactional structures in addition to linguistic structures. They describe an extended episode of misunderstanding between two students in an asynchronous CMC project and suggest that online intercultural exchanges "afford both students and teachers the opportunity to learn more about historical facts, linguistic features of speech, and discourse pragmatics, as well as about the expectations of genre and the constraints of the medium" (p. 202). Students can explore the nature of language and communication across cultures and can be encouraged to reflect on both their and their interlocutors' utterances.

In addition to the potential problem of differing discursive styles in intercultural CMC, different cultures-of-use of the internet communication tools themselves can help or hinder communication (see Ware & Kramsch's [2005] reference above to the constraints of the medium). Based on three case studies, Thorne (2003) concludes that the tools are not neutral media. Email was found to be a constraining variable in the intercultural communication process because students perceived it to be a tool for communication between power levels and generations (e.g., students to teachers or children to parents); students much preferred instant messaging for communicating with their peers. Not only is the asynchronous versus synchronous nature of the CMC tool an issue, but as Herring (1999) suggests, the structural properties of CMC systems have an effect on interactional coherence, specifically on turn-taking and exchange structures. In synchronous text chats, for instance, there is a high degree of "disrupted adjacency, overlapping exchanges, and topic decay" (p. 1). The choice of CMC tool can therefore be important in how successful an intercultural telecollaboration is.

As Belz (2003) recommends, tensions within telecollaboration often "constitute cultural rich-points that we want our students to explore" (p. 87), and this sentiment is echoed by Schneider and von der Emde (2006), who acknowledge that intercultural conflicts will never disappear and that the solution is not to teach students sociocultural strategies for more

"effective" communication which avoids conflict, but rather to help students to deal with the conflict as a learning opportunity. O'Dowd and Ritter (2006) advise educators to take "an on-going action research approach to their classes which involves collecting and analyzing online interactions and subsequent feedback from their students" (p. 639). This proposal is expanded upon in the next section on the assessment of ICC.

### **Assessment of ICC**

Although intercultural competence has gained importance in foreign language curricula, there are few comprehensive treatments of the assessment of ICC outcomes (see Sinicrope, Norris, & Watanabe, 2007). Schulz (2007) proposes a set of fundamental objectives for cross-cultural awareness and understanding and recommends the use of portfolio assessment for tracking learners' development since the acquisition of ICC is an iterative process. Program-specific questionnaires, self-assessments, and interviews can also be used for assessing ICC outcomes. In addition to a renewed understanding of language within an intercultural orientation, Scarino (2009) also suggests a reconceptualization of the assessment process involving several dimensions: (a) communication in the target language in which students negotiate meaning through interpreting and using language in diverse contexts; (b) understanding how students' dynamic and developing enculturation affects how they see and interpret the world; (c) eliciting students' meta-awareness of how language, culture, and meaning are interrelated; and (d) positioning students as both language users and learners/analyzers.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The research questions investigated in this study are the following:

RQ1: How does the choice of internet tools (specifically asynchronous forum discussions and synchronous chats) contribute to the style of language produced by the learners? In particular, (1a) Is there a difference in the percentage of statements versus questions used by both the American and German students? and (1b) What types of speech acts are used to convey pragmatic ability and the development of ICC?

RQ2: How does discourse analysis of our data contribute to "an empirically informed internet pragmatics"? Specifically, how do learners demonstrate their pragmatic ability to perform various types of speech acts in their online postings (e.g., express facts, express opinions, express curiosity or interest, negotiate meaning, seek to understand the other, save face, hedge, and reflect on their own or the other's culture, all components of ICC)?

### **METHOD**

#### **Participants**

The participants in this study were students in an upper division German sociolinguistics course at a large state university in the western US and students in an English class for Math, Physics and Geoscience majors at a university in northern Germany. Twenty-three students were enrolled in the German course, and 23 students attended the English class intermittent-

ly. In both classes, the online exchange was a part of the course but not a central component of the course. It is important to note that the students in the German course had regular, required assignments, including requirements to answer online questionnaires and post in online forums. In contrast, the students in the English course were strongly encouraged, but not required, to participate in the online exchange. This difference in course requirements is common and often unavoidable in these types of exchanges (O'Dowd & Ritter, 2006). The exchange took place over a 10-week period during the course of an American trimester.

**Materials and Procedures**

**Word associations and asynchronous forum discussions**

The exchange began following the procedure used by Furstenberg et al. (2001) in their *Cultura* project (<http://cultura.mit.edu/>). The students were asked to fill out a word association questionnaire consisting of 12 words/phrases chosen by the two course instructors. Students were asked to write 3-5 words or phrases in their respective L1 that they associated with the 12 words/phrases (listed in their L1). Four of the 12 words were related to "language" so that they might be relevant to the sociolinguistics course (see the left-hand column in Table 1). The other 8 words/phrases were thought to be topics or concepts of interest to university students (the right-hand column in Table 1).

Table 1  
List of Words/Phrases in the Word Associations

| Language-related words  | Other words of interest   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• language/<i>Sprache</i></li> <li>• dialect/<i>Dialekt</i></li> <li>• slang/<i>Umgangssprache</i></li> <li>• Denglish/<i>Denglisch</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• alcohol/<i>Alkohol</i></li> <li>• homeland/<i>Heimat</i></li> <li>• order/<i>Ordnung</i></li> <li>• work/<i>Arbeit</i></li> <li>• quitting time/<i>Feierabend</i></li> <li>• night life in city X/<i>Nachtleben in der Stadt Y</i></li> <li>• recycling/<i>Recycling</i></li> <li>• climate change/<i>Klimaänderung</i></li> </ul> |

The entries for the word associations formed the basis of discussion in the subsequent online forum discussions. Students in both courses were instructed to view the word associations online in which the answers for each word/phrase were shown side by side; the American students' answers were in the left-hand column, and the German answers were in the right-hand column (see Table 2).

Table 2  
Answers for Word Associations: "dialect/*Dialekt*"

| dialect  | <i>Dialekt</i>   |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a language spoke in a certain region</li> <li>• a more specific form of communication, but not considered "official" or "standard"</li> <li>• A way of speaking, or a language sub-group</li> <li>• Aachener Platt, Bavarian, cowboy accent</li> <li>• accent, region, language</li> <li>• Boston and Chicago</li> <li>• differences in saying the same thing</li> <li>• grammar, diction, geographical regions</li> <li>• neat to hear, german dialect, cultural</li> <li>• Plattdeutsch, Bairisch, Westfaelisch (<i>Plattdeutsch, Bavarian, Westfalian</i>)</li> <li>• pronunciation, geography, diversity, history, expressions</li> <li>• region</li> <li>• region, accent, sound</li> <li>• region, slang, intonation</li> <li>• switzerland, diglossia, culture,</li> <li>• twang, regional, changing</li> <li>• unique, familiar, cultural</li> <li>• what defines an autochthonous inhabitant. A labeling force.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Akzent, Plattdeutsch, Tonakzent, Änderung der Tonhöhe, Morphem (<i>accent, Plattdeutsch, tone accent, change in pitch, morpheme</i>)</li> <li>• Eigenart, regional, lustig (<i>idiosyncrasy, regional, funny</i>)</li> <li>• Einge Formen von Sprachen (<i>own form of language</i>)</li> <li>• dialektfrei witzig regional (<i>dialect-free, funny, regional</i>)</li> <li>• Regionale Verbundenheit (<i>regional bonds</i>)</li> <li>• regionaler Unterschied innerhalb der selben Sprache (<i>regional difference within the same language</i>)</li> <li>• Verschiedene Tonhöhe einer Sprache, (<i>different pitches of a language</i>), language of people not from your home town, a different form of your language that is spoken in certain area of your country, sometimes the same words may have different meanings then.</li> </ul> |

Each of the word associations had a separate forum. Students were instructed to choose several word associations of interest and write comments of approximately 50 words in German in each of the respective forums, comparing the answers of the students in the US (at UNIV-A) with the answers of the students in Germany (at UNIV-G) and noting what they found especially interesting (see Table 3 for a sample forum discussion about the word associations for the words "dialect/*Dialekt*").

Table 3  
Forum Discussion: "dialect/*Dialekt*"

Question Topic "dialect/*Dialekt*"  
Please type your answers directly in the forum window—DO NOT cut and paste from Microsoft Office or another rich text application, as this can introduce corrupted characters into the post. Thank you! Schreiben Sie ca. 50 Wörter **auf Deutsch**. Vergleichen Sie die Antworten der UNIV-A Studenten mit den Antworten der UNIV-G Studenten. Was finden Sie besonders interessant daran? (*Write approximately 50 words in German. Compare the answers of the UNIV-A students with the answers of the UNIV-G students. What do you find especially interesting?*)

Dorothy Chun  
Apr 24, 2009

Was fuer mich am interessantesten waren zwei Sachen; Erstens keine negative Woerter wurden damit (Dialekt) verbunden. Zweitens, diese Idee von Semiotics, d.h von Bezeichner und Bezeichnetes.

Ich fand es interessant, dass am "schlimmsten" wenn man das so beschreiben darf, wir haben solche woerter benutzt wie "lustig," "witzig" statt "idiotisch" proletenhaft, voll asi usw. Keine negative Woerterassoziationen, keine Verurteilungen...wir sind schon unterwegs wahr? Es gab noch einen Punkt: Bezeichner und Bezeichnetes. Wir verwenden manchmal verschiedene Woerter oder sprechen die Komplett anders aus, wann das Objekt das selbe Objekt in einer andere Sprache ist.

*(What was most interesting for me were two things: First, no negative words were associated with it (dialect). Second, this idea of semiotics, i.e., of signifier and signified. I found it interesting, that the "worst," when one can describe it that way, we used such words as "funny," "humorous" instead of "idiotic," working class/crude, [profanity], etc. No negative word associations, no convictions ... we are already on our way, yes? There was one more point: signifier and signified. We sometimes use different words or say them completely differently, when the object is the same object in another language.)*

Brian (UNIV-A)

Apr 27, 2009

Ich denke, wir alle stimmen eine generelle Definition von einer Dialekt ein. Ich habe festgestellt, Kommentare wie "innerhalb der selben Sprache" und eine Art der "Verbindung." Wie wir in der Klasse diskutiert haben, die Kriterien, an der man definiert, was eine Sprache ist oder was bindet Menschen bei regionalen Sprach ist sehr subjektiv. Persönlich bin ich nicht für die Idee der Dialekte. Ich denke, es ist wichtig, zu vereinheitlichen Sprachen zusammen, oder zumindest einige Basis-Sprache. Eine Region, die nicht, dies zu tun, auch nicht für die Kommunikation mit dem Rest der Welt und wird nicht als Wirtschaft existieren.

*(I think we all agree about a general definition of a dialect. I have noticed comments like "within the same language" and a kind of "connection." As we discussed in class, the criteria by which one defines what a language is or what connects people through a regional language is very subjective. Personally, I am not for the idea of dialects. I think it is important to unify languages, or at least a basic-language. A region which doesn't do this also [cannot have] communication with the rest of the world and will not exist as an economy.)*

Charlie (UNIV-A)

Apr 29, 2009

Akzent ist für uns akzeptierbar. manchmal es läßt uns lachen manchmal läßt uns beneiden. Aber all in positivem Sinne.

Wenn man sich an eine Person erinnert, erinnert er sich auch an ihren Akzent, falls diese Person einen hat. Also, der Akzent zeichnet nicht eine Persönlichkeit aus aber macht sie in der Erinnerung noch lebendiger und kann auch ein charakteristisches Merkmal sein.

Solange man sich verständigen kann, ist Akzent noch ok. Aber wenn man einen anderen nicht mehr so gut versteht...ich weiß nicht, wie geduldig wir sein können...

*(Accent is acceptable for us. sometimes it makes us laugh and sometimes it makes us envious. But all in a positive sense.*

*When one remembers a person, one also remembers the accent, if the person has one. So the accent doesn't mark a personality but makes the person livelier in one's memory and can also be a characteristic feature.*

*As long as one can make oneself understood, [having an] accent is ok. But when one can't understand the other well, I don't know how patient we can be ...)*

Mani (UNIV-G)

May 07, 2009

### Synchronous chat session

Towards the end of the course, a synchronous text chat was scheduled between the two groups. Students in the US went to a computer lab during their normal class hour, and students in Germany were asked to go to a computer lab at a later hour than their class usually met. Students were told that they could write in whichever language they chose (German or English). Since only 7 German students were present for the online chat, students in the US paired up in order for all of the students to be involved. They were instructed to chat about anything that had been posted previously online (see Table 4 for an excerpt, completely in English, of a chat about dialects in Germany).

Table 4

Excerpt of a Chat Discussion: "dialect"

Sam & Niko: Dialects/High German  
 Sam (UNIV-A): American student with Swiss parents  
 Niko (UNIV-G): Born in Vietnam, emigrated to Germany with his parents

Sam: is the type of German which you speak in XXXXX much different than in other parts of Germany?  
 Niko: oh yes  
 Sam: how so?  
 Niko: yes we talk high german in XXXXX  
 Sam: do you find it a pretty type of German?  
 Sam: do you like it?  
 Niko: it's like the kind of german you hear in the News on TV  
 Sam: i see  
 Niko: in the other part of germany people talk it with a lil bit more accents  
 Sam: what do you think about low German, such as what they speak in Munchen or Switzerland  
 Sam: ?  
 Niko: i like it very much  
 Niko: we're proud of our high german  
 Sam: Have you ever been to Switzerland?  
 Niko: not yet, i have a friend there and will probbably go there this summer  
 Niko: if i have sime money  
 Sam: yes, i understand

### Data Analysis

The data produced by the students were analyzed in three ways. First, numerical tallies of the number of words written in the asynchronous online forums and in the synchronous text chats were made. Second, macrolevel tallies of statements and questions and mean length of these statements and questions were calculated in order to compare the different genres of forum discussion vs. chat. Third, a finer grained microlevel discourse analysis, investigating the language used to show interest/curiosity and to perform facework (e.g., hedging, avoiding conflict, and expressing disagreement) were analyzed because these types of speech acts could contribute to development of pragmatic competence and ICC (Koike, 1989). As Bardovi-Harlig (2001) states, "Although it is not the only way of viewing pragmatics, speech act research has been well represented in crosscultural and interlanguage pragmatics research" (p. 13). In his description of what is required for ICC, Byram (1997) states that "the efficacy of communi-

cation depends upon using language to demonstrate one’s willingness to relate, which often involves the indirectness of politeness, rather than the direct and ‘efficient’ choice of language full of information” (p. 3) and which is a component of performing facework.

**Student Assessment of Success of Chat**

At the end of the course, students in the U.S. class were asked via a written questionnaire to evaluate the success of the online exchange with particular regard to the text chat. The responses of individual students were then compared with the actual text chat in which the students participated because the discourse analysis of the students’ text chat and their level of satisfaction expressed about the text chat could provide two different means of determining or explaining what constitutes a “successful” intercultural exchange.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Participants**

It is important to note that most of the participants on both sides are multilingual and multicultural to varying degrees. Of course, the students in the US were all studying German, and the students in Germany were all taking an English class so they all were bilingual in German and English. A number of the students grew up as bilinguals: Five of the students in the US grew up as English/German bilinguals, two of the students were raised bilingually in English and Vietnamese, three were raised as English/Spanish bilinguals, and one was a Romanian/German bilingual. Among the students in Germany who participated in the forum discussions and chats, one was raised bilingually in German and Vietnamese, one was a Chinese/German bilingual, and one was a Spanish/German bilingual. Many of the students had lived or studied abroad. Although the multilingual backgrounds of the students present a potentially confounding variable, it is increasingly the case that today’s students are bi- or multilingual to varying degrees, and it is nearly impossible to find monolinguals who are also monocultural.

**Word Associations**

For each of the 12 English words/phrases, 18 (sometimes 19) students in the US posted anonymous entries. For each of the 12 German words/phrases, 7-8 students in Germany posted anonymous entries. These numbers indicate that a great majority of the 23 students in the US wrote word associations, while only about a third of the students in Germany did so.

**Asynchronous Forum Discussions**

To answer RQ1, the first type of analysis consisted of a tally of the number of entries posted, along with the total number of words in each forum, the average number of words per entry, and the average number of words per sentence (see Table 5). A very low number of forum entries was written by the students in Germany; only 4 students made a total of 10 posts. In contrast, 58 posts were made by the U.S. students, an average of 3 posts per student. In Table 5, the boldfaced word associations are the ones with forum entries from the students in Germany.

Table 5  
Number of Entries in the Forum Discussions About the Word Associations

| Forums for Word Associations                              | No. of U.S. entries | No. of words | Average no. of words per entry | Average no. of words per sentence | No. of German entries | No. of words | Average no. of words per entry | Average no. of words per sentence |
|---|---------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| language/Sprache  | 2                   | 167          | 84                             | 14                                | 0                     |              |                                |                                   |
| <b>dialect/Dialekt</b>                                    | <b>3</b>            | <b>395</b>   | <b>132</b>                     | <b>17</b>                         | <b>1</b>              | <b>87</b>    | <b>87</b>                      | <b>15</b>                         |
| slang/Umgangssprache                                      | 3                   | 204          | 68                             | 15                                | 0                     |              |                                |                                   |
| Denglish/Denglisch  | 6                   | 487          | 81                             | 16                                | 0                     |              |                                |                                   |
| alcohol/Alkohol   | 9                   | 696          | 77                             | 19                                | 0                     |              |                                |                                   |
| homeland/Heimat   | 5                   | 499          | 100                            | 15                                | 0                     |              |                                |                                   |
| order/Ordnung   | 5                   | 408          | 82                             | 18                                | 0                     |              |                                |                                   |
| <b>work/Arbeit</b>  | <b>5</b>            | <b>425</b>   | <b>85</b>                      | <b>15</b>                         | <b>1</b>              | <b>53</b>    | <b>53</b>                      | <b>27</b>                         |
| quitting time/Feierabend                                  | 8                   | 509          | 74                             | 13                                | 0                     | 0            | 0                              |                                   |
| <b>nightlife in city X/<br/>Nachtleben in der Stadt Y</b> | <b>7</b>            | <b>582</b>   | <b>78</b>                      | <b>14</b>                         | <b>2</b>              | <b>123</b>   | <b>62</b>                      | <b>18</b>                         |
| <b>recycling/Recycling</b>                                | <b>2</b>            | <b>232</b>   | <b>116</b>                     | <b>17</b>                         | <b>1</b>              | <b>59</b>    | <b>59</b>                      | <b>20</b>                         |
| <b>climate change/<br/>Klimaänderung</b>                  | <b>2</b>            | <b>123</b>   | <b>62</b>                      | <b>13</b>                         | <b>5</b>              | <b>373</b>   | <b>75</b>                      | <b>19</b>                         |
| Overall average   | 5                   | 394          | 87                             | 16                                | 2                     | 139          | 67                             | 20                                |

To answer RQ(1a), the second type of analysis of the forum discussions was a tally of the number of questions versus statements in the entries. One of the reasons for such a tally was to obtain an overall idea of the global syntactic types of entries in an asynchronous forum which could then be compared to the types of entries in a synchronous chat. Table 6 shows the number of questions and statements in the forum discussions for each of the word associations. The boldfaced word associations are the forum entries from the students in Germany.

Table 6  
Number of Questions Versus Statements in the Forum Discussions

| Forums  | No. of questions in U.S. entries | No. of statements in U.S. entries | No. of questions in German entries | No. of statements in German entries |
|---|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| language/Sprache  | 0                                | 12                                |                                    |                                     |
| <b>dialect/Dialekt</b>                                    | <b>1</b>                         | <b>21</b>                         | <b>0</b>                           | <b>7</b>                            |
| slang/Umgangssprache                                      | 1                                | 13                                |                                    |                                     |
| Denglish/Denglisch  | 5                                | 27                                |                                    |                                     |
| alcohol/Alkohol   | 0                                | 46                                |                                    |                                     |
| homeland/Heimat   | 0                                | 31                                |                                    |                                     |
| order/Ordnung   | 3                                | 25                                |                                    |                                     |
| <b>work/Arbeit</b>  | <b>0</b>                         | <b>21</b>                         | <b>0</b>                           | <b>2</b>                            |
| quitting time/Feierabend                                  | 1                                | 38                                |                                    |                                     |
| <b>nightlife in city X/<br/>Nachtleben in der Stadt Y</b> | <b>0</b>                         | <b>40</b>                         | <b>2</b>                           | <b>5</b>                            |
| <b>recycling/Recycling</b>                                | <b>0</b>                         | <b>14</b>                         | <b>0</b>                           | <b>3</b>                            |
| <b>climate change/<br/>Klimaänderung</b>                  | <b>0</b>                         | <b>11</b>                         | <b>0</b>                           | <b>19</b>                           |
| Total   | 11 (4%)                          | 299 (96%)                         | 2 (5%)                             | 36 (95%)                            |

As the figures in Table 6 show, statements comprise 96% of the entries made by the students in the US and 95% of the entries made by the students in Germany, which is not surprising for asynchronous forums.

To answer RQ(1b), a third, finer grained discourse analysis was used to examine the postings from all the forums. The goal of this discourse analysis was to determine, on the one hand, the linguistic means used to state facts, make less definitive statements, make observations, and express opinions and, on the other hand, the types of pragmatic speech acts used to exchange information, display attitudes of interest or curiosity, suspend disbelief about the other's culture (C2) or to reflect on one's own culture (C1), all hallmarks of ICC.

Tables 7-9 show that the U.S. students, all advanced learners of German, employ many of the same linguistic means and speech acts as the students in Germany for stating facts, making definitive statements, mitigating statements, speculating, and expressing opinions. The examples are representative of *all* of the students, not just a few.

Table 7  
Typical Statements in the Forum Discussions

| American students' typical statements                                     | German students' typical statements  |
|---|--|
| Für die amerikanischen Studenten ...<br>(For the American students ...)   | Die amerikanischen Studenten haben mehr geschrieben, wie ..., während die meisten deutschen Studenten ...<br>(The American students wrote more about ..., whereas most of the German students ...) |
| Aber für die deutschen Studenten ...<br>(But for the German students ...) | Das zeigt, dass ...<br>(That shows that ...)   |
| Die Deutschen sagen, dass ...<br>(The Germans say that ...)               |  |
| Die Amerikaner glauben, dass ...<br>(The Americans think that ...)        |  |
| Man merkt ...<br>(One notices ...)  |  |
| Die Studenten beschreiben ...<br>(The students describe ...)              |  |
| Ich habe bemerkt, dass ...<br>(I noticed that ...)                        |  |

In the definitive statements in Table 8, note in particular the use of particles such as *doch* 'really, very' and *wohl* 'surely, very' and adjectives and adverbs such as *wirklich* 'really,' *klar* 'clearly,' *genau* 'exactly,' and *unbestreitbar* 'indisputable.'

Table 8  
Definitive Statements in the Forum Discussions

| American students' definitive statements  | German students' definitive statements   |
|---|--|
| Die Einträge von diesem Thema ist <b>doch</b> ja getrennt ...<br>(The entries for this topic is very distinct ...)  | Uns ist das Thema <b>wohl</b> bewusst, ...<br>(We are very aware of the topic ...) |
| Der Unterschied ... ist <b>genau</b> erkennbar<br>(The difference ... is exactly discernible)                       |  |
| Man kann sehen, dass es <b>wirklich</b> ein Unterschied ...<br>(One can see, that there really is a difference ...) |  |
| <b>Klar</b> , dass ...<br>(Clear that ...)  |  |
| Es ist <b>unbestreitbar</b> ...<br>(It is indisputable ...)   |  |

As can be seen in Table 9, the linguistic means used to make statements less definitive or speculative include the words *vielleicht* 'perhaps' and *anscheinend* 'apparently' and the verbs *scheinen* 'to seem,' *aussehen* 'to appear, look like,' and these words were used in multiple postings.

Table 9  
Examples of Less Definitive Statements in the Forum Discussions

| American students' less definitive statements   | German students' less definitive statements  |
|---|--|
| <b>Vielleicht</b> ist es nicht so in Deutschland ...<br>(Maybe it is not that way in Germany ...) | Das liegt <b>vielleicht</b> daran, dass ...<br>(That is perhaps because ...)   |
| Es <b>scheint</b> , als ob ...<br>(It seems as if ...)  | <b>Vielleicht</b> hängt es aber auch damit zusammen, dass ...<br>(But maybe it is also related to the fact that ...) |
| Als Amerikaner <b>scheint</b> es mir zu sein ...<br>(As an American, it seems to me to be ...)    | ...aber es <b>sieht so aus</b> , dass ...<br>(... but it looks/seems that ...)                                       |
| Die Amerikaner/Studenten <b>scheinen</b> ...<br>(The Americans seem ...)                          | ... in Amerika aber <b>anscheinend</b> ...<br>(but in America apparently ...)  |
| ...auf jeden Fall <b>sieht es so aus</b> , ...<br>(in any case it looks ...)                      |  |

In terms of expressing opinions, the most commonly used phrases were *ich glaube/denke/meine* 'I believe/think/mean,' with 26 occurrences on the American side and 3 occurrences on the German side (see Table 10). The second most common comments were variations of *ich finde/fand ... interessant* 'I find/found ... interesting,' with 19 occurrences on the American side and 3 on the German side. Less commonly used expressions included *meiner Meinung nach* 'in my opinion,' *persönlich* 'personally,' *ich weiß nicht* 'I don't know,' *ich bin mir nicht sicher* 'I'm not sure.' Adjectives used to express opinions included *lustig* 'funny' with 4 occurrences, *typisch* 'typical,' *komisch* 'funny, odd,' and *ironisch* 'ironic.'

Table 10  
Examples of Expression of Opinion in Forum Discussions

| American students' expression of opinion   | German students' expression of opinion  |
|--|---|
| Ich <b>denke/glaube/meine</b> , ...<br><i>(I think ...)</i>  | Ich <b>denke</b> ...<br><i>(I think ...)</i>  |
| Ich <b>finde</b> es besonders <b>interessant</b> ...<br><i>(I find it especially interesting ...)</i>  | Ich <b>finde</b> ...<br><i>(I think ...)</i>  |
| Ich <b>finde</b> die unterschied ... ganz <b>interessant</b> und manchmal auch <b>kommisch</b><br><i>(I find the difference ... very interesting and sometimes also funny)</i> | Allerdings ist es <b>interessant</b> ...<br><i>(It's certainly interesting ...)</i><br>Aus der amerikanischen Seite kam mehr ..., was ich eigentlich <b>gut finde</b><br><i>(From the American side came more ... which I actually think is good)</i> |
| Ich <b>finde</b> die unterschied ... <b>interessant</b> aber <b>typisch</b><br><i>(I find the difference interesting but typical)</i>  | ... <b>ich weiß nicht</b> , wie geduldig wir sein können ...<br><i>(... I don't know how patient we can be ...)</i>   |
| Was fuer mich <b>am interessantesten</b> war ...<br><i>(What was most interesting for me was ...)</i>  | Was mich aber <b>wirklich aufgeregt hat</b> , war ...<br><i>(But what really upset/annoyed me was ...)</i>  |
| <b>Meiner Meinung nach</b> ...<br><i>(In my opinion ...)</i>   | emotion?  |
| <b>Persönlich</b> bin ich nicht für die Idee ...<br><i>(Personally, I'm not for the idea ...)</i>  |   |
| <b>Ich bin mir nicht sicher</b> , ob ...<br><i>(I'm not sure if/whether ...)</i>   |   |
| Wie <b>lustig</b> , dass viele von uns glauben ...<br><i>(How funny, that many of us think ...)</i>  |   |
| Aber es ist ganz <b>ironisch</b> ...<br><i>(But it's really ironic ...)</i>  |   |
| <b>Es freute mich</b> zu sehen ...<br><i>(It pleased me to see ...)</i> emotion?   |   |
| Diese Assoziation <b>gefällt mir</b> mehr als unsere<br><i>(I like this association more than ours)</i>  |   |

Table 11, from the forum for the topic "work/Arbeit," lists examples of how these types of statements and opinions are manifested as reflections on the C1 or the C2 and comparisons of the two cultures.

Table 11  
Forum Discussion on Word Associations: "work/Arbeit"

| Discussion Topic "work/Arbeit"  | Speech Acts   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Ich glaube</b>, dass die meisten UNIV-A Studenten eine mehr negative Verbindung mit Arbeit haben, <b>es schaint als ob</b> sie UNIV-G Studenten mehr an eine gute Zukunft denken, wo Arbeit Geld, Spaß und Kollegen bedeutet. <b>Die UNIV-A Meinung</b>, dass Arbeit langweilig ist und nur da ist um man Geld zu verdienen, kommt von den Erfahrungen mit "High School und College jobs", die man nur hat um Taschengeld, Essen oder Rente zu bezahlen. Die Arbeit ist aber nur für eine kleine Zeitspanne und bringt wenig Geld. <b>Was die meisten UNIV-G Studenten beschreiben ist die Zukunft, wo Arbeit auch Spaß machen kann und soll, die UNIV-A Studenten warten auf das auch wenn das Studium fertig ist.</b> <i>(I think that most of the American University students have a more negative connection with work, it seems as though the German University students think more about a good future, where work means money, fun, and colleagues. The American University opinion that work is boring and is only there so that one can earn money comes from the experiences with "high school and college jobs," which one has in order to have pocket money and pay for food or rent. Work is but for a short time span and brings in little money. What most of the German University students describe is the future, where work can and should also be fun, the American University students are also waiting for that when their studies are done.</i></p> <p>Daniela (UNIV-A)</p> <p>Apr 26, 2009</p> | <p>Statement of opinion<br/>Less definitive statement<br/>Reflection on C1</p> <p>Comparison of C2 and C1</p> |
| <p><b>Die UNIV-A Studenten sehen ihre Arbeit als was negatives</b>, aber auch als etwas was ein Teil des Lebens ist. <b>Die UNIV-G Studenten scheinen</b> ein bisschen mehr positiv darüber zu sein. Sie beschreiben die Arbeit als "motivation" und als "notwendig". Sie beschreiben die Arbeit auch als etwas was einem Geld verdient. <b>Ich glaube</b> der Unterschied zwischen den Antworten hat damit zu tun das die Wörter "work" und "Arbeit" sehr anders von einander sind. "Work" in der Amerikanischer Kultur wird meistens mehr als eine Belastung gesehen. <i>(The American University students see their work as something negative, but also as something that is a part of life. The German University students seem to be a bit more positive about it. They describe work as "motivation" and as "necessary." They describe work as something that earns you money. I think that the difference between the answers has to do with the fact that the words "work" and "Arbeit" are very different from each other. "Work" in the American culture is mostly seen as more of a burden.)</i></p> <p>Lynda (UNIV-A)</p> <p>Apr 27, 2009</p>  | <p>Reflection on C1<br/>Less definitive statement about C2</p> <p>Opinion/reflection on C1</p>                |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Ich denke</b>, das Wort "Arbeit" wird im Deutschen tatsächlich direkter mit einem Beruf verbunden als mit der Aktivität "arbeiten". <b>Allerdings ist es interessant</b>, dass die Studenten der UNIV-G die Arbeit fast einheitlich mit "Geld verdienen" verknüpfen, während Studenten der UNIV-A "work" mehr differenzieren und eine große Bedeutung bis hin zum Lebensinhalt zukommen lassen.<br/> <i>(I think the word "Arbeit" in German is in fact more directly tied to a profession than with the activity of "working." It is certainly interesting that the students of the German University almost uniformly link work with earning money, while the students of the American University differentiate work more and afford it a larger meaning in terms of purpose of life.)</i></p> <p>Uwe (UNIV-G)<br/>                 Apr 27, 2009</p>   | <p>Opinion about C1; interest in comparison of C1 and C2</p>  |
| <p><b>Die Studenten von UNIV-G denken</b> viel über das Geld, das in Beziehung zu Arbeit ist. <b>Ich dachte</b> die Amerikanern liebten Geld viel mehr, weil ich die Leute hier einkaufen lieben weiss. <b>Oder wollen wir nicht Arbeit für das Geld, wie die Deutsch. Vielleicht</b> alle die Leute lieben und brauchen Geld ebenso.<br/> <i>(The students of the German University think a lot about money in connection to work. I thought that Americans loved money much more because I know that people here love to shop. Or we don't want work for money, like the Germans. Maybe all people love and need money equally.)</i></p> <p>Andrew (UNIV-A)<br/>                 Apr 28, 2009</p>  | <p>Reflection on C2; Opinion/reflection on C1 and C2; Speculation about C1 and C2</p>                       |
| <p><b>Viel von den UNIV-A studenten sagten, dass Arbeit stressvoll ist. Aber die Studenten von UNIV-G sagten, dass Arbeit soll spass machen.</b> Das ist einen <b>interessanten Unterschied</b> zwischen Ami und Deutsche kultur. Im durchshnitt sagten viel studenten von UNIV-A, dass arbeit etwas negatives ist. Aber die Studenten von UNIV-G sagten, dass sie arbeit genießen mochten. <b>Interessant</b> ist auch wie viele Studenten von UNIV-G an das Geld denken. <b>Ich meine</b>, dass nur Amis immer an Geld denken.<br/> <i>(Many of the American University students said that work is stressful. But the students from the German University said that work should be fun. That is an interesting difference between American and German culture. On average many students from the American University said that work is something negative. But the students from the German University said that they want to enjoy work. It is also interesting how many students of the German University think about money. I think that only Americans are always thinking about money.)</i></p> <p>Sam (UNIV-A)<br/>                 Apr 28, 2009</p> | <p>Comparison of C1 and C2; interest in the differences and similarities of C1 and C2; reflection on C1</p> |

In an asynchronous forum, it can be difficult to engage in dialogue, given the nature of the forum and the fact that there can be great time lags between posts. However, in one forum on "climate change/Klimaänderung" students on both sides made attempts to engage their partners, in contrast to all of the other forums in which students on each side simply made statements without attempting to interact with each other. Table 12 shows the entire forum

discussion, including the speech acts that were employed in the asynchronous postings. This forum discussion was unique among the forum discussions, mainly because it had the greatest participation by students in Germany and provides a glimpse into how interactive such online forums could be.

Table 12  
 Forum Discussion: "climate change/Klimaänderung"

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>Discussion Topic: "climate change/Klimaänderung"</p> <p><b>Interessant</b> ist, dass fast alle Studenten der UNIV-A die Klimaänderung als eine Bedrohung sehen. Leider gibt es nur wenige Antworten aus Deutschland, aber <b>es sieht so aus</b>, dass das Thema von Studenten der UNIV-G weniger emotional betrachtet wird. <b>Das liegt vielleicht daran</b>, dass der Klimawandel in Deutschland schon seit vielen Jahren ein Thema ist und mittlerweile die möglichen Folgen nicht mehr so stark diskutiert werden. <b>Vielleicht hängt es aber auch damit zusammen</b>, dass die Medien in den USA gut darin sind, den Menschen Angst zu machen.<br/> <i>(It is interesting that almost all of the students at the American University see climate change as a threat. Unfortunately, there are only a few answers from Germany, but it looks as though the topic is viewed less emotionally by the students at the German University. Maybe that is due to the fact that climate change has been a topic [of interest] for many years in Germany and in the meantime the possible consequences are not being discussed so strongly any more. Maybe it is also related to the fact that the media in the USA are good at frightening people.)</i></p> <p>Uwe (UNIV-G)<br/>                 Apr 27, 2009</p>   | <p>Opinion about C2<br/>                 Speculation, less definitive statements</p>              |
| <p><b>Ich denke</b> das Medien trägt einen großen Teil dazu bei Umweltbildung verbreiten und damit die Menschen umweltbewusster zu machen. Denken wir an die großen Waldbrände in Kalifornien und sogar direkt in Santa Barbara im Sommer 2008. Tagelang wurde im Fernsehen Polizei- und Feuerwehr- sowie Zivileinsätze gezeigt, wie sie mit dem Feuer kämpfen. Und da hat Klimawandel sicherlich mehr oder weniger damit zu tun. Total schreckliche Bilder, <b>die es selten bei uns in Deutschland zu sehen gibt, weil wir eben den Ausmaß des Klimawandels in Deutschland nicht so stark "sprühen" müssen. Uns ist das Thema Klimawandel wohl bewusst, jedoch müssen wir noch nicht mit Umweltproblemen so wie die Kollegen in USA konfrontieren.</b><br/> <i>(I think that media contribute a large part to spreading education about the environment and thereby making people more environmentally conscious. Think of the huge wildfires in California and in fact directly in Santa Barbara in the summer of 2008. For days the police, fire department and civilian operations were shown on television fighting the fire. And surely climate change had something more or less to do with it. Totally awful images, which are seldom to be seen here in Germany, because we don't have to "experience" the full extent of climate change in Germany. We are well aware of the topic of climate change, but we don't yet have to confront environmental problems like our colleagues in the USA.)</i></p> <p>Niko (UNIV-G)<br/>                 Apr 27, 2009</p> | <p>Opinion<br/>                 Reflection on C1<br/>                 Comparison of C1 and C2</p> |



**Ich stimme zu.** Fast alle StudentInnen der UNIV-A haben "scary", "threat", und "end days" oder etwas ähnliches geschrieben. Für uns wird Klimaänderung eng mit Bedrohung verbunden. **Ich glaube** das Medien hat etwas damit zu tun. Besonders wenn Klimaänderung heutzutage so eine politische "talking point" ist... DREI Studenten haben "Al Gore" geschrieben!! **(Für unsere Freunde aus Deutschland, die ihn vielleicht nicht kennen: Al Gore hat den global-warming Film "An Inconvenient Truth," gemacht.) Leider ist Klimaänderung für viele Leute in den USA nur politisch und sensationell.** *(I agree. Almost all the students from the American University wrote "scary," "threat", and "end days" or something similar. For us, climate change is tied closely to threat. I think that the media have something to do with it. Especially because climate change these days is such a political "talking point" ... THREE students wrote "Al Gore"!! (For our friends from Germany, who perhaps don't know him: Al Gore made the global-warming film "An Inconvenient Truth.") Unfortunately, climate change is for many people in the USA only political and sensational.)*

Ashley (UNIV-A)  
Apr 28, 2009

**Es sieht so aus,** wie alle Studenten angst haben von GLOBAL WARMING. Leider sind unsere **westlichen Lebensstile** verantwortlich für es. **Ich finde es auch interessant,** dass Studenten von UNIV-A und von UNIV-G an Al Gore denken wann sie dieses Wort "Klimaänderung" lesen. *(It looks as though all students are afraid of GLOBAL WARMING. Unfortunately, our western life styles are responsible for it. I also find it interesting that students from both the American University and the German University think of Al Gore when they read this word "climate change.")*

Sam (UNIV-A)  
Apr 28, 2009

**Noch was dazu:** von den Antworten **ist die Einsicht zu vermitteln,** dass die **westliche Lebensweise** ein Auslaufmodell ist. Die wachstumsorientierte kapitalistische Wirtschaftsweise ist nicht nur unter dem Eindruck der aktuellen Finanzkrise sondern auch wegen der nachhaltigen Wirkung auf unser Klima grundsätzlich in Frage zu stellen. *(Something else to add: from the answers we get the sense that the western way of life is an obsolete model. The growth-oriented capitalistic economic model is not only under the effect of the present financial crisis but also should basically be questioned because of its lasting effect on our climate.)*

Niko (UNIV-G)  
Apr 28, 2009

Direct response to previous posting  
Opinion

Statement directed at German partners ("friends")  
Opinion/reflection on C1

Less definitive statement; reflection on C1; opinion

Additional comment to further discussion; less definitive statement; reference to previous posting about "western lifestyle"

**Ich denke,** das jeder Mensch auf der Erde die Gefahren einer globalen Erwärmung sieht und sich gegen Verschwendung von Ressourcen ausspricht. Aber wenn es dann auf persönlichen Verzicht ankommt, relativieren sich die Meinungen.... *(I think that every person on the earth sees the dangers of a global warming and speaks out against waste of resources. But when it then comes to personal renunciation, the opinions become relative ...)*

Tom (UNIV-G)  
Apr 28, 2009

**Aus der UNIV-A-Seite kam mehr sentimentale Reaktion, was ich eigentlich gut finde. Unsere Studenten haben auch tolle Antwort dazu mit bisschen mehr Gelassenheit.** Meistens arbeiten die Menschen unter Druck noch mehr effizient. 5 Jahre vorher konnte man andere Antwort finden und in 5 Jahre sehen die Antwort bestimmt wieder anderes aus. **hoffentlich denkt man nicht nur automatisch an Al Gore** und einen Hausaufgabe, sondern auch noch dran, Gott, wie viel CO2 habe ich heute noch produziert, muss schon wieder für den Überschuss teuer bezahlen? **(From the American University side there were more sentimental reactions, which I actually find good. Our students also have great answers with a bit more dispassionateness/equanimity.** Generally, people under stress work more efficiently. 5 years ago you could find other answers and in 5 years the answers will surely look different again. **hopefully one doesn't think automatically of Al Gore** and of an assignment, but rather also, God, how much CO2 have I produced today, I will have to pay dearly for the excess.

Mani (UNIV-G)  
May 03, 2009

Opinion

Opinion  
Reflection on C2 and C1

Direct reference to previous posting about Al Gore

**Synchronous Chat Session**

A total of 8 out of the 10 chats between the American and German students were saved (2 were not saved due to technical difficulties), totaling over 6,450 words, for an average 807 words per chat session over a 50-minute period. (The forum discussions contained an average of 490 words per discussion.) All 8 chats were analyzed, but only 3 will be discussed here because they represent both the less successful attempts at interaction as well as the more successful exchanges between the chat partners. To answer RQ1, Table 13 shows basic information about each of the 3 chats. Striking, but not surprising, is the average number of words per sentence/entry in these chats. Whereas the average number of words per sentence in the forum discussions was 16 for the students in the US and 20 for the students in Germany, the average in the chat was 6 words per chat entry for students in both countries. This is typical of chat "style," where the idea is to "hit return often," meaning that "turns" are often very short and multiple turns are strung together in quick succession (Herring, 1999).

Table 13  
Synchronous Chat Quantitative Data

| Chats  | Number of words in U.S. entries/ average per entry | Number of words in German entries/ average per entry |
|--|--|--|
| Chat #1 Lynda & Karen (UNIV-A) and Tom (UNIV-G) (35 min.)  | 118/5.0  | 136/5.0  |
| Chat #2 Sam (UNIV-A) and Tom (UNIV-G) (53 min.)            | 314/8.0  | 384/8.0  |
| Chat #3 Cara & Daniela (UNIV-A) and Tom (UNIV-G) (42 min.) | 398/6.0  | 486/7.0  |
| Overall average  | 277/6.2  | 335/6.5  |

To answer RQ(1a), unlike the forum discussions, where 95-96% of the entries were statements, the percentages are very different for the chats, again, as might be expected. Table 14 shows that, for the 3 chat sessions analyzed here, 66% of the U.S. entries were statements, as compared with 75% of the German entries. The students in the U.S. *quantitatively* asked a higher percentage of questions (34%) than their German chat partners (25%). (These percentages correspond almost exactly to those compiled for all 8 chats.) In fact, students who found the chats less successful commented that the German partners did not seem interested in chatting with them and did not ask many questions. However, for students on both sides, the percentage of statements was much higher than the percentage of questions. This point will be discussed further below.

Table 14  
Synchronous Chat Quantitative Data

| Chats                 | Number of questions in U.S. entries | Number of questions in German entries | Number of statements in U.S. entries | Number of statements in German entries |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| Chat #1               | 12                                  | 5                                     | 12                                   | 13                                     |
| Chat #2               | 19                                  | 12                                    | 24                                   | 37                                     |
| Chat #3               | 15                                  | 16                                    | 53                                   | 47                                     |
| 1-3 Total             | 46 (34%)                            | 33 (25%)                              | 89 (66%)                             | 97 (75%)                               |
| Total for all 8 chats | 125 (33%)                           | 121 (26%)                             | 257 (67%)                            | 336 (74%)                              |

The excerpt from Chat #1 (see Table 15) is an example of a less successful chat, in the sense that basic (mundane) questions are asked and the discussion consists of many short questions and answers (and some expansions on answers). Considering that the learners on both sides are advanced L2 learners, the language they employed is basic and simple. The American English-German bilingual student (Lynda), who was typing the chat entries for herself and her American classmate, has excellent German competence, but the questions she posed are not very advanced linguistically. In fact, her reaction to the chat was that it was problematic because the German partner was not very talkative; she claimed that they asked him questions but that he posed very few questions to them. Her classmate (an English-Vietnamese bilingual) lamented that it was difficult to begin the chat and that, for the most part, they asked questions and their partner asked the same questions back.

Table 15  
Chat #1

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Excerpt about the German language<br>Lynda [typist] & Karen (UNIV-A): bilingual English-German speaker, bilingual English-Vietnamese speaker<br>Tom (UNIV-G): German student who had been to the US once for 3 weeks<br>Tom: do you like the german language ?<br>L&K: ja die Sprache gefaellt uns ganz gut. ich bin eigentlich zweisprachig aufgewachsen ( <i>yes we really like the language. I actually grew up bilingual [Lynda].</i> )<br>Tom: but in the us or in germany ?<br>L&K: in Kalifornien ( <i>in California</i> )<br>L&K: wann hast du englisch gelernt? ( <i>when did you learn english?</i> )<br>Tom: since 5th grade<br>L&K: und gefaellt dir die englische sprache? ( <i>and do you like the English language?</i> )<br>Tom: and since when do you speak german<br>Tom: i love it<br>Tom: it is simpler than german<br>Tom: and i can talk to every freakin person in the whole wide world<br>L&K: seit ich Kind war ( <i>since I was a child</i> )<br>Tom: you are lucky to be native speakers<br>L&K: haha ja das stimmt ( <i>haha, yes that's right</i> )<br>L&K: thanks<br>L&K: sprichts du auch andere Sprachen ausser Deutsch und Englisch? ( <i>do you also speak other languages besides German and English?</i> )<br>Tom: no<br>Tom: but i would like to learn spanish before finishing my diploma<br>L&K: was studierst du? ( <i>what are you studying?</i> )<br>Tom: german: wirtschaftsingenieurwesen ( <i>industrial engineering with business studies</i> )<br>L&K: wow<br>L&K: und gefaellt dir dieses Fach? ( <i>and do you like this subject?</i> )<br>Tom: i like it<br>Tom: but it would be better if we could talk over skype<br>L&K: see each other and talk<br>L&K: hmm our professor won't allow it<br>L&K: we tried but your lab and our lab have had problems with it. skype is prohibited at UNIV-A<br>L&K: it would be better though<br>L&K: wir haben Klasse dieser Stunde. bist du an der Uni auch? ( <i>we have class at this time. are you also at the university?</i> )<br>L&K: es ist fast 21 Uhr bei dir? ( <i>it is almost 9 p.m. there?</i> )<br>Tom: yeah that right<br>L&K: du hast jetzt noch Unterricht?! ( <i>you still have class now?</i> )<br>Tom: it is a free course<br>L&K: ach so ( <i>oh, I see</i> ) | Interest (Answer + additional information)<br>Clarification question<br>Interest<br>(Same question as above)<br>Interest<br>Opinion<br>(Expansion)<br>Opinion<br>Curiosity<br>Interest<br>(New topic) |
|--|---|

From a discourse or pragmatics perspective, asking questions is not the only way to indicate interest or curiosity. While one of the American students (Lynda) said that Tom did not ask many questions, he did; the other American student (Karen) said that Tom asked them the same questions that they asked him. Although this may simply be due to the task structure, what is interesting is that both Lynda and Karen felt that the chat was not successful, despite their opposite assertions about how many questions their German partner posed.

Similarly, in the excerpt from Chat 2 in Table 16, which is entirely in English, the chat consists of short and basic questions followed by short and perfunctory replies. In the postchat evaluation, the American student (an English/Swiss German bilingual) commented that the chat was about “really basic topics,” that it was “interesting yet a bit awkward,” and that it seemed that his partner “was not interested/bored by the topic” of the type of German he speaks.

Table 16  
Chat #2a

|  |                            |
|--|----------------------------|
| Excerpt about Dialects/High German   |                            |
| Sam (UNIV-A): American student with Swiss parents<br>Niko (UNIV-G): Born in Vietnam, emigrated to Germany with his parents |                            |
| Sam (UNIV-A): is the type of German which you speak in your city much different than in other parts of Germany?            | Interest                   |
| Niko (UNIV-G): oh yes  | (Short answer)             |
| Sam (UNIV-A): how so?  | Interest                   |
| Niko (UNIV-G): yes we talk high german in our city   | (Short answer)             |
| Sam (UNIV-A): do you find it a pretty type of German?  | Curiosity                  |
| Sam (UNIV-A): do you like it?  | (Short answer)             |
| Niko (UNIV-G): it's like the kind of german you hear in the News on TV   |                            |
| Sam (UNIV-A): i see  |                            |
| Niko (UNIV-G): in the other part of germany people talk it with a lil bit more accents                                     | (Expansion)                |
| Sam (UNIV-A): what do you think about low German, such as what they speak in Munchen or Switzerland                        | Curiosity                  |
| Sam (UNIV-A): ?  |                            |
| Niko (UNIV-G): i like it very much   | (Short answer)             |
| Niko (UNIV-G): we're proud of our high german  | Reflection on C1           |
| Sam (UNIV-A): Have you ever been to Switzerland?   | Curiosity                  |
| Niko (UNIV-G): not yet, i have a friend there and will probbably go there this summer                                      | (Short answer, no details) |
| Niko (UNIV-G): if i have sime money  |                            |
| Sam (UNIV-A): yes, i understand  |                            |

To answer RQ2, in the same chat between Sam and Niko, there is a second excerpt that contains a more involved discussion about American and German culture (see Table 17). The turns are a bit longer, and there is evidence of curiosity and interest in the C2, reflection on the C1, and also some hedging and facework. The American student (Sam) commented in the postchat evaluation that he felt he had obtained an “authentic German perspective” (despite having chatted with a partner (Niko) who had been born in Vietnam but emigrated to Germany years ago with his parents).

Table 17  
Chat #2b

|   |  |
|---|--|
| USA/Germany/American/American culture   |  |
| Sam (UNIV-A): American student with Swiss parents<br>Niko (UNIV-G): Born in Vietnam, emigrated to Germany with his parents  |  |
| Sam (UNIV-A): warum mochtest du an die USA kommen. mir gefällt die USA meistens gar nicht<br><i>(why do you want to come to the USA. for the most part I don't really like the USA)</i>   | Curiosity; reflection on C1                |
| Niko (UNIV-G): ich glaube es ist immer so, man will immer wo anders hin, hauptsache weg<br><i>(I think it's always like this, you always want to go somewhere else, as long as you can go away)</i>   | Opinion                                    |
| Niko (UNIV-G): ich finde es gibt so viele zu entdecken in USA<br><i>(I think there are so many things to discover in the USA)</i>   | Interest in C2                             |
| Sam (UNIV-A): jaa.... aber manchmal mag ich die Leute and das Kultur einfach nicht<br><i>(yees...but sometimes I just don't like the people and the culture)</i>  | Hedging; reflection on C1                  |
| Sam (UNIV-A): amerikaner sind im durchschnitt sehr bloed<br><i>(on average the Americans are very stupid)</i>   | Reflection on C1 (strong statement);       |
| Sam (UNIV-A): find ich...<br><i>(I think...)</i>  | hedging                                    |
| Niko (UNIV-G): das ist auch normal so, wenn du ne Weile hier wohnst wirst du wahrscheinlich auch das Gleiche empfinden<br><i>(that's normal, after having lived here for a while you'll probably feel the same way)</i>   | Facework (doesn't disagree outright)       |
| Niko (UNIV-G): was mgst du so nicht an den Leuten und der Kultur?<br><i>(what don't you like about the people and the culture?)</i>   | Curiosity                                  |
| Sam (UNIV-A): amis haben kein richtigen kultur. der kultur in den alle glauben ist oberflaclich...es geht nur um viel geld und material dinge<br><i>(Americans don't have a real culture. the culture everybody believes in is superficial...everything just revolves around money and material things)</i> | Reflection on C1; solidarity with Niko (?) |
| Sam (UNIV-A): was denkst du uber deutscher kultur?<br><i>(what do you think about german culture?)</i>  | Curiosity                                  |

The final chat excerpts exhibit evidence of more engagement and interaction between the interlocutors (see Tables 18 and 19). As is true of all of the more engaged chats, multiple, sequential turns can be noticed—often several statements that expand on the interlocutor’s thoughts or position—along with fewer simple question-simple answer sequences.

Table 18  
Chat #3a

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Politics (Torture: Guantanamo Bay)  |  |
| Tom (UNIV-G): German student who had vacationed once in the U.S. for 3 weeks  |  |
| Cara (UNIV-A): American student who had studied for a year in Germany   |  |
| Tom (UNIV-G): can i ask you what you think of guantanamo bay?   | (Polite) Curiosity   |
| Cara (UNIV-A): aber ich glaube es ist so einfach eine regierung zu kritizieren wenn wir nichts wirklich alles wissen<br><i>(but I think it's so easy to criticize a government when we don't really know everything)</i>    | Expansion on an earlier post                                       |
| Cara (UNIV-A): na ja also ich weiss es genauso nichtich meine eine sland sollte eigentlich eine protection agency haben oder?<br><i>(well I don't really know I mean a country should have a protection agency, right?)</i> | Hedging (bit defensive?)   |
| Cara (UNIV-A): aber ich weiss es nicht ob gitmo die richtige antwort ist<br><i>(but I don't know if gitmo is the right answer)</i>  | Reflection on C1   |
| Tom (UNIV-G): but why guantanamo bay and not palm beach ?   | Interest   |
| Cara (UNIV-A): what... gitmo=palm beach for terrorist   |  |
| Tom (UNIV-G): why outside of the usa  |  |
| Cara (UNIV-A): ahh  | Negotiation of meaning   |
| Cara (UNIV-A): dass meinst du<br><i>(that's what you mean)</i>  |  |
| Cara (UNIV-A): ummm ja, kein plan, ich hab es selber nicht gemacht<br><i>(ummm yes, no plan, I didn't make it myself)</i>   | Hedging  |
| Tom (UNIV-G): you got one of the best constitution in the world   |  |
| Tom (UNIV-G): but that the way betray it  |  |
| Cara (UNIV-A): hmmm?? das versteh ich nicht<br><i>(hmmm?? I don't understand that)</i>  | Negotiation of meaning; Facework (question instead of a statement) |
| Tom (UNIV-G): if you are going outside the us you don't have to stick to your constitution, right ?   |  |
| Tom (UNIV-G): thats why they were going "international"   |  |
| Cara (UNIV-A): also ... ja<br><i>(well ... yes)</i>   | Hedging  |
| Cara (UNIV-A): ja, also ich weiss was du mit gitmo meinst<br><i>(yes, well I know what you mean about gitmo)</i>  |  |
| Tom (UNIV-G): don't get me wrong, i really like the us  | Facework (avoiding conflict)                                       |

Table 19  
Chat #3b

|  |                            |
|--|----------------------------|
| Politics (Collective Guilt)  |                            |
| Tom (UNIV-G): German student who had vacationed once in the U.S. for 3 weeks   |                            |
| Cara (UNIV-A): American student who had studied for a year in Germany  |                            |
| Cara (UNIV-A): also was findest du am besten bei euch<br><i>(so what do you like the most over there)</i>  | Curiosity                  |
| Tom (UNIV-G): in germany?  |                            |
| Cara (UNIV-A): ja, die uni<br><i>(yes, the university)</i>   | Negotiation of meaning     |
| Cara (UNIV-A): deutschland, eure regierung<br><i>(germany, your government)</i>  |                            |
| Tom (UNIV-G): they do things more quietly, and they have to be more careful about certain issued, because we started WW II                       | Reflection on C1           |
| Cara (UNIV-A): yeah, we are kinda in the same boat huh??   | Reflection on C1           |
| Tom (UNIV-G): we did some really horrible things in the past   | Reflection on C1           |
| Tom (UNIV-G): no we were worse   |                            |
| Cara (UNIV-A): ja ich weiss, ihr wisst dass, die ganzes welt wisst dass<br><i>(yes I know, you [guys] know that, the whole world knows that)</i> | Negotiation of meaning     |
| Cara (UNIV-A): aber du hast dass selber nicht gemacht<br><i>(but you didn't do yourself)</i>   |                            |
| Cara (UNIV-A): also, ich finde diese kollektive schuld total bloed<br><i>(so, I find this collective guilt totally stupid)</i>                   | (Strong opinion statement) |
| Tom (UNIV-G): but it is frightening that such things can happen with "educated people" at that time  |                            |
| Cara (UNIV-A): ja.. stimmt<br><i>(yes...that's true)</i>   | Facework? (agrees)         |

The American student Cara commented that she enjoyed the chat about culture, Germany, and American politics, noting that "Germans like to talk about politics." But she also stated that it would have been better if the Germans had shared more of their ideas rather than just asking questions. This is an interesting comment because the actual chat data reveal that Tom shared his ideas and did not pose that many questions.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

To recapitulate, RQ1 was "How does the choice of internet tools (specifically asynchronous forum discussions and synchronous chats) contribute to the style of language produced by the learners?" The data in this study reveal that as Thorne (2003) found, different internet tools are not neutral media in that each fosters a different kind of syntactic and pragmatic style. Asynchronous forum entries contain longer, syntactically more complex statements, whereas synchronous chat entries are short, reactive, and less formal. From multiple past experiences (e.g., Chun & Wade, 2004), asynchronous forums often lack true interaction unless learners can be trained to respond to previous postings, a process that takes constant and repeated admonition on the part of the instructors. In following Scarino's (2009) suggestion that as-

assessment of intercultural competence entails understanding how students' dynamic and developing enculturation affects how they see and interpret the world *and* positioning students as both language users and language analyzers, this study examined the forum and chat transcripts both quantitatively and qualitatively and triangulated the data with the students' postexchange evaluations of the success of the exchange. Future research might employ corpus analysis for more precise collocation data.

To answer RQ(1a) "Is there a difference in the percentage of statements versus questions used by both the American and German groups?" and (1b) "What types of speech acts are used to convey pragmatic ability and the development of ICC?", the American students *quantitatively* asked a higher percentage of questions than the German students in the chats (33% and 26%, respectively). This could explain the expectation on the part of some American students that one shows interest by asking questions, and, in fact, in their postchat evaluations these students stated that they were disappointed that the Germans did not seem to be interested in their thoughts or that their partner seemed bored by the topic because they did not ask many questions. The chat transcripts of these American students, however, revealed simple question-answer sequences, without in-depth expression of opinions or curiosity. Incidentally, these particular students possessed advanced linguistic ability, but they ostensibly did not appear to have the pragmatic ability to realize that it is not only through questions that one signals interest or curiosity. Instead, they perceived a lack of interest on the part of the German students despite the fact that the German interlocutors did ask questions, albeit not to the same extent as the American students. In addition, their own postings lacked expansion of their thoughts and opinions.

The data show, on the one hand, that students from the two classes interacted according to their own pragmatic norms, sometimes resulting in a clash of expectations (so-called "cross-cultural pragmatics" as defined by Boxer, 2002). On the other hand, RQ2 "How do learners demonstrate their pragmatic ability to perform various types of speech acts in their online postings?" can be answered with the observation that some students' chat entries revealed their emerging "interlanguage pragmatic" ability, reflecting Boxer's (2002) concept of "interlanguage pragmatics" that "it is the task of the language learner or newcomer to acquire the norms of the host community" (p. 151). These students demonstrated ICC because they were able to use an appropriate combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes in real time in order to interact with interlocutors from a different country or culture, maintaining conversational involvement by making additional statements to indicate interest instead of only posing questions. Their chat transcripts revealed more involved sequences in which both interlocutors posted several comments in succession, expanding on their thoughts and opinions.

In other words, *qualitatively* comparing the types of discourse produced in the chats with the students' end-of-the-quarter reactions to the exchange revealed that when certain types of discourse were present in the chats, learners judged the chats to be "successful," while other types of discourse often resulted in dissatisfaction with the chat. As stated above, in several chats, students showed curiosity and interest in the other culture and reflected on their own culture (components of ICC described by Byram, 1997) not only by asking questions, but also by contributing unsolicited thoughts and opinions. In addition, they appeared to keep the conversation flowing by hedging, avoiding conflict, and performing facework. These students subsequently had positive reactions and felt they "gained an authentic perspective" of the other culture and that their "partner was interesting because he wanted to know about us."

The discourse analyses of the data suggest that students who were satisfied with the chats tended to have had extended discussions with their partners about cultural and political topics, whereas students who found the chats awkward or difficult to start used brief questions and answers about mundane topics similar to face-to-face small talk. There was ample

evidence of many students' emerging ICC (e.g., they showed curiosity, suspended disbelief about the other's culture, and reflected on their own culture), and the types of speech acts that these advanced learners of German used were sophisticated and nuanced, particularly in how they performed facework. The discourse of the synchronous chats reflected much more engagement and contained more evidence of developing ICC than the entries in the asynchronous forum postings. However, there were also examples in the forum postings of students' reflecting on their own culture and changing their attitudes, "I [used to think] that Americans ... but maybe we are more similar to the Germans [after all]."

To conclude, this study has corroborated previous research by Kramsch and Thorne (2002) with regard to different discourse styles and Ware and Kramsch (2005) with regard to students reflecting on discourse pragmatics (with varying degrees of success). It is hoped that the types of discourse analyses in this article can contribute to understanding how L2 learners develop interactional pragmatic abilities and eventually contribute to an empirically informed internet pragmatics for L2/C2 learners. Learners today participate in diverse social activities online, and such intercultural exchanges can help them gradually develop translingual and transcultural competence, despite the pragmatic hurdles that need to be overcome in the process.

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