Examining language learners' roles and perceptions in the development of Intercultural Communicative Competence: An analysis of Intercultura Spanish language learning materials from an Activity Theory perspective

Adolfo Alfredo Carrillo Cabello

Iowa State University
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By

Adolfo Alfredo Carrillo Cabello

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Major: Applied Linguistics and Technology

Program of Study Committee:
Carol Chapelle, Major Professor
Dan Douglas
Volker Hegelheimer
Cristina Pardo Ballester
David Russell

Iowa State University

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To my nice Itzel and nephews Karim, Isai, Adrián, and Patricio. Los quiero mucho hijos.
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Abstract

With the increasing globalization, approaches to foreign language teaching have recognized the need to prepare learners for interactions with native speakers of the target language. Research studies in the areas of cross-cultural and intercultural communication have identified intercultural communicative competence (ICC) as a skill needed for such interactions. However, the majority of studies in these areas have focused on contradictions that arise from communication between two different cultural groups of learners without consideration to the roles they take in the discussions or their attitudes towards the materials. In addition, the majority of ICC studies have investigated ICC development in language courses using materials that have not been fully integrated into the courses. Attempts have been made to guide language educators in preparing learners for intercultural interactions, such as the goals outlined in the National Standards document (ACTFL, 2011). However, today’s foreign language classrooms are still confined to the use of textbooks as guiding principles for teaching. Unfortunately, textbooks have not fully incorporated research findings from the area of ICC.

To address the lack of materials that integrate ICC findings and that are fully integrated in language courses, I developed the Intercultura materials. These materials contain cultural information from four Hispanic countries (Argentina, Chile, Colombia, and Spain). In this study I proposed and investigated an innovative approach for the teaching of culture and development of ICC in the context of a foreign language classroom. The investigation focused on five research questions that aimed at the study of (a) participants’ roles in the discussion of cultural information, (b) development of ICC and connection to the
components of the Intercultura materials, (c) differences in the pursuance of goals (i.e., understanding cultural information), (d) participants’ perceptions of and attitudes towards the Intercultura materials, and (f) participants’ preferences for the viewing of materials in or out-of-class. Two research methodologies were employed. Data consisting of participants’ (n=42) entries to eight discussion forums and sociograms obtained from the forums were analyzed qualitatively to answer research questions 1, 2, and 3. A mixed methods approach was used to investigate research questions 4 and 5. Quantitative (participants’ (n=115) ratings to Likert-scale items in an exit survey) and qualitative (responses to open-ended questions in the survey) data were used.

Main findings showed that participants who had a stronger connection to the target culture or to a culture that differed from the mainstream US culture (e.g., first and second generation of immigrants, students who had experiences abroad) were able to take on the role of leaders and assist others in the development of a greater understanding of the cultural information presented to them. In regard to the development of ICC, instances of the dimension of interpreting and relating increased when participants viewed the materials outside of class. The use of what/how questions and integration of information from four countries in the Intercultura materials were contributing factors to the increase in the dimension of interpreting and relating. Overall, participants found different features of the Intercultura materials to be beneficial. Finally, participants preferred viewing materials out-of-class and offered valid reasons for choosing their own materials. The study has pedagogical implications in regard to task types for the development of ICC (i.e., use of what/how questions), the viewing of materials (in or out-of-class), and consideration of participants’ cultural backgrounds in discussions about culture.
Chapter 1. Introduction

It has become commonplace to say that the world has changed, that globalization and internationalization make everything different, that intercultural experience is the experience of everyone. This is indeed true for those – and there are many of them – who encounter people from other countries in their daily lives, as such encounters are obviously ‘intercultural’ experiences. Freedom of movement in Europe particularly has grown in recent decades and the need for intercultural dialogue is well recognized (Council of Europe, 2009, p. 3).

1.1 Statement of the problem

This statement from the Council of Europe is situated within the tightly knit multilingual community of Europe, but it expresses a theme that is equally pertinent in foreign language teaching throughout the world. With the increasing globalization, approaches to foreign language education have attempted to provide students with the skills needed to interact with people from different cultures. Recent approaches for teaching foreign languages have emphasized communication and expression of ideas in different situations and in specific contexts (i.e., time and place) (Sieloff Magnan, 2007). This principle has been incorporated in approaches that focus on communication and language functions such as the communicative language approach and the functional approach to language teaching. Guidelines for the development of communication ability and communication in cross-cultural encounters have been proposed. For example, in Europe, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL, 2009) stresses the need to prepare language learners with competences that go beyond linguistic ability to include social and cultural aspects. In particular, the CEFRL has explicitly advocated for the need to incorporate intercultural communicative competence (ICC) as an ability that is central for communication with people from other cultures. ICC refers to the ability of language learners
to interact with a foreign culture and manage communication with people of different cultural entities (Coperias Aguilar, 2010). The term competence refers to the ability that speakers possess, whereas intercultural refers to the inclusion of two or more different cultures (Sercu, 2010).

The same overall agenda appears in the US in the goals for teaching languages in the foreign language classroom developed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) in the National Standards document (ACTFL, 2011). In this framework, the notion of the need to develop skills necessary for communication with people from different cultures is implied, but the construct of intercultural competence is not stated. Furthermore, procedures to develop tasks and materials to accomplish such ability are undeveloped. In the National Standards document the development of skills useful in communication with people from other cultures is regarded as an effect from the making of comparisons between the foreign culture and the learner’s own culture, but the description of skills to achieve intercultural communicative competence is not developed.

The lack of the explicit statement of ICC in the National Standards document as a skill needed for intercultural communication has resulted in language educators and materials developers failing to explore and incorporate ICC theories to guide their practices. Researchers have studied ICC development of language learners in different contexts (e.g., telecollaboration, study abroad), but their findings have not been incorporated in the teaching practices in the foreign language classrooms. Research studies in this area have primarily incorporated materials for ICC development in the foreign language classrooms for research purposes only, but the materials have not been fully integrated into the courses. In addition, these studies have failed to account for learners’ impressions of the materials (e.g., relevance
and significance of information, applicability of information for future use) and their preferences for implementation (e.g., type of media used, preference for working with materials in or out of class).

The extensive body of research in the area of ICC has grown, as have the practices of cross-cultural exchanges in language classrooms. Indeed, with the appearance of computers, researchers in ICC have used this medium to engage language learners in communication with native speakers of the target language. The growth of such practices has demanded a closer look at these interactions. Some studies have investigated the process of collaboration of two distinctly different cultural groups mediated by computer communication. Such studies have been identified as telecollaboration studies. Telecollaboration studies have served to identify factors that affect communication breakdowns that occur in cross-cultural encounters (e.g., the works by Belz, 2002, 2005; Kramsch & Thorne, 2002; Thorne 2003). For example, Thorne (2003), Belz (2005), and Basharina (2007) have noted that differences in the cultural expectations of the participants may prompt breakdowns in communication and impede learners from benefiting from the interactions with participants from other cultures. Other studies have focused on the investigation of the process of collaboration (Basharina, 2007; Dooly, 2011; Kim, 2011) and have pointed out the benefits associated with the analysis of the elements that come into place in this process. Basharina (2007), for instance, in an investigation of the collaboration process of three cultural groups (Russian, Mexican, Japanese) found evidence that suggests that differences in the cultural norms and expectations of the learners may hinder communication and reduce opportunities for learning about the foreign culture.
The majority of studies in ICC have utilized texts (e.g., readings from textbooks, newspaper articles) as the primary source of information to learn about the foreign culture. However, some studies (Belz and Kinginger, 2003; Liaw, 2006; Nguyen, H., & Kellog, G., 2010) have also utilized other media (e.g., films) as a tool to facilitate communication exchanges and the fostering of ICC. The use of texts in communication exchanges has been guided by the practicality of their use (i.e., readiness for use, adaptability), but also by the increasing popularity of the Cultura Project (Furstenberg, G., Levet, S., English, K., & Maillet, K., 2001). The Cultura Project has outlined criteria for the selection of texts and guidelines for the development of tasks, which has served as the basis for other projects and studies in ICC and provided great appeal for its integration. However, the use of texts in the Cultura Project and other studies in ICC (e.g., Belz, 2003) do not explore the advantages that computers offer, such as the delivery of multiple forms of input (e.g., visual, aural).

In addition to the limitation of the use of texts as the primary source of information, another limitation of studies in ICC is the focus on the analysis of the contradictions that arise from interactions (Basharina, 2007; Reeder, Macfadyen, Roche, & Chase, 2004; Sercu, 2000; Thorne, 2003). Studies in ICC have explained the general process of collaboration in cross-cultural interactions (Basharina, 2007), but little attention has been given to the actual content of the materials used in the projects and how participants process the information from texts to develop their ICC.

It is true that the large body of research in the area of ICC has tremendously increased the understanding of the construct of ICC and of how learners go about developing ICC in communication exchanges between distant learners from different backgrounds. Unfortunately, language teachers have not fully benefitted from these gains because the
research findings have not been completely applied to approaches and materials used in their classrooms. Studies in ICC have predominantly focused on cross-cultural encounters, even though in reality, today’s mainstream foreign language classroom is still confined to pedagogies for teaching culture based on commercially available textbook materials.

Despite the usability of the findings from research in ICC in regard to the process learners follow for developing ICC, little is known about how this process applies to the context of the foreign language classroom. Therefore, there is a need to investigate this process, and in particular the role of learners in intra-group interactions in their development of ICC. Knowledge of the roles of learners can facilitate the development of approaches, tasks, and materials that trigger and enhance roles identified as beneficial. To advance the understanding of the construct of ICC, there is a need to investigate the specific roles that participants take during the interactions so that language educators can use this knowledge to develop or adapt materials and tasks to increase the opportunities of learners to develop their ICCs.

Considering the advances in ICC research, in this dissertation, I proposed and investigated materials for the development of ICC that are fully integrated into a language course. Findings from this investigation can assist language educators and materials developers to reconceive foreign language education around sociocultural influences and towards teaching approaches that incorporate aspects to be found as beneficial for ICC development.
1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to empirically investigate how the Intercultura materials and their implementation affect the development of ICC in intermediate Spanish learners in the context of the foreign language classroom. To better understand the issues involved in the development of ICC, the interactions of participants, and the attitudes derived from their interactions, several objectives are pursued.

The first objective of this study is to analyze the roles that learners take in the discussions of cultural information for the development of ICC. Activity Theory (AT) is a theory that focuses on the understanding of the relationship between subjects and objects/goals. The theory analyzes the actions subjects take to obtain objects, which are considered the goals of the activity. In addition, the analysis of activity takes into account the mediational means that subjects use for the pursuance of objects/goals (Engeström, 1997). According to Engeström, the tools subjects use are determined by sociocultural factors such as personal or collective (i.e., established in a community or group of individuals) values and beliefs. AT has been widely employed in ICC due to its ability to identify elements that come into play in a system, the role that each element has, and the factors (internal and external) that impact the system. Considering that there are different elements involved in the activity investigated in the present study (e.g., involvement of two cultures, groups of subjects, Intercultura materials, technology used in the delivery of the materials), and taking into account that the goal of the study is to understand the elements of activity and their relationship, the use of AT is seen as a suitable theoretical framework to employ in this investigation.
AT will be employed as the framework of analysis to assist in the identification of the roles that learners take in the discussion of cultural information. The analysis will help uncover the type of tools (e.g., cultural knowledge) learners utilized as the mediational means to develop an understanding of the foreign culture. Considering that the learners will discuss cultural information about the Hispanic culture and will relate the information to their own, the tools considered in their discussions will cover three types of cultural knowledge: 1) cultural knowledge from the Intercultura materials, 2) knowledge about the foreign cultures, and 3) knowledge about the native culture. The analysis of tools will consider the type of knowledge used in the discussions and the relationship of the knowledge to the participants. In this way, the analysis of tools will inform about the tools used and how previous knowledge affected the use of these tools and its effects in the achievement of cultural understanding.

The second objective of the study is to identify differences (if any) that derive from the viewing of materials in-class and out-of-class, and to explain why these differences exist based on the interactions of the participants and the goals pursued in activity systems for the development of ICC.

The third objective of this study is to provide information that would assist in the understanding of the factors that affect the development and selection of materials from the point of view of the participants. For this purpose, a mixed methods approach is employed. Quantitative data will be used to describe general trends of students’ perceptions of, preferences for, and attitudes towards the Intercultura materials. In addition, qualitative information derived from open-ended answers to questions in an exit survey will be used to explicate the trends found in the quantitative data.
1.3 Significance of the study

Given that this study utilizes an innovative approach that draws upon empirical research studies in the area of ICC, its findings can inform approaches used for teaching culture and fostering ICC in the foreign language classroom. Furthermore, the findings will provide insights about the way learners of Spanish as a foreign language develop ICC when exposed to multimedia materials and engaged in dialogues and conversations about the foreign culture in the context of the foreign language classroom. In particular, the use of AT will help expose the manner in which language learners of similar backgrounds interact with each other, and how they construct their understanding of the second culture. In addition, it will allow for the identification of the resources (e.g., cultural knowledge about the C1 and C2) that language learners use while processing cultural information.

1.4 Organization of the dissertation

This dissertation is organized in five chapters. This first chapter provides the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, and its significance. In Chapter two a review of the literature is presented to situate the study in the area of ICC and foreign language education—with an emphasis on the teaching of culture. Furthermore, the review of the literature provides an overview of the issues pertaining to this investigation and the theoretical frameworks (e.g., activity theory) used in the analysis and interpretation of findings. Chapter two includes a brief description of the Intercultura materials that were developed for the research. The chapter concludes with the statement of the research questions.
The third chapter in this dissertation covers the methodology employed in the investigation of the research questions. The chapter includes a description of the participants and their linguistic and cultural background as they relate to the present study. Chapter three includes detailed descriptions of the features of the Intercultura materials and their implementation in the Spanish courses considered in the study. The chapter outlines procedures for data collection and analysis.

In chapter four, the results of the investigation are reported along with a discussion of the findings. I discuss four roles that learners took during the discussion of intercultural information and how the knowledge learners possessed influenced the role they took in the discussions. I then report on how two of the components of the Intercultura proved to be more beneficial for participants’ development of ICC. Furthermore, I explain the differences encountered in terms of the appearance of activity systems, and how the amount of information received and the location where materials were viewed affected the focus of the discussions and the goals pursued by participants. Finally, I explain the reasons students reported for preferring the viewing of materials outside of class. In addition, I report on the benefits of the Intercultura materials that participants found such as allowing for individualized learning and ability to control their learning of cultural information.

The dissertation concludes with chapter five in which I discuss the theoretical and practical implications of the study, the limitations, directions for future research, and conclusion. This study provided significant insights on the roles of participants in the discussion of cultural information, which will serve to better inform practices for the teaching of culture. In addition, the insights reported by participants in regard to the Intercultura
materials can better inform future approaches for CALL and textbook materials that aim at the development of ICC.
Chapter 2. Literature Review

This chapter presents a review of the literature that has prompted the development of the Intercultura materials and studies that have informed the approach proposed and its implementation. It highlights the shortcomings found in previous studies in the area of ICC, to demonstrate the need for the current research. The chapter first presents an overview of the teaching of culture in the foreign language classroom and introduces the problem that the Intercultura materials seek to address: the need for an informed approach for the teaching of culture, and ICC development, as made evident by the limitations of cultural materials in textbooks used in the foreign language classroom. Secondly, the chapter elaborates on the need to investigate the developmental process of ICC in the context of the foreign language classroom. This argument is made by first describing the findings of empirical research conducted in the area, with an emphasis in telecollaboration studies. The concepts and issues addressed in the research are explained: the meaning making process, the approaches to materials used in ICC studies and their connection to ICC development, and the role of attitudes in ICC development. Next, Activity Theory, the theoretical framework used for the analysis is defined and I explain how this theory will be used in the analysis. Finally, a description of the Intercultura materials is presented. In addition, the goals and scope of the materials are stated, and a brief description of the main features is provided. The chapter concludes with the statement of the research questions.

2.1 The teaching of culture in the foreign language classroom

In the foreign language classroom in the US, with the adoption of national standards for language teaching, the teaching and learning of culture has been central to recent
pedagogies. Indeed, with the implementation of what has come to be known as the Five Cs (Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, Communities), the framework defined by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) in the national standards document (ACTFL, 2011), has prompted a paradigm shift in language teaching pedagogies from a communicative approach to a focus on cultural issues (Castro, Sercu & Garcia, 2004; Thanasouas, 2001). This shift has been marked by the emphasis given to sociocultural contents that are included in the objectives of the National Standards document. What this has meant for language instructors across the different levels of education is that in addition to covering linguistic premises, instructors also need to integrate aspects of the culture of the foreign language that are needed in cross cultural interactions. The reason for inclusion of sociocultural aspects is to better prepare language learners in developing intercultural competence. Such sociocultural aspects include knowledge about spoken language in informal settings, daily living and customs, and cultural norms governing social interactions (Castro, Sercu & Garcia, 2004).

According to the ACTFL National Standards, “[t]he approach to second language instruction found in today’s schools is designed to facilitate genuine interaction with others, whether they are on another continent, across town, or within the neighborhood” (p. 11). The approach described in the National Standards document emphasizes the idea that learners need to be better prepared for communications with speakers of foreign languages, an ability that encompasses intercultural communicative competence. However, this approach presents different challenges because even within the same language group there are linguistic and cultural differences that need to be taken into account in interactions that affect not only the outcomes of the interactions but also the process of involvement of participants. In the case
of Spanish, for example, regional linguistic variations in terms of vocabulary usage, intonation patterns, and verb forms (vos, a non-standard second person singular verb form, for example, used exclusively in some countries in South America) can hinder the ability of learners of a specific dialect of Spanish (e.g., Castilian Spanish, Mexican Spanish, etc.) to communicate with native speakers of Spanish from regions where other dialects of Spanish are spoken. In other words, being able to communicate with speakers of foreign languages entails not only linguistic ability, but also sociocultural competencies needed for successful communication exchanges between speakers of two distinct linguistic and cultural groups.

In addition to linguistic variations, cultural practices vary, and the ‘what to say to whom and when’ premise (i.e., as in the case of when two people meet, who speaks first, which is determined by factors such as age and social status of the speakers) is problematic given that regional variations of such practices are difficult to observe or recreate in the context of the foreign language classroom. In other words, the claim made in ACTFL’s national standards in regard to ‘genuine’ interactions, and more specifically, to the facilitation of these interactions by foreign language pedagogies, needs to be analyzed more carefully if teachers and materials are really going to be able to help students to achieve intercultural communicative competence.

In an attempt to facilitate the pursuance of the proposed objectives, the National Standards document provides frameworks for the interpretation of the objectives. One of such frameworks is related to the area of cultural comparisons (ACTFL, 2011, p. 37). In the framework for communicative modes, cultural knowledge is identified as one of the three components that come into play when engaging in communications at the interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational levels. As part of the interpretive level, language learners are
expected to develop and demonstrate an “ability to analyze content, compare it to
information available in their own language and assess linguistic and cultural differences…”
and the “ability to analyze and compare contents in one culture to interpret US culture” (p. 37). The frameworks provided in the National Standards document (ACTFL, 2011) attempt
to express the need for language teaching to engage learners in the development of
intercultural competence. Although not clearly defined or related in the guidelines, the
concept of intercultural competence comes into play in the description of the proposed tasks
and skills defined in the document, which aim at the pursuance of competencies and skills
that would allow language learners to communicate with members of the target language.

The National Standards (ACTFL, 2011) do not define in sufficiently concrete terms
the construct of ICC. Even though the ACTFL guidelines imply the construct of ICC in the
National Standards document, lack of clear definitions of the objectives and features sought
for materials for the fostering of ICC has hindered the development of materials that
concretely integrate objectives, features, and tasks that target ICC development.

The impediment for the development of ICC materials for the language classroom
becomes more evident, for instance, in the ‘chopped’ approach followed in language
textbooks. The majority of textbooks introduce cultural contents pertaining to one country in
a cultural section at the end of each chapter. This division made in language textbooks of
cultural contents does not seem to reflect the claims made in the national standards. If
learners are to make cultural comparisons to develop analytical skills and awareness
necessary for intercultural competence, when presenting learners with information about one
country, there is no information about other country to refer to for the purpose of
comparisons. Consequently, the development of broader views about culture to develop ICC is hindered.

In the national standards document, objectives with regard to cultural knowledge specify that as a result of studying foreign language students should be able to make connections and comparisons between the native and foreign culture. For example, Standard 4.2 states that, “Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own” (p. 9). The goal stated in Standard 4.2 is connected to one of the dimensions defined in Byram’s (1997) model of ICC. The connection that exists between the standards and ICC theory provides evidence of the relevance of ICC in the National Standards document (ACTFL, 2011).

Even though the statement of objectives and goals has advanced the language teaching practices because it provides a clear mapping of the skills sought, procedures for achieving these goals remain unclear. As language practitioners, teachers tend to rely on textbooks as guiding materials with the perception that the materials and approach in the textbook abide by the national standards. Nevertheless, the content of textbooks is an issue in and of itself that deserves closer attention. In their reviews of textbooks used for the teaching of foreign languages, several authors (Macian, 1986; Ramírez & Hall, 1990; Young & Oxford, 1993) have expressed concern for the need to make explicit the cultural contents presented to students. The concern expressed by these authors is connected to the emphasis given to linguistic forms in the organization of textbook materials, without much consideration of the cultural meanings attached to linguistic forms. Other authors have pointed to the potential of books for the development of ICC (Sercu, 2000). However, what is
essential to consider is that even though there is potential for the development of ICC in textbooks, there are also missed opportunities (Chapelle, 2010) that could be overcome.

The tasks and skills fostered in the language textbooks do not seem to facilitate the development of abilities necessary for engaging in interactions with members of the target language. The tasks described in the National Standards document (ACTFL, 2011) focus on linguistic competencies and the making of cultural comparisons. However, if the assumed goal in the National Standards document is the fostering of ICC, the tasks and skills pursued should expand beyond the making of comparisons to encompass skills that promote cultural awareness, and dialogues with peers and members of the foreign culture to achieve cultural understanding, skills that go beyond the acquisition of linguistic tools as the mere focus of teaching.

The limitation of tasks for the fostering of ICC skills is also restricted by the scope and organization of cultural information presented in foreign language textbooks. First, at the curriculum level, in Spanish textbooks for foundational courses (i.e., beginning and intermediate levels), cultural information relevant to one specific Hispanic country is included in each chapter. For example, chapter one may focus on Spain, chapter two on Mexico, and so forth. At the chapter level, the cultural information is commonly supplemented in a stand-alone section at the end of the chapter. The separation that exists between the chapter contents, the language contents, and the curriculum as a whole may prevent learners from developing the type of analytical skills that are conducive to the development of analytical skills, cultural awareness, and the ability make comparisons between the foreign culture and that of their own. It appears that based on the distribution and organization of cultural materials in textbooks, the approach followed emphasizes the
idea that cultural knowledge is an ad hoc asset to language competence. To illustrate this point further, I turn to a description of the organization and distribution of cultural materials and tasks implemented in the textbook *Interacciones*, which is used in the intermediate Spanish course at focus in this study.

In *Interacciones*, three main cultural components are included in each chapter: a video segment, a section on cultural products and practices with a focus on people (e.g., celebrities, famous people), and a section on profiles of a Hispanic country or region. In Table 1 below, I provide examples of the type of information contained in each section, and examples of tasks. The examples from the textbook are taken from Chapter 7 that focuses on the transnational corporations and banking.

According to the description of goals provided in the instructor’s manual of *Interacciones*, the goal of these sections is to provide opportunities for identification of cultural practices in the foreign culture and native culture, and to promote comparisons for the interpretation of the cultural information presented. However, these sections contain no tasks that require learners to make comparisons between the two cultures nor tasks that promote interpretation of the information presented. The tasks included are limited to the production of descriptions of the cultural artifacts or responding to comprehension questions. If the goal is to provide opportunities for interpretation and development of ICC, other types of tasks that require learners to draw upon their own cultural references and to develop analytical skills should be included.
Table 1. Sample cultural topics and tasks for chapter seven of the Interacciones textbook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Topic and Materials</th>
<th>Sample task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Video segment</td>
<td>The new McDonalds menu</td>
<td>Pre-viewing: Discussion on typical menu items at McDonalds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Video in DVD</td>
<td>Predicting content of the video from title.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Post-viewing: Discussing main ideas, complete comprehension quiz.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural products and practices</td>
<td>Cultural Heritage: The Hispanic community in the USA</td>
<td>The reading showcases famous Hispanic celebrities such as Celia Cruz, Jennifer Lopez, Bill Richardson, and it also provides information about the Hispanic influence in the architecture of some historical sites in the US such as San Agustín in Florida and El Alamo in Texas. Task: In pairs, students describe the characteristics of Spanish colonial architecture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic country/region</td>
<td>Welcome to south America: Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay</td>
<td>The reading includes information on the geography or the region, weather, and currencies used in each country. Task: post-reading quiz that includes three questions (e.g., capitals, things in common between countries)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Intercultura materials were developed to provide such tasks. In Table 2, I illustrate how the Intercultura materials may better assist learners in the interpretation of materials from their own culture and encourage them to draw their own conclusions on the similarities and/or differences between the two cultures under study. The descriptions correspond to the materials for chapter seven in the textbook.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Topic &amp; Content</th>
<th>Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multimedia Online Activity</td>
<td>Banking Video segments describing banking habits, use of credit, availability and accessibility of banks, use of checks/checking account.</td>
<td>Watch video, listen to descriptions, interact with built-in functions (e.g., search, play, pause, show transcript)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Built-in Comprehension Quiz</td>
<td>Questions corresponding to the content of the video segments</td>
<td>Complete quiz by answering questions: true/false, matching, drag &amp; drop, fill in the gaps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Discussion Forum</td>
<td>Banking Four questions. The questions follow Belz’s (2003) what/how categories (what: identification of content, elicitation of noticing certain aspects; how: eliciting reflection, relationship to C1, inquiry)</td>
<td>Post a comment addressing at least one of the questions for the forum. Respond to at least one comment to a post. This activity is done outside of class allowing for one week to complete the task.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following research findings in studies of ICC development, the Intercultura materials increase the opportunities learners have for the making of comparisons between the two cultures, for interpreting the text from their own culture, and analyzing the cultural information more critically. In terms of tasks, in the Intercultura materials learners are asked to first relate the content of the materials to their own culture so that they can develop a broader understanding of the cultural practices. For instance, in the videos the cultural informants are asked to describe how they bank in their country of origin (e.g., frequency of use of banks, access to banks, location). Learners are then asked to compare the cultural information they have learned about in the materials to their own banking habits. In the context of the classroom, however, learners may not have enough time to process the information and come up with relevant information to make comparisons and to analyze.
cultural information critically. Therefore, the Intercultura materials give them the opportunity to think about the materials, process the information, and converse with their peers to broaden their cultural understanding in discussion forums. Given the identified limitations that the approach in foreign language textbooks for Spanish offer for the development of ICC, I turned to research in the area of ICC to identify research findings that can serve to better assist learners in the development of ICC in the context of the foreign language classroom. Next, I review the process of meaning making and development of cultural understanding in ICC studies given that this process is key for the making of comparisons, the interpretation of cultural meanings, and development of ICC. I then review the approaches to materials for teaching ICC with a focus on the use of texts (i.e., readings from textbooks and other sources) in empirical studies for the fostering of ICC. However, before discussing the area of ICC, it is important to provide a definition of the topic under study.

2.2 Definition of intercultural communicative competence

The general area in which this study is situated is Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC). This area is concerned with the study of the ability of language learners to interact with a foreign culture and manage communication with people of different cultural entities (Coperías Aguilar, 2010). The term competence refers to the ability that speakers possess, and intercultural refers to the inclusion of two different cultures (Sercu, 2010).

The concept of ICC has been widely used in the area of SLA and foreign language pedagogies. The concept of ICC is concerned with the ability that language learners possess to interact with a speaker from a different cultural and social background. Internationally, the most widely accepted model of ICC comes from Michael Byram (1997). According to
Byram, ICC encompasses four dimensions: attitudes, discovery, interpreting and relating, and knowledge and awareness.

This area of study has focused on developmental aspects, for instance, how learners develop the ability to interact when coming in contact with a second culture (Belz, 2003, 2005), what problems arise during the interactions and how learners go about finding solutions to these problems (Sercu, 2005, 2010; Basharina, 2007). Some studies have also investigated the process of meaning making of participants when developing cultural understanding. As part of developing their ICC, participants engage in discussions about the interpretations of cultural information. The meaning making process and development of cultural understanding has been investigated in ICC. In the next section I discuss research findings in this area of study in ICC research. In addition, I discuss the limitations of studies in this area and describe how these limitations are addressed in the present study.

2.3 Meaning making and development of cultural understanding in ICC studies

Studies in ICC have focused on the challenges that learners face in cross-cultural encounters. For example, the work by Belz (2002, 2003, 2005), Belz and Kinginger (2003), Ware and Kramsch (2005), and Basharina (2007) revealed the misunderstandings that occur in communication exchanges between two different cultural groups. As reported in these studies, cultural misunderstandings arise from the interactions between the two cultures, which are prompted by the meaning-making process that occurs during interactions. However, as Chapelle (2010) points out, the benefits associated with ICC development in these types of studies are difficult to assess given that the focus of study is miscommunication rather than analyzing the process of development.
The research area of ICC has seen a change from studies that were merely descriptive to process-oriented research with a focus on communication breakdowns. Early studies in the area of telecollaboration had a focus on the description of the medium of communication (e.g., computer programs and materials), and the products of such communication exchanges (Chapelle, 2001; Levy, 2007; Liaw, 2006). Telecollaboration studies have changed research methodologies to a focus on communication breakdowns that occur in cross-cultural encounters (e.g., the works by Belz, 2002, 2005; Kramsch and Thorne, 2002; Thorne 2003). This change in research methodology has provided a greater understanding of the process of collaboration (Basharina, 2007; Kim, 2011; Dooly, 2011), the effectiveness and limitations of such exchanges (Thorne, 2003), and the impact that cross-cultural collaboration can have on language learning and teaching pedagogies (Ware, 2005; Sercu, 2005). Furthermore, with the appearance of computers, language educators and learners alike have attempted to engage in communication with audiences of the target language. The growth of such practices has demanded a closer look at these interactions.

Research in ICC has uncovered the complexity of interactions that come into play in cross-cultural encounters. In an influential article in the area of telecollaboration, Belz and Kinginger (2003) studied the role that address forms in German had on the development of cultural understanding between participants in the US and Germany. The study analyzed the use of formal and informal address forms in German, the second person pronouns *du* and *Sie*. Participants in a university class of German as a foreign language in the US communicated with participants in a university class of English as a foreign language in Germany. Participants exchanged e-mails and communicated in synchronous chat sessions about their views and interpretations of films and readings that both groups read and watched. Belz and
Kinginger found that the complexities of use of the pronouns presented learners of German with challenges for the use of the pronouns in the context of the exchange. However, the context of the exchange offered learners opportunities for assistance with the use of the pronouns from the native German speakers. Communication mishaps arose in the misuse of the pronouns by the American students. The Belz and Kinginger study has served as an example of the way in which the use of linguistic forms can affect communication between two culturally and linguistically different groups, and the conflicts that arise as a consequence of miscommunication between groups from two different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Communication breakdowns appeared during the process of meaning making. More than differences in linguistic forms, greater differences existed between the two groups due to their framework for interpretation of the tasks (i.e., conversing with their German/American counterparts) and the rules of engagement that they followed.

Investigations in ICC have considered groups from two different backgrounds, but there have also been studies (Basharina, 2007) that have looked at interactions between groups from three different backgrounds. In her investigation, Basharina (2007) analyzed the conflicts that arose from the discussions of participants in bulletin boards. There were differences in the perspectives that participants had about the expectations of the exchange as well as in the way participants interacted. Given that the study included groups from different cultural backgrounds, misunderstandings between the three different groups (Mexican, Japanese, Russian) occurred, but there were also differences that emerged among participants from the same group. Basharina’s (2007) study used Activity Theory in the analysis of these contradictions, and with the use of this framework, she was able to identify clashes that
occurred from the interactions with resources (tools) and the medium of delivery, such as technological problems with the course management system and access to the Internet.

Basharina’s (2007) study confirmed the mishaps found in Thorne’s (2003) study with regard to cultures of use. Thorne (2003) indicates that Internet mediated tools (e.g., e-mail, chat programs) for communication carry expectations for their use that affect the communication. The expectations that learners have about the use of certain media have an impact on the communication and the perceptions learners develop towards the participants involved in the communication exchanges and towards their cultures. Indeed, in telecollaboration studies, research has found that the participants’ cultures-of-use with regard to technology has influenced the interactions of participants in cross-cultural encounters, which usually result in the development of negative attitudes towards the interactions. However, conflicts in the interactions are to be expected given the varied access to resources that participants have. This is particularly true in countries in which technology is not ‘the norm’ and access to computers and the Internet is not as readily available as it is in institutions of higher level of education such as university campuses. In Basharina’s (2007) study, the negotiation of meaning and meaning making was affected by the cultures-of-use of the participants, their expectations, and their experiences with the use of computers for the purpose of communicating. Activity theory was used to analyze how the tensions arose and what factors prompted the appearance of tensions. In this way, Basharina was able to discover that differences in the underlying values and cultural norms of the participants (and their cultures or origin, e.g., Mexico, Russia) prompted participants to have different expectations of participations (i.e., frequency of correspondence, tone used in notes) that resulted in tensions between the groups of participants.
One such example of differences in access to the Internet and the repercussions that this has on participants’ perceptions of the ‘foreign’ group can be observed in Belz’s (2005) study. Belz investigated the tensions that arose during the communication exchanges between one male student in the US and two female students in Germany. The interactions of these students were analyzed linguistically by considering the type and number of questions used by students and their relation to the affordances of ICC development. Belz focused on tensions because she states that as Vigotsky (1978) indicates, “one of the best ways to understand a phenomenon or system may be by looking at its pathology, i.e. those points where it is disrupted or where it does not run smoothly” (Belz, 2005, p.12). In her study, Belz (2005) suggests that one of the reasons the American students developed negative attitudes towards their counterparts was the limited response to their e-mails that they received from their pen pals in Germany.

The problem here is that since research has shown that variations in Internet access and technology creates conflicts for interactions, why are these factors still not accounted for to eliminate variables that may have negative impacts in the gains of learners in regard to ICC? Even recent studies such as Dooly’s (2011) article, with a focus on modes of language use between participants in Spain and Czech Republic, noted that the differences in cultures-of-use in regard to technological practices had a negative impact in ICC development.

In telecollaboration studies, this research has shown that misunderstandings and mishaps in technological differences prompt conflicts that help us to better understand the implications that variations in cultural practices have in ICC development. In view of these findings and the goal of language teaching to foster ICC development, approaches that prepare students to learn from such conflicts when they occur may better assist learners in
their quest towards the achievement of ICC. Furthermore, research in ICC that considers interactions between groups from different linguistic, cultural, and geographical backgrounds leaves out some key details that can help us understand the fuller implications of how participants from similar backgrounds go about developing ICC by preparing for such encounters. Therefore, based on the need to investigate ICC development in the context of the foreign language classroom, this study aims at the analysis of learners’ interactions in the process of pursuing ICC when interacting with their peers. As part of understanding this process, it is important to study the materials used and their role in ICC development.

2.4 Approaches to materials for teaching ICC

The majority of studies in ICC have utilized texts as reading materials for the promotion of discussions. Empirical studies have shown that the use of texts facilitates interactions among participants. Through these interactions and discussions, learners may develop ICC. The use of texts for the fostering of interactions and discussions predominates in studies that incorporate telecollaboration. The use of texts varies from readings in textbooks to selected readings from newspapers, magazines, and other sources such as brochures.

Foundational studies such as those by Sercu (2002) and Belz (2003) incorporated the reading of texts for the development of ICC. The texts were used in the promotion of the factors identified as beneficial (e.g., knowledge, attitudes/affect, reflection, and critical awareness) for ICC development. Sercu (2000) investigated readings that appear in textbooks analyzed for their potential to foster ICC in Flemish students learning German. In her research, Sercu (2000) found that cultural references to the target culture offered the potential
to elicit skills of inquiry and the development of positive attitudes towards the foreign culture. However, the use of texts in this research did not offer the opportunity to learn about the way cultural understanding is constructed by interactions among learners given that the research focused merely on the identification of cultural references in the textbooks that offer potential for ICC development. The texts used in Sercu’s (2000) study were readings selected from textbooks. A complete description of the texts analyzed is not provided, but among the genres of texts mentioned were folk tales and informative texts describing aspects of German cultural practices.

Part of the limitations of doing research that focuses on methodological approaches, such as the case of the work of Sercu (2000), is that the theoretical frameworks used for analysis consider the potential of texts for the development of ICC, but the frameworks that have been used do not take into consideration the type of interactions that take place in communication exchanges. Nevertheless, Sercu’s (2000) work has been a guiding seminal study that assesses the potential of texts in the fostering of ICC and how foreign language pedagogies can benefit from tasks that aim at the elicitation of cultural awareness.

The use of text as a basis for tasks that foster ICC is also present in Belz’s work (2002, 2003, 2005). In Belz’s (2003) article, for example, the use of purposely-selected texts (e.g., texts that serve as reading materials) that contain cultural information showed that such texts can be beneficial for the promotion of discussions in cross-cultural encounters. The use of texts as the basis of tasks that are designed to prompt discussions/interactions has been widely explored in empirical studies. One influential approach to teaching ICC was developed in the Cultura Project, which was developed by Furstenberg, Levet, English, and Maillet (2001).
The *Cultura Project* fosters ICC in the language classroom through the use of readings and the use of students’ L1s as cognitive tools for the transmission of cultural knowledge. The approach utilizes cultural readings delivered electronically via the WWW in a cross-cultural exchange (i.e., involving two culturally distinct groups) for the promotion of inquiry as the facilitator for cross-cultural communications. The *Cultura Project* has been influential in ICC teaching because it demonstrates how purposefully selected cultural readings can facilitate cross-cultural interactions, and how participants can develop skills of inquiry facilitated by the use of texts (i.e., texts from different sources such as magazines, newspapers, brochures used as reading materials).

The approach proposed in the *Cultura Project* has been used in different studies, even in more recent research such as the articles by Nguyen and Kellog (2010), and Kim (2011). In Nguyen and Kellog’s (2010) study, similar to the approach proposed by the *Cultura Project*, texts are used as the common ground for cross-cultural discussions. The participants in their study express their views on the readings and share their thoughts in a discussion board. This basic set up is typical in telecollaboration. However, even though this approach has yielded significant advantages in the facilitation of communication and dialogues in cross-cultural encounters, the use of texts alone does not take advantage of the affordances of computers and online materials. In other words, using text (i.e., texts as reading materials) as a basis for interactions facilitated by computers does not fully investigate the potential of the use of computers in the fostering of ICC given the capabilities for the delivery of multimedia materials (e.g., imagery, video, audio, hypertext) afforded by this medium (Levy, 2007; Liaw, 2006).
Telecollaboration projects have utilized computers as the medium of communication. Considering the language learning potential that the use of computers may offer (Chapelle, 2001), it is wise to explore other capabilities made available with the use of computers for the fostering of ICC. In commercial textbooks for the teaching of Spanish as a foreign language in the USA, for example, video programs have been integrated in the curriculum. The video programs are commonly offered on DVDs that instructors can play for in-class viewing. Nowadays there is increased popularity of electronic versions of the textbooks and workbooks offered for online individual viewing such as e-books. However, the new affordances of technology such as individual viewing of video materials and the effects that such tasks offer for the development of ICC need to be further investigated. Such type of investigation should be methodical in that it would have to consider not only the medium of delivery as a factor that affects ICC development, but it should also examine the medium as one of the factors involved in the process of ICC development. This type of investigation, which is proposed in the present study, would bring valuable insights into the implications of online materials in ICC development (Belz & Thorne, 2006; Basharina, 2007; Dooly, 2011). This claim can be further explained in terms of the basic approach followed in telecollaboration with the use of texts. Some studies have focused on the analysis of the contradictions (Basharina, 2007; Reeder, Macfadyen, Roche & Chase, 2004; Sercu, 2000; Thorne, 2003) that arise from interactions, but little attention has been given to the actual content of the texts used in the projects and how participants process references from texts into their development of ICC.

Studies that have considered the role of the contents of the texts in ICC development, such as Haneda (2007) and Nguyen and Kellog (2010), have found that contents of readings
do have an effect on the way participants construct cultural knowledge and how this affects learners’ development of ICC. In Hadena’s study, for instance, the learners were able to increase their understanding of the practices and expectations of writing by considering the text as the tool they used to communicate with the community at large. Writing practices were central to the study, and identifying linguistic features in their texts allowed the language learners to develop linguistic resources to more effectively communicate with the audience. The development of linguistic resources was connected to the awareness of the gains learners made in regard to writing as a communicative tool. Nguyen and Kellog (2010) utilized the content of the texts to trace changes in the conceptions and attitudes participants had to the concept of stereotypes. By analyzing the use of information from the content of the texts Nguyen and Kellog were able to establish connections between the gains in ICC development that learners had and how these related to the text and interactions with other participants. The types of analysis conducted by Hanera (2005) and Nguyen and Kellog exemplify the benefits that closer considerations to the content of the texts in the study of ICC development can have.

2.5 Attitudes in ICC development and towards materials used

Attitudes in Byram’s (1987) model of ICC are seen as indicators of development towards the acquisition of ICC because the expression of attitudes (positive or negative) provides evidence of awareness of the existence of differences in cultural practices. Attitudes are concerned with judgments (positive or negative) made about cultural practices, whether one’s own or a foreign culture. These judgments are greatly influenced by the knowledge we have about the cultural practices. The knowledge, on the other hand, is determined by the
experiences we have with the culture, whether gained from personal contact or through an external source such as readings from texts, videos, or from conversations with others. In the case of a foreign culture, language learners make interpretations and judgments about the culture by drawing upon their inventory of values and cultural beliefs that they possess about their own and the foreign cultures. Byram (1997) states that the attitudes learners have towards the foreign culture are frequently “characterized as prejudice or stereotype” (p. 34) with a tendency to be negative. However, Byram explains that negative attitudes may be triggered by feelings of the unknown, the different, and these attitudes can change to feelings of acceptance and appreciation.

According to Byram (1997), judgments made about the cultural practices of the foreign culture result from the identification of the practice and comparing the practices of the foreign culture to one’s own. In the cases where the practice is not part of one’s inventory, it may be perceived negatively since the knowledge about the practice from which judgments can be made is not existent. For example, when learning about eating habits, a foreign language learner may have a negative reaction when discovering that a common practice in some Hispanic countries is eating internal organs of animals and even insects. Even though this practice does exist in the US, it is not common. Learners may experience a negative reaction to this eating practice, but upon learning about the reasons behind it they may have different perceptions. However, this type of attitude is also influenced by the openness of the learner to the identification and acceptance of the otherness, the acceptance of the fact that other cultures have different practices. Sercu (2010) proposes that the identification and acceptance of the otherness is a process that can be illustrated as a continuous line in which learners can be placed as indicated in Figure 1.
The scale presented in Figure 1 illustrates the process that learners, and people in general, go through when coming into contact with a culture that is foreign to them. The scale can also be used in the analysis of native cultures. The use of the scale is not restricted to foreign cultures since individuals may come into contact with cultural practices of their own culture that are new to them, such as in the case of less-common practices for an individual acquainted with mainstream cultural practices. The scale also serves to illustrate the process learners are involved in when coming into contact with the foreign culture in the foreign language classroom. The use of the scale can assist us in the analysis of the development learners make while being exposed to a foreign culture. The expression of attitudes towards the foreign culture can give an indication of where in the spectrum a learner is located in regard to the culture as a whole, but also in relation to a particular topic or cultural feature.

In his model of ICC, Byram (1997) considers attitudes as one of the dimensions that serve as indicators of ICC development. There are four dimensions included in Byram’s model of ICC: 1) knowledge and awareness, 2) interpreting and relating, 3) discovery, and 4) attitudes. In Byram’s (1997) model of ICC, the ability to relate knowledge of one’s self and one’s culture to that of the foreign culture and foreign self is seen as a key component for the development of ICC. According to Byram, the cultural comparisons subjects make influence
the attitudes they develop towards the cultures. Based on this premise, and following Belz’s (2005) suggestions in regard to the elicitation of knowledge about the foreign culture and one’s own that allows for the making of comparisons and the increment of cultural and linguistic awareness, what and how questions were used in discussion forums that are integrated in the Intercultura materials. According to Belz (2005), what and how questions “may indeed be one means of increasing declarative knowledge about the other which may eventually lead to intercultural awareness” (p. 23).

The use of what and how questions in the discussion forums has a dual purpose. First, they serve to elicit declarative statements in which learners express their attitudes towards the foreign culture and their own. Secondly, these questions also bring about questions that learners have in regard to the topic, which fosters dialogue between members. As Belz (2005) explains, when engaged in the analysis and discussion of a foreign culture, there is the possibility for misinterpretation and missed interpretations to occur. This dialogue about differentiations of cultural interpretations (of the foreign and one’s own) creates tensions that lead to the creation of positive attitudes, which, as explained above, is an indicator of the development of ICC.

Despite all the benefits that have been found in empirical studies in regard to the central role that attitudes about the foreign culture have towards the development of ICC, little is known about the attitudes learners have towards the materials used to promote ICC. The judgments learners make about the foreign culture may be greatly influenced by the attitudes they develop from their interactions with the materials they use to gain information about the culture or to communicate with others to learn about the foreign culture. To my knowledge, there is only one study that has focused to a certain extent on the investigation of
the attitudes learners have towards the materials used in ICC development. Elola and Oskoz (2008) conducted a study that focused on the investigation of ICC development of students in a language class in the US who communicated via blogs with students from the same university studying abroad in Spain. Elola and Oskoz applied Byram’s (2000) assessment guidelines for the analysis of ICC development. Elola and Oskoz reported that both groups of students exhibited instances of ICC development based on the analysis of their interactions in blogs. Students in the US were asked to rate their experiences communicating via blogs with students studying abroad. Even though this study inquired about students’ perceptions of their experiences, it did not specifically asked them to rate their experiences with the particular tools (e.g., blogs) that they used for their interactions. In light of the limitation in the research of ICC in regard to learners’ attitudes towards tools used in ICC development, in this study I investigate the attitudes that participants develop from their interactions with the tools used in their discussions (e.g. Intercultura materials, discussion forums).

Considering that attitudes are affected by different factors such as the knowledge subjects have about the culture, the materials used to elicit comparisons, and the comparisons made by participants, this study utilizes Activity Theory as the framework of analysis in the examination of ICC development. In the next section I describe Activity Theory in terms of its use in previous ICC research, and how it will be used in the present study.

2.6 ICC and Activity Theory

The analysis of the interactions of participants, texts, medium, and goals in studies related to ICC development has utilized different approaches. An approach that has been useful in the analysis of the different elements that come into play in cross-cultural and
intercultural interactions is the use of Activity Theory (AT) as a framework for analysis. In this section I describe AT in relation to ICC research, and I elaborate on the use of ICC in the present study.

In his conceptualization of the Zone of Proximal Development, Vygotsky (1978) indicates that the process of collaboration among learners is facilitated by the use of tools, understood as the artifacts (physical objects or conceptual/semantic objects such as language) utilized in the completion of actions for the achievement of particular goals. This idea was further developed by AT, with Yrjö Engeström (1987, 1999, 2001) as a prominent representative of this theory (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Engeström (1999) explains AT from the point of view of the apprenticeship metaphor, in which the apprentice develops higher knowledge with the assistance of the master – who is more knowledgeable. Engeström bases the analysis of activity systems, the basic unit of analysis in AT, in relation to the different components involved in the interactions. Figure 2 below presents the illustration of the components considered in activity systems.

The elements of the activity system shown in Figure 2 represent the different factors that come into play when a subject engages in the pursuance of an outcome or object. The actions taken by the participants in pursuance of an outcome are determined to a great extent by the artifacts, tools, and practices that the subject possesses. For example, when pursuing the outcome of making a cake, having a mixer or not will influence how the subject will go about mixing the ingredients. The values, rules, and conventions correspond to the norms that regulate activity. In the example of making the cake, the conventions for baking a cake will influence the actions taken. The subject would probably follow baking conventions by measuring ingredients for the cake. The values of the subject in regard to recipes will also
affect the use of recipes for baking. The community refers to a group to which the subject belongs that is connected to the activity. For instance, the subject working on the making of a cake may be a home cook taking cooking lessons with other subjects. The community can affect the actions since the values and beliefs of the community may influence the subjects and how they proceed in the pursuance of an outcome. The division of labor refers to how the tasks involved in the pursuance of the outcome are divided, especially in activity that involves more than one subject.

Figure 2. Activity System model (Engeström, 1987).
In Engeström’s model of AT, the premise is that a subject acts over an object in the pursuance of a goal and with the purpose of obtaining an outcome. In the diagram in Figure 2 of the model, we can observe the different factors that affect the actions taken by the subject. All of these factors are relevant and work together in a system that works towards a goal. For instance, when acting towards a goal, the actions of a subject are affected by the values this subject possesses that tell her or him how to act on specific circumstances. Furthermore, the tools and practices available to the subject influence the actions of the participant. In addition, the conventions and rules of the community affect how the subject can act in the pursuance of a goal.

One of the limitations of Engeström’s model is the consideration of outcome as material (tangible) objects. From a linguistic point of view, Wells (2002) reformulated Engeström’s model to account for the role of dialogue as a goal/outcome in and of itself. Figure 3 below shows the representation of Wells’s model.

In his model, Wells (2002) conceives of language as a mediating tool that subjects use in the pursuance of goals, but he also points out that language can also be the resulting product of the activity (i.e., the outcome achieved from the activity). Since Wells based his model of activity on Engeström’s model, they share many elements. For example, we can see in Figure 3 how Wells also considers the rules and conventions, community, division of labor, and tools. These elements are relevant in activity for the pursuance of goals, as it was explained in the diagram for Figure 2.
One of the main differentiations that Wells makes to the system of analysis proposed by Engeström is the shifting of the outcome to the top center of the triangle to indicate this element as the semiotic product co-constructed by participants, such as “descriptions, narratives, and explanations in speech as well as writing through which understanding is achieved” (Wells, 2002, p. 43). For instance, in his 2002 article, Wells gives the example of joint activity developed by two students who were engaged in the completion of a class project. Through the analysis of the activity systems that resulted from the exchange of
communication between the two students, Wells argued that the outcome of the activity was the decision-making process that the participants engaged in while working on the project, and not the artifact they were to create, which was the teacher’s set goal (outcome) of the project. What motivated the development of an activity system in this example was the decision-making process articulated in a dialogue, a conceptual (intangible) outcome. Similarly, the goals expected in the activity systems pertaining to the present study are conceptual (intangible) outcomes because the goal of the activity (i.e., discussions) is to come to an understanding of the Hispanic culture, a conceptual goal. This goal will be achieved through explanations, descriptions, comparisons of cultural practices, and understanding of theoretical relationships that exist between cultural norms, practices, and products. Therefore, taking into consideration the joint activity of participants and the pursuance of conceptual goals, the use of Wells’ model as the framework of analysis in this study is considered a perfect fit for the purpose of the analysis.

AT has been used as a framework for analysis in different studies in ICC such as those by Haneda (2005), Basharina (2007), and Kim (2011). Using Engeström’s (1987) model of AT, these studies were able to describe the underlying factors that affect the development of ICC. Basharina’s (2007) study, for instance, focused on the contradictions that emerged from the communications and negotiations of participants. The study focused on the analysis of the rules and conventions (shown in Figure 3 in the lower left corner) that learners followed in their interactions, and how these rules needed to be negotiated when coming into contact with a community that has varied conventions. Basharina concluded that learner’s preconceptions, expectations, and cultures-of-use (Thorne, 2003) affect the development of ICC. In Haneda’s (2007) study, the increase of awareness of the features and
resources of learners in writing tasks proved to be a positive factor in the development of ICC. In Well’s model, we can identify this awareness in the top of the model under the outcome. The awareness of these learners came from the realization of the semiotic functions of the artifacts (texts) they produced. Kim’s (2011) study investigated the factors that contributed to the (de)motivation of Korean learners of English. Even though his study does not focus on ICC development, through the use of AT Kim (2011) was able to map out the sociocultural factors that affected the learning process of the participants. Kim (2011) found that the subject’s perceptions of the context affected their learning. In Well’s model, the participants in Kim’s study had different perceptions with regard to the community (shown at the bottom in Figure 3 above) where they interacted.

Different from research in telecollaboration where emphasis is given to the analysis of misunderstandings and communication breakdowns, the present study utilizes AT in the analysis of the development of ICC. AT will be used to examine the context in which the communication takes place and the factors involved in interactions between the participants and Intercultura materials. Based on Wells’s model of joint activity, this study will follow an AT model in the analysis. Figure 4 below presents the proposed model of analysis used in this study.
In the present study, Wells’s model (2002) of joint activity will be used in the analysis of activity systems due to its focus on linguistic activity. This model will be used to examine the interactions of intermediate Spanish learners. Utilizing Wells’ model in the analysis and discussion of the activity systems can more fully account for the different elements (subjects, outcome, tools, activity, distribution of labor) implicated in the participants’ interactions than a linguistic approach (e.g., discourse analysis, conversational analysis). With the use of Well’s model, the analysis of the interactions will take into

*Figure 4.* Representation of joint activity in the project Intercultura (adapted from Wells, 2002, p. 59).
consideration the tools learners use in relation to the background of the participants (i.e., cultural norms and knowledge that influence their actions), and the context of the study (i.e., consideration of the cultural information obtained from the Intercultura materials, and from other participants). The consideration of tools is very important in the analysis because the tools used are intrinsically connected to the goals achieved. In other words, the knowledge learners have about the cultures (i.e., their own culture, the foreign culture, cultural information in the Intercultura materials) determines to a great extent the knowledge they gained from their discussions. For example, learners who have had experiences abroad can bring a different perspective of the foreign culture than those offered in the textbook and the Intercultura materials because abroad experiences provide first-hand experimentations with the foreign culture.

A second consideration for the use of Wells’ model (2002) of joint activity is the ability of this framework to allow for the identification and analysis of actions learners take in the pursuance of goals. In Well’s model, emphasis is given to joint activity, which helps in the understanding of the actions of each individual and how these contribute to the achievement of goals. For example, in discussions about cultural topics that are unknown to one participant, a second participant can assist this participant to become familiar with the topic, or the more knowledgeable participant can assist to clarify doubts. Identifying the actions taken by the participants will assist in the understanding of the process of interactions, the contributions made by participants, the roles participants take in the interactions, and how these factors contribute or restrain the pursuance of goals: developing cultural understanding.
Finally, Wells’ 2002 model of activity theory is used in this study because the goals pursued (i.e., developing an understanding about Hispanic cultures) in the activity that takes place in this study are related to the understanding of events, concepts, and their relationships with the cultures under study (e.g., US and Hispanic). In other words, Wells’ model is preferred because it considers activity that has conceptual (intangible) goals: understanding of concepts, events, cultural practices, and their relationships. The goals are achieved through meditational means such as descriptions, narratives, and explanations that learners produce in their discussions about culture. On the other hand, Engeström’s model of AT limits the analysis by considering concrete (tangible) goals of activity.

2.7 The Intercultura materials

Based on research findings in ICC and following the ACTFL guidelines (ACTFL, 2011) for cultural objectives (e.g., interpretative framework, cultural comparisons), I developed the Intercultura materials as an attempt to assist learners of Spanish as a foreign language in the development of ICC. In this section, in an attempt to provide a background for the interpretation of the research questions, I first state the goals of the materials. Then I provide a brief description of the contents of materials. Finally, I briefly explain the tasks and implementation of the materials.

Goals and scope of the Intercultura materials

The aim of the Intercultura materials is twofold: 1) to introduce learners of Spanish to cultural information that is relevant to cultural practices of Hispanics, and 2) to foster ICC development. The scope of the materials focuses on cultural practices of four Hispanic countries: Spain, Chile, Colombia, and Argentina. The information is concerned with
everyday information needed to effectively interact with others. Considering the emphasis given to geographical and historical information about Hispanic countries available in Spanish textbooks (Thanasouas, 2001; Schulz, 2007), and following research findings in the area of ICC (Byram, 1997; Sercu, 2005; Belz, 2003; Scarino, 2010), information concerning cultural norms of everyday practices has been preferred for inclusion in the Intercultura materials.

*Contents of the Intercultura materials*

Given the distinctiveness of the richness of the 21 Hispanic cultures in the Hispanic world, the materials were designed to expose learners to materials that represent the variety of cultural points of view that exist within the Hispanic world (Alred, Byram, & Fleming, 2003). In the approach taken for the Intercultura materials, learners are taught the same areas of cultural information, but the specific content varies depending on the particular country of origin of the informant. For example, in chapter four learners are exposed to information about cultural practices at the restaurant, but these practices (e.g., tipping, ordering drinks, common expressions) vary from country to country. Table 3 shows the distribution of the Intercultura materials by chapter in relation to the topics of the chapters as they appeared in the textbook *Interacciones*, which is used in the course Spanish 202. The distribution of materials was guided by the research questions investigated in this study. Therefore, for chapters seven, nine, and eleven, only materials for one country were included, as shown in Table 3.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Intercultura Materials: Countries and cultural information included</th>
<th>Cultural Section in <em>Interacciones</em> (textbook)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Going shopping</td>
<td>Spain Shopping habits, common expressions, business hours</td>
<td>Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru Information about the geography, climate, and currencies of the countries. Cultural reading on the history of the Guayabera [type of shirt from Mexico]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Spain, Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru</td>
<td>Information about the geography, climate, and currencies of the countries. Cultural reading on the history of the Guayabera [type of shirt from Mexico]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Living in the city</td>
<td>Spain, Chile, Colombia, Argentina Places to visit in the city for entertainment, night life</td>
<td>Peru Colonial architecture in Peru, restoration of the balconies in the downtown historic center in Peru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The job market</td>
<td>Colombia Process for getting a job, employment benefits, compensation</td>
<td>Hispanics in the US The Hispanics who live in New York City (Puerto Ricans), importance of the Spanish language in the US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The multinational corporation</td>
<td>Spain, Chile, Colombia, Argentina Banking, typical forms of payment, use of credit/cards</td>
<td>Hispanics in the US The legacy of Hispanics in the US (architecture), famous historical and entertainment figures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Travels</td>
<td>Spain Means of transportation and usage, names for means of transportation, common expressions</td>
<td>Argentina, Chile, Paraguay &amp; Uruguay Information about the geography, climate, and economy of the countries The presidential elections in Chile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Sports, visit to the doctor’s office</td>
<td>Spain, Chile, Colombia, Argentina Visit to doctor’s office (procedures for scheduling an appointment, frequency, causes, costs), health facilities (clinic, hospital), use of alternative medicine</td>
<td>Argentina, Chile, Paraguay &amp; Uruguay The importance of soccer in Argentina, famous historical and entertainment figures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Central to the contents of the materials was the integration of cultural information relevant to everyday life in the second/target culture. For instance, the contents addressed issues of vocabulary usage (e.g., common expressions used on a daily basis), cultural norms (e.g., politeness, use of request strategies), and suggestions for the consideration of context in cultural interactions (e.g., use of formal and informal registers).

Tasks and implementation of the Intercultura materials

Interactions with the Intercultura materials follow a combination of in-class and out-of-class viewing of the materials, completion of a comprehension quiz, and postings to eight discussion forums. Participants rotate the viewing of materials per chapter, viewing materials for one chapter (for chapters 7, 9, 11) in-class, and out-of-class (for chapter 8, 10, 12) for the subsequent chapter. Participants complete comprehension quizzes for each activity. In in-class viewings the quiz is completed at the end of the activity, and for out-of-class viewing the quiz is completed while viewing each video segment included in the activity (i.e., a comprehension question is included after each short clip). Participants discuss out-of-class the topics of the materials following guiding questions in eight discussions forums.

2.8 Research questions

This study investigates how the Intercultura multimedia materials affect the development of ICC in intermediate Spanish learners in the context of the foreign language classroom. This issue is investigated by seeking answers to five questions using two approaches: an overarching qualitative approach was used in addition to a mixed methods approach.
2.8.1 Research question 1

*What observable roles do learners take during the joint activity in the activity systems that derived from the negotiations of meaning/learning in the online discussions?*

Question one focuses on the roles participants take in discussions for the interpretation of cultural information. This question will be answered based on three factors: engagement of participants in the discussions, tools used (i.e. knowledge about the foreign culture and their own culture), and actions taken in the discussions. Question one seeks to uncover the way language learners discuss and process cultural information in intra-group interactions. Learning about this process and how it is articulated would expand our understanding of the conditions that affect the negotiations of language learners, and would in turn assist language instructors to better facilitate the fostering of ICC in the foreign language classroom.

2.8.2 Research question 2

*What components of the Intercultura materials facilitate or constrain ICC development of participants based on comparisons of the viewing of materials in and out of class?*

Question two aimed at the identification of evidence of ICC development based on the four dimensions (attitudes, knowledge and awareness, interpreting and relating, and discovery) of ICC (Byram, 1997) and how the Intercultura materials and its implementation affect development. To establish development, instances of the ICC dimensions will be compared across the eight discussion forums considered in the study. The analysis of ICC development will consider the viewing of the Intercultura materials, in and out of class, to compare different components of the materials (e.g., access to information from four
countries in out-of-class viewing). Understanding how development occurs would provide valuable insights about the components of the Intercultura materials that are beneficial for the promotion of ICC.

2.8.3 Research question 3

Are there any observable differences in the development of activity systems caused by the contact participants have with the materials? In other words, are the activity systems that develop from viewing activities in class different from those that develop from viewing the activities outside of class?

This study utilizes an innovative approach that combines the use of multimedia materials and online discussion forums. The Intercultura materials were viewed in class and also out of class. Participants rotated the viewing from in to out of class by chapter. The purpose of this set up in the viewing of materials was to investigate if there are any differences in the interactions of participants based on the viewing of materials. Any differences that occur were explained based on the analysis of sociograms (Dawson & Lockyer, 2009) created for the discussion forums. In addition, information about the pursuance of goals (Hispanic or non-Hispanic) was used to explicate the differences that result from the viewing of materials and in relation to the goals pursued.

2.8.4 Research question 4

What attitudes do participants have about the Intercultura materials (e.g., relevance of information presented, structure of video materials, usefulness, discussion forums)?
Some researchers (Bateman, 2002; Belz & Thorne, 2006; Sercu et al, 2005) have echoed the need to consider the attitudes that students have towards materials used in the teaching of culture, and in particular those used in the foreign language classroom. The rationale behind this consideration is that the attitudes of students greatly influence the way they interact with the materials (Bateman, 2002; Belz & Thorne, 2006) and consequently gains in their learning. In addition, the effectiveness of the materials can be more accurately described in relation to students’ perspectives because their perceptions on materials can assist in discovering if judgments that students make about the materials are a factor that should be considered in the design, development, and implementation of such materials.

2.8.5 Research question 5

What attitudes do participants have about the approach utilized (i.e., viewing materials in class and outside of class)? In other words, what attitudes do participants have about the method of delivery of the materials (i.e., using webCT as a platform for accessing the Intercultura materials in comparison to viewing materials as a class?)

Similar to research question four, question five aims at the examination of the attitudes of participants in regard to the approach followed and the medium of delivery. Also, question five expands on the concepts analyzed in question three in the differentiation of in-class and out-of-class viewing of the materials. In question five, the discussion will be centered on the delivery of materials and integration into the course. The Intercultura materials were fully integrated into the course, and question five can help to explicate the capabilities or restrictions of this integration. As shown in the review of the literature (Sercu et al, 2005), the problem with the inclusion of materials for the teaching of culture is that
language instructors and learners alike have expressed reservations about the use of materials that are not perceived as part of the course materials given that this can translate into the materials being conceived of as ‘extra work’ or something additional that instructors and learners have to do.

2.9 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented the review of the literature in the area of ICC, foreign language teaching, and Activity Theory. In particular, the literature has served to situate the present study in relation to the teaching of culture, and specifically, to the teaching of culture in the foreign language classroom. Activity Theory was presented to introduce how this theory has assisted the area of ICC in the investigation of ICC development, and it has also been discussed how Activity Theory will be employed in the analysis and interpretation of findings in this study. The approach proposed and followed in the Intercultura materials was presented along with a description of the materials in relation to research findings that prompted their development. Finally, the research questions that guide this dissertation were stated.
Chapter 3. Methodology

This chapter describes the research methodology carried out in this dissertation. First, the research methodologies are presented followed by description of the setting and participants of the study. Next, a detailed description of the Intercultura materials is provided. The description includes the process followed in the development and creation of the materials. Finally, materials and procedures for data collection and analysis are described.

3.1 Research Methodology

Due to the nature of the research questions investigated in this study, an overarching qualitative design was used in addition to a mixed methods design. First, qualitative methods were employed to answer research questions one, two, and three. Qualitative data consisting of participants’ entries in forum posts were analyzed using two frameworks: 1) Well’s framework of joint activity (i.e., tools, activity systems, goals), and 2) Byram’s (1997) dimensions of ICC. A mixed methods design validating quantitative data model was implemented to answer research questions four and five. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected at the same time from an exit survey and the intent was to use qualitative information to provide evidence supporting the quantitative results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2006; Holliday, 2010). The exit survey (see Appendix D) was administered during week sixteen in the semester of classes, after the qualitative data for the overarching qualitative method was collected. The quantitative data came from Likert-scale items in the exit survey, and included the participants’ judgments about the pedagogical approach, the materials, and the medium of delivery. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The second set of data in the mixed methods approach, qualitative (text), comprised participants’
answers to open-ended questions in the exit survey. This set of qualitative data was analyzed to identify recurrent themes. The rationale for this approach was that the general trends established from the statistical analysis (descriptive statistics) represent self-reported data, and in order to increase the validity of this data qualitative data was used to further explain the statistical results. The qualitative data will allow for the exploration of participants’ views about the approach and materials used in more depth.

3.2 Setting and participants

3.2.1 Setting

This study was conducted at Iowa State University (ISU), a large land-grant university in the Midwest. The participants in this study were enrolled in Spanish 202, Intermediate Spanish II, in the Spring semester of 2011. Prerequisites for enrolling in Spanish 202 include passing Spanish 201 or placement by examination. Students who have taken Spanish in high school are required to take a placement exam, and they can be placed in beginning (101, 102) or intermediate (201, 202) courses based on exam scores. In this study, a large number (n=71) of freshman students placed in Spanish 201, Intermediate Spanish I, upon entering ISU and had continued to take Spanish 202, Intermediate Spanish II.

In total, six sections of Spanish 202 were included in this study. There were four traditional face-to-face sections and two of the sections were hybrid courses. The hybrid sections of Spanish combine face-to-face and online instruction, whereas traditional sections meet four times a week in the classroom (i.e., face-to-face instruction). In the hybrid sections, students met twice a week in the classroom, and once per week online using the virtual world of Second Life. All sections of Spanish used webCT as the course management system for
delivery of some assignments such as course readings, quizzes, and homework. In addition to all assignments in regular (traditional) sections of the Spanish course, the hybrid sections integrated speaking assignments that students completed using Wimba Voice Board. In these assignments, students recorded a one-minute speech as a commentary in response to comprehension questions that elicited their views on assigned readings. All students were expected to be very familiar with webCT and all course components given that the Spanish 202 course is a continuation of Spanish 201, and most students had taken Spanish 201 in the previous semester, Fall 2010. The sequence of Spanish 201 and 202 used webCT as the CMS for the delivery of course materials. Figure 5 shows the course homepage in webCT.

*Figure 5. Illustration of the organization of the webCT course.*
3.2.2 Participants

There were 116 students who participated in this study: 27 males and 89 females. The difference in the number of males and females is typical of language courses at ISU and many other institutions –language courses at ISU have a higher enrollment of female students. There was representation of students from all levels of university study in the sample of participants, with a predominant number of freshmen (n=71), followed by similar numbers of sophomores (n=18), junior (n=14), seniors (n=11), and a small number of graduate students (n=2).

Considering that the participants from this study were enrolled in an intermediate Spanish class, all participants had taken Spanish courses prior to the course considered in this study. Some participants reported to have studied Spanish for at least one year (n=9) while some had taken Spanish for five years (n=39). However, the participants who had taken Spanish for over two years were placed in Spanish 202, the intermediate course considered in this study, due to their scores (199 to 349) in WebCAPE, the placement test. Thus, the Spanish language proficiency of students was considered similar.

3.2.2.1 Foreign languages of participants

In addition to the study of Spanish as a foreign language, there were participants in this study who had studied other languages such as French (n=1), German (n=2), and Russian (n=1). These students reported being at the beginning level of speaking the foreign languages. There were five students who spoke languages other than English as a second or first language. There were two students who considered themselves native speakers of other
languages, one spoke Tai Dam, and the other Lao. Six students were second generation of immigrants, one of Arabic descent, two German, and three Spanish.

3.2.2.2 Abroad experiences of participants

In terms of experiences abroad, participants reported varying degrees of experience. Fifty-four participants had not had experiences abroad, while 45 had had limited experiences of stays abroad of less than six weeks. Twelve participants had had significant experiences abroad of more than six weeks abroad but less than 10 weeks. Six participants reported spending more than 10 weeks abroad. The participants who had extensive experiences abroad of more than 10 weeks were those who had family connections to a foreign language. For example, there was a second generation Spanish speaker from Guatemala who reported to have spent every summer in that country.

3.2.2.3 Sub-set of participants considered in qualitative approach

In this study, a qualitative approach was implemented to answer research questions one, two, and three in regard to the roles of participants, the tools (e.g., knowledge about cultures) they used in their interactions with other participants, and differences in the activity systems developed from their interactions. Considering the need to provide detailed descriptions of the factors affecting the interactions of these participants, a sub-set of number of students was selected for extensive qualitative analysis. This sub-set of participants came from two of the six sections considered in this study. The same instructor taught both sections and the students enrolled in these two sections had access to the same course in webCT. Therefore, the participants in these sections contributed to the same discussion
forums from which the data sets used to answer research questions one, two, and three were taken. The participants in this sub-sample shared the same characteristics of the larger sample of participants, as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4. Comparison of participants’ characteristics of the general population and sub-set**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>General Population (n=116)</th>
<th>Sub-set (n=42)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distribution of class</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>71 (61.2%)</td>
<td>28 (66%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>18 (15.6%)</td>
<td>3 (7.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>14 (12%)</td>
<td>4 (9.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>11 (9.4%)</td>
<td>6 (14.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>2 (1.7%)</td>
<td>1 (2.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distribution of gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>27 (23%)</td>
<td>8 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>89 (77%)</td>
<td>34 (80%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distribution of prior study of Spanish</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five years</td>
<td>39 (33.6%)</td>
<td>12 (28.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four years</td>
<td>54 (46.5%)</td>
<td>27 (64%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three years</td>
<td>9 (7.7%)</td>
<td>2 (4.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two years</td>
<td>6 (5%)</td>
<td>1 (2.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One year</td>
<td>8 (6.8%)</td>
<td>2 (4.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abroad experiences</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No abroad experience</td>
<td>53 (45.6%)</td>
<td>20 (47.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited experience (less than 6 weeks)</td>
<td>45 (38.7%)</td>
<td>17 (40.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant experience (more than 6 weeks, less than 10)</td>
<td>12 (10.3%)</td>
<td>4 (9.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extensive experience (more than 10 weeks)</td>
<td>6 (5.1%)</td>
<td>1 (2.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foreign languages</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak a foreign language proficiently (native or high proficiency)</td>
<td>6 (5.1%)</td>
<td>2 (4.7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3 Materials and data gathering instruments

3.3.1 Materials

*Intercultura Materials*

This study was conducted in Spanish 202, an intermediate Spanish course. The course focuses on the development of four skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and aims to prepare students for more advanced courses. Out of class assignments in the course include completing online workbook activities that focus on grammar, and work with online readings (i.e., doing the reading and completing post reading comprehension quizzes). During the course of this study participants interacted with multimedia materials, namely the Intercultura materials as part of the assignments for the course. Six chapters from the course textbook are covered during the duration of the course, a semester. The Intercultura materials corresponded to the topic of the textbook. Activities for three chapters of the Intercultura materials were completed out of class, and for three chapters they were completed in class.

As a result of working with the Intercultura materials, the students would be able to: 1) understand and be able to explain main cultural practices of four Hispanic countries on identified topics that relate to those studied in the course textbook, 2) identify differences in cultural practices that exist between their culture and the Hispanic culture, 3) draw comparisons and contrast the information presented in the Intercultura materials with their own cultural practices.

The materials were developed using Adobe Presenter and this allowed for the inclusion of comprehension quizzes that are embedded in the materials. The quizzes were
computer-graded. Specific step-by-step instructions on how to access the materials and how to navigate through the video and quiz were also available in webCT. Participants had access to the materials online via their webCT course.

*Developmental process of the Intercultura materials*

The following steps were taken in the development of the Intercultura materials:

1. The cultural topics contained in the textbook were organized in a spreadsheet containing the general topic and sub-topics covered.

2. Seven language instructors who had previously taught the course were asked to write topics that they perceived as relevant to the topics in the textbook, but that had a closer connection to everyday activities. For example, in the chapter about ‘traveling’, the general topic in the textbook, instructors marked as relevant to the topic the learning about the means of transportation that exist in Hispanic countries, frequency of use, accessibility, travel seasons, among others. The goal of this task was to compose a comprehensive list of related topics and questions that were relevant to the textbook. All language instructors and the researcher contributed with topics and questions separately using Google Docs to organize the information.

3. Upon completion of the pool of topics and questions, the instructors were asked to decide on ten to twelve questions for each topic.

4. The questions were sorted by topic, compiled, and ordered to reflect logical transition and sequence of the questions going from general to specific (see Appendix A). For example, in the questions related to a visit to the doctor, the set of questions starts
with a question about the existence of health facilities (e.g., number, types -public or private, location), and it is followed by procedures used to visit the doctor’s office.

5. Seven native speakers of Spanish from five different Hispanic countries were invited to participate in the project. All informants agreed to participate and interviews were scheduled.

6. Individual oral interviews using the same sets of questions (see Appendix A) were conducted at separate times. Video recordings of each interview were obtained using a high definition video camera.

7. The video segments were digitized, edited, and transcribed. Each video was segmented into small clips divided by question: one question per clip.

8. Images of concepts (e.g., events) and objects mentioned in the informants’ answers in the interview were integrated into the presentation. This process implied first the identification of images in Flickr Creative Commons (CC), and the editing of the image so that it could be used in the presentation. Flickr CC was used because it allowed for access to a large collection of authentic images. In addition, in adherence to copyright laws, the images are licensed for use without many restrictions (e.g., no for profit projects).

9. Icons were created to visually and thematically connect the materials. For instance, chapter icons were created for each topic and used across countries. In other words, the icon for chapter seven is used in the presentation of materials of Chile and the rest of the countries.

10. Adobe Presenter was selected as the software for compiling the video materials and delivery of information. Adobe Presenter was chosen because it allows for integration
of multimedia content (imagery, video, text) and computer-corrected quizzes that are built in into the content. In addition, with Acobe Presenter, the materials can be integrated into course management systems as SCORM modules. In this way, the materials were fully integrated into the webCT course. Furthermore, the use of SCORM modules allowed for the reporting of quiz grades that were directly recorded into the webCT gradebook for the course.

11. Once the materials were integrated in Adobe Presenter, comprehension quizzes of each activity were created. The quizzes included an average of seven questions per activity/chapter. The questions used several formats such as true/false, multiple-choice, fill in the blanks, and matching. Given that the quizzes were intended as comprehension exercises for self-evaluation, questions containing instances of inference of information were not included. All quizzes underwent a review by one native speaker of Spanish and one native speaker of English with a near native level of Spanish. The goal of this review was to warrant unbiased questions. The reviewers were asked to complete every quiz and to note whether the information provided in the videos was sufficient to answer the questions in the quiz. Corrections and changes to questions as prompted by the reviewers were made.

Integration of the Intercultura materials in Spanish 202

The Intercultural materials were used in all six sections of Spanish 202, the second and last course in the sequence at the intermediate level. The courses met four times a week for fifty minutes. Each section met once a week at the computer lab. Lab sessions rotated activities weekly. On one week the class completed an activity for Intercultura, and then two
consecutive weeks of chat sessions follow. The average class size was 22 students. The majority of students were from the Midwest.

Representative of mainstream university level Spanish courses, the general goal of the Spanish 202 course was to help students consolidate their basic knowledge of the Spanish language, with emphasis on grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing and communicative activities in order to improve Spanish knowledge. The course reviewed some of the materials presented in the first-year Spanish language courses, and introduced additional vocabulary, functional phrases and grammar structures with emphasis on real communication and in meaningful cultural contexts.

The Spanish 202 courses used WebCT, the course management system. All materials for Intercultura were fully integrated into the course. Figure 6 shows the distribution of Intercultura materials in WebCT. The icons presented correspond to each chapter of the textbook.

![Figure 6](image)

*Figure 6. Distribution of the Intercultura materials in WebCT.*
Figure 7 shows the distribution of materials per chapter. In this figure, we can observe the icons for the activities, identified by country, and the discussion forum associated with this chapter.

Features of the Intercultura materials

The Intercultura materials are comprised of video segments that include cultural information of everyday practices of Spanish native speakers. The topics covered in the materials are aligned to the topics of the textbook. The videos follow an interview format: Spanish native speakers respond to questions (see Appendix A) related to various topics such as daily life, eating in a restaurant, vacationing, etc. The questions used for the interviews were developed by six instructors and were intended to elicit information on common cultural practices (e.g., eating habits, tipping at restaurants) relevant to the topics in the textbook. The group of instructors included two faculty members who have previously taught the intermediate course and who are instructors of a course that focuses on the development
of conversational skills through the study of cultural topics, and four instructors of the intermediate course.

Even though the information covered (e.g., questions used for interviews with participants) was the same in all activities, variations in the specific contents allowed for the integration of images that help provide visual representations of some concepts. For example, in Figure 8, we can see the picture of a typical restaurant in Spain. Images pertaining to all topics were integrated as much as possible. Flickr Creative Commons was used to identify images that were relevant to the topic, appropriate for the target audience, and original (i.e., pictures taken in the respective country of origin of the informant).

![Figure 8. Sample window of Intercultura materials showing the integration of images.](image-url)
The video materials included help options such as basic command functions for video (e.g., play, pause, forward, backward), outline view, transcriptions of the video segment, and a search function of keywords. Figure 9 is a screen shot of the interface of the materials.

Figure 9. Representation of the interface of the Intercultura materials showing the window for video, text options, and controls.

Quizzes containing comprehension questions were integrated within each activity to facilitate understanding and processing of the information presented in the materials. Learners were prompted with a question (e.g., fill in the blanks, multiple choice, drag and drop) after each video segment. The quizzes were set up so that learners could listen to the video segments as many times as they desire. Figure 10 shows an example of the type of questions used in the activities and interface of the quiz.
Figure 10. Example of drag and drop question in the comprehension quiz for the Intercultura materials.

Upon completing each quiz, learners can see their results and they can review the quiz with access to their responses and correct responses. Figure 11 shows an example of the results window and Figure 12 is an example of the review mode for the quiz.
Figure 11. Results window in Intercultura quizzes.

Figure 12. Sample window of the review mode in Intercultura quizzes.
Relevant to the approach of the Intercultura materials was the integration of opportunities for reflection (Byram, 1997; Belz, 2003, 2005; Belz & Thorne, 2006; Schulz, 2007). Discussion forums were used to provide learners with questions to assist them in the identification of concepts and to encourage them to draw comparisons and contrast the information to that of their own. Figure 13 shows an example of the interface for the discussion forums.

![Figure 13. Sample window of a discussion forum showing instructions and threads.](image)

**webCT Course**

All materials and tasks (e.g., those conducted in discussion forums) were integrated in the webCT spaces for the Spanish courses. There were three webCT courses, each containing two sections of Spanish 202. The reason for having three courses was to facilitate the managing of the course for the instructors since each instructor was teaching two sections of the course. The number of webCT courses corresponded to the number of instructors who taught the sections: there was one webCT course per instructor; each included two sections.
WebCT is the official course management system used in the university where this study took place. Participants were familiar with the system. The researcher provided support for the use and access to the materials to participants and instructors, as it was necessary. The Intercultura materials were organized in folders by chapter. Each folder contained links for access to four activities organized by countries (e.g., Spain, Chile, Colombia, and Argentina), and also a link to the discussion forum. Additional resources for participants were also available in webCT such as grading rubric (see Appendix B), and guidelines for postings (see Appendix C). WebCT also served as the delivery method for the survey.

Discussion forums

The ‘forum’ feature in webCT was used to provide participants with a space in which they could write reflections about the contents of the materials and exchange interpretations with other participants. The forums were organized by chapters corresponding to the chapters in the textbook. Each forum included questions for discussion. The questions for all topics corresponded to the categories identified by Julie Belz (2003) of ‘what’ (e.g., identification of content, elicitation of ‘noticing’ certain aspects) and ‘how’ (e.g., eliciting reflection, relationship to C1, inquiry), referring to the observation of the information presented in the contents, and how that information related to the participants' own experiences. For example, in the forum for chapter 7, participants are asked: 1) What products they like to shop, what factors affect their selection of the products, and 2) How are these factors and selection of product similar or different in Spain. The forums were displayed in the form of threaded discussions. Participants had access to the forums at all times during the course of the study, sixteen weeks.
3.4 Data gathering instruments

Three sets of data were collected in this study: two qualitative (text) data sets and one quantitative (numeric) data set. The first qualitative set included participants’ entries to discussion forums, and the second set of qualitative data contained participants’ answers to open-ended questions contained in the exit survey (see Appendix D). The quantitative data set included participants’ ratings to Likert scale items in the exit survey. In addition, sociograms (Dawson & Lockyer, 2009) mapping the pattern of interactions in the discussion forums were obtained using a software program to facilitate the identification of activity systems (research question one) and to allow for comparisons of interactions (research question three) in the discussions.

3.4.1 Discussion forums

Participants posted comments to a discussion forum after interacting with the multimedia materials. Since reflective tasks have been found to be beneficial in the development of ICC, participants were asked to reflect upon the cultural contents included in the Intercultura materials as those contents related to their own cultural experiences. Each forum included on average three questions. For example, in the forum for chapter 7, participants were asked what type of products they like to purchase, where, and what factors affect their purchases. In addition, they were instructed to relate that information to the contents of the Intercultura materials by answering how their experiences compare to the practices in the Hispanic countries. Participants received general instructors for interactions in the discussion forums, which included number of words expected in entries (200 word minimum post), and also the grading they received based on their interactions. Participants
were required to post an original entry to the forum, and participation points were given based on the number of replies they completed to other posts. The forums were opened all semester long, but entries to the forum were expected to be completed during the time participants studied the chapter for which the forum was completed, a period of two weeks for each chapter. Participants had the opportunity to exchange their interpretation of the cultural contents of the materials with other students in the forum. The text was automatically collected in the forum with the forum function in webCT.

3.4.2 Survey

A 28-item survey (see Appendix D) was developed to find out three types of information: 1) biographical and background information (i.e., previous contact with second languages and culture, formal studies of languages), 2) perceptions about the materials and approach, and 3) comments and feedback. The first part of the survey contained eight items that assisted in the description of the population/participants. Questions in this section requested biographical information (e.g., age, gender, major), and previous experiences with second languages (e.g., formal studies, abroad experiences, other forms of contact with the second language). The second part of the survey included eight statements that used a five point Likert scale (a. Excellent - e. Bad). These statements obtained information about participants’ perceptions about the use of the materials, the format of the materials, mode of delivery, organization, and contents. The third part of the survey used open-ended questions to elicit comments about the materials and asks participants to provide clarification and explanations of their answers, and feedback for improvement of the Intercultura materials.
3.4.3 Sociograms

Sociograms are visual representations of the activity (e.g., exchange of information in replies and original posts) that takes place in discussion forums. The software program SNAPP was used to generate sociograms of all discussion forums developed for this study, which included a total of 8 discussion forums per course. For the creation of sociograms, the program SNAPP uses data of log activity in the forums (e.g., number of posts, date and time of posts, flow of threads) that is readily available in course management systems (CMS). The software program was developed by Dawson and Lockyer in 2009 at the University of Wollongong as part of a research grant. The project, titled “Seeing’ networks: visualising and evaluating student learning networks project,” was funded through the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC). The aim of the project was to develop a program that would allow for the visualization of collaborations in online forums and to investigate how this resource might support the teaching and learning practices in higher education (Learning Networks, 2010).

One of the benefits associated with the use of sociograms that is relevant to this study is the ability to have a visual representation of interactions that take place in the discussion forums. In a course management system (CMS) such as webCT, entries to discussion forums are displayed in categories of threads, as shown in Figure 14. However, this display of information in CMSs is linear and it does not exhibit cyclical responses that are common in discussion forums. In addition, from an analytical standpoint, it is hard to make sense of the interactions in the forum from a linear display of information.
To assist in the interpretation of these interactions, SNAPP creates sociograms of the forum by extracting data from the CMS to create networks that utilize nodes to represent participants. These nodes are increased in size depending on the number of replies and posts participants produce. The screenshot in Figure 15 shows the use of nodes and representations of interactions in two different forums. In example C, the forum is teacher-centered and the larger node at the center indicates this, whereas in example D the discussion was among students with no teacher intervention.

The sociograms in Figure 15 show how visual representations of the activities in the discussion forum provide a more accurate picture of the dynamics of the conversation (e.g., teacher-mediated, presence of groups) that is not possible with linear representations available in CMS’s. In example D, for instance, we can distinguish how the conversation triggered grouping of participants. The three threads show how participants interacted with each other as well as the flow of the conversation: who responded to whom.
Based on the data that the program SNAPP uses in the production of sociograms, these visual representations are very accurate. The program uses information captured by the CMS, such as log in information (e.g., frequency of logs, elapsed time, dwell time), and entries to the forum (e.g., original posts, replies, group averages).

3.5 Procedures for data collection

The following procedures were observed for the purpose of data collection.

1. With IRB approval, participants were recruited in all sections of intermediate Spanish II at ISU, and 116 agreed to participate.

2. All sections of intermediate Spanish utilized the Intercultura materials, as per agreement with the section coordinator for the course. Regardless of participation in the study, all students enrolled in the course completed the assignments as part of the course requirements and received a numeric grade. All assignments for Intercultura counted as 10% of the overall grade for the course. The Intercultura materials,
including video activities and discussion forums were available in the webCT course during the course of the semester, 16 weeks. The use of the materials combined in-class and out-of-class viewing of videos. However, posting to the discussion forums was done out-of-class. When completing video activities out-of-class, participants were assigned a specific country (e.g., Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Spain). Table 5 summarizes the distribution of materials.

3. The exit survey (see Appendix D) was administered during the last week of the semester. Participants were invited to complete the survey in webCT outside of class. The survey was opened for free access by participants, however, time limitations were set for completion and alerts were put in place to inform students of any missing information in the survey (e.g., failing to answer a question). The alerts were used to encourage full completion of the survey, but participants were not required to answer all questions as condition for submission.

4. When the sixteen-week period (a semester) of interactions with the materials was finished, the data were collected and organized. First, all texts for the discussion forums were downloaded into text (.txt) files. Naming conventions were observed to facilitate the easy identification of files. Given that all the text in the forums was in Spanish (i.e., it included special characters such as accent marks), it was necessary to reformat all files so that special characters (e.g., ñ, é, á) were not lost in the transferring of the data. This procedure was done two times: first, in the downloading of the text from the online forums, and then in the importing of files into NVivo.

5. The numerical data from the surveys were downloaded into Excel spreadsheets files (.xlsx) and these were imported into the program NVivo© for analysis.
**Table 5. Distribution of Intercultura materials by group and chapter**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter/Topic</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>Group 3</th>
<th>Group 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 – De compras (Going Shopping)</td>
<td>Done in-class: Watch video (Spain), complete quiz in webCT</td>
<td>Done out-of-class: post entry to forum in webCT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 – En la ciudad (Living in the city)</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>Chile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 – Los empleos (The job market)</td>
<td>Done in-class: Watch video (Spain), complete quiz in webCT</td>
<td>Done out-of-class: post entry to forum in webCT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 – La empresa multinacional (The multinacional Corporation)</td>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Colombia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 – de viaje (Travels)</td>
<td>Done in-class: Watch video (Spain), complete quiz in webCT</td>
<td>Done out-of-class: post entry to forum in webCT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 – los deportes/oficina del médico (Sports, doctor’s office)</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>Chile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Sociograms of the discussion forums were obtained and an initial analysis was conducted for the identification of activity systems. Using activity theory as the framework, in-depth analysis of the activity systems followed.

Table 6 below offers a summary of the timeline of the study, project integration, data collection instruments, and data collected.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Sample cultural information provided in Interculta</th>
<th>Course Assignment</th>
<th>Product / data collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Post entry to forum 1</td>
<td>Text entries to forum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Going Shopping</td>
<td>Shopping habits, common expressions, business hours</td>
<td>Post entry to forum 1 [continuation]</td>
<td>Text entries to forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Watch video, complete online quiz</td>
<td>Forum activity log (e.g., number of posts, replies, flow of discussion).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Post entry to forum 2</td>
<td>Sociogram</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Life in the city</td>
<td>Post entry to forum 2</td>
<td>Text entries to forum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Watch video, complete online quiz</td>
<td>Forum activity log</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Post entry to forum 3</td>
<td>Sociogram</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The job market</td>
<td>Watch video, complete online quiz</td>
<td>Text entries to forum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Post entry to forum 4</td>
<td>Forum activity log</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Watch video, complete online quiz</td>
<td>Sociogram</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Post entry to forum 4</td>
<td>Text entries to forum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Watch video, complete online quiz</td>
<td>Forum activity log</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Post entry to forum 5</td>
<td>Sociogram</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The multinational</td>
<td>Post entry to forum 4</td>
<td>Text entries to forum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>company</td>
<td>Watch video, complete online quiz</td>
<td>Forum activity log</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Post entry to forum 5</td>
<td>Sociogram</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Post entry to forum 5</td>
<td>Text entries to forum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Forum activity log</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sociogram</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Post entry to forum 5</td>
<td>Text entries to forum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Forum activity log</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sociogram</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Break</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Traveling</td>
<td>Means of transportation and usage, names for means of transportation, common expressions</td>
<td>Watch video, complete online quiz</td>
<td>Post entry to forum 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Text entries to forum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>At the doctor’s office</td>
<td>Visit to doctor’s office (procedures for scheduling an appointment, frequency, causes, costs), health facilities (clinic, hospital), use of alternative medicine</td>
<td>Watch video, complete online quiz</td>
<td>Post entry to forum 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Text entries to forum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Forum activity log</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sociogram</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Responses to survey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.6 Data analysis procedures

There were two research methodologies used in this study: an overarching qualitative design and a mixed methods design. Hence, two distinct procedures for analysis were carried out. Table 7 summarizes the types of analyses that were conducted for each of the research questions and the corresponding data that was considered.

Table 7. Summary of procedures for analysis of data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Data (number of sources)</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Roles of learners and implications on ICC development</td>
<td>Discussion forums (8)</td>
<td>Sociograms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sociograms (8)</td>
<td>Language indicating tools used (knowledge about native and foreign culture), actions taken by participants, and engagement in discussion forums.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Components of Intercultura materials and ICC development</td>
<td>Discussion forums (8)</td>
<td>Language indicating instances of the four dimensions of ICC: discovery, interpreting and relating, attitudes, knowledge (Byram, 1997).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Differences in development of activity systems based on viewing of materials (in-out-of-class)</td>
<td>Discussion forums (8)</td>
<td>Comparisons of activity in the forums (e.g., number of posts, elicitation of responses/replies) and relation to sociograms (e.g., appearance of nodes, flow of discussion).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sociograms (8)</td>
<td>Comparisons of goals pursued in activity systems.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mixed Methods Approach</th>
<th>4 Attitudes towards Intercultural materials</th>
<th>Exit survey: Likert-scale items and open-ended questions</th>
<th>Descriptive statistics of numerical item in survey, responses to open-ended question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 Attitudes towards method of delivery</td>
<td>Exit survey: Likert-scale items and open-ended questions</td>
<td>Descriptive statistics of numerical items, responses to open-ended questions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.6.1 Qualitative Approach

Based on the research design used in this study, two types of data were analyzed qualitatively: 1) Entries to the forums used to answer research questions 1, 2, and 3, and 2) Participants’ responses to open-ended questions in the exit survey, which were used to answer research questions 4 and 5.

Qualitative analysis of entries to forums

The qualitative data set consisting of entries to the discussion forums was used to answer research questions one, two, and three. The entries were coded using pre-established codes (see Tables 8, 9, 10, and 11), which were then refined to account for content not reflected in the initial codes. Four sets of pre-established codes were used: 1) roles of participants, 2) types of knowledge (tools) used by participants, 3) dimensions of ICC, and 4) goals of activity systems. To answer research question one, the codes for roles of participants and types of knowledge were used. To answer research question two, the codes for dimensions of ICC were used. To answer research question 3, the codes for goals of activity systems were used.
The first set of pre-established codes for the roles of participants was formulated based on Wells’ (2002) model of activity theory. The pre-established coding schema is shown in Table 8. The second pre-established set of codes was formulated based on Byram’s (1997) model of ICC distinguishing between knowledge about the foreign culture (C2) and one’s own (C1). The coding schema corresponding to the types of cultural knowledge is shown in Table 9. The third set of codes was formulated following Byram’s (1997) model of ICC corresponding to the identification of four dimensions of ICC: knowledge, interpreting and relating, attitudes, discovery. This coding schema is shown in Table 10. The fourth set of codes was based on the types of goals pursued in the activity systems. Two basic codes were used: Hispanic goals and Non-Hispanic. Hispanic goals were those in which participants discussed information related to cultural practices of Hispanic cultures. Non-Hispanic were goals in which participants discussed information related to the cultural practices in the US. The set of codes is shown in Table 11.

Qualitative analysis of responses to exit survey

Participants’ responses to open-ended questions in the exit survey were compiled and entered into the software program NVivo 9. A pre-established set of codes was used to code all entries. The pre-established codes followed a simple scheme that considered positive, negative, neutral, and mixed comments. This pre-established set of codes was refined to reflect more specific comments provided by participants in their responses. Common language (i.e., word frequencies) was used to refine and add new codes based on the language used in the responses. These frequencies are reported and discussed in the results section in Chapter 4. For example, for question 19 on the exit survey, participants reported on
the relevance of information of the Intercultura materials. After coding the participants’ responses on the pre-established set of codes (i.e., negative, positive, neutral, mixed), other categories such as “linking information to course content” and “finding contents useful for future use” were established based on their high frequency of appearance in the responses.

Analysis of the qualitative data to answer research questions one, two, and three, and the analysis of the participants’ responses to the open-ended questions in the exit survey used to answer research questions 4 and 5 followed these steps: coding, coding done by second coder, peer debriefing, determining themes, constructing arguments, going back to the data to find examples to illustrate themes (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2006; Holliday, 2010).

Coding of qualitative data

I began the process of coding by first marking the entries to the forums with the pre-established codes. It needs to be noted that this was not a linguistic analysis of the data, but a content analysis of roles of participants and the resources they used in their interactions. Special care was taken to allow for the re-formulation of codes as it was deemed necessary, based on the applicability of the codes to the actual data. Following Holliday’s (2010) recommendation, I used the process of coding as a mediating process for the identification of themes that reflect ideas presented in the data. Codes were counted for frequency of appearance in the data. In this way, the most salient codes were identified as themes.

The entries to the forums were analyzed to answer research questions one, two, and three. There were 941 forum entries made by 42 participants (from two sections) to 8 discussion forums. I first coded 10% of the whole data set, and then a second coder (see full description of second coder in the next section) coded the same data. Upon verifying the
accuracy of the data as determined by the intercoder reliability (average Kappa values of 0.75 to 1), I continued the coding of the whole data set, which included all entries to the discussion forums.

*Codes used and analysis conducted for research question 1*

To answer research question 1, I used the codes shown in Tables 8 and 9. Table 8 shows the codes used to identify the roles of the participants. These codes are based on Wells’ model of joint activity. Two main categories were used as the basis for the analysis, but there were four roles identified in the data: apprentice, leader, finalizer, and secluded poster.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data [simplified]</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>What it means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I watched the video on Spain and I learned that some people take naps in the afternoon. What about other countries?</td>
<td>Appr</td>
<td>Apprentice – learner requesting information. Based on findings from the pilot study, the role of inquirer is associated with the role of ‘apprentice’ – using terminology from activity theory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Germany we don’t tip at all restaurants, but here in the US I have found that people tend to tip at most restaurants. I think that tipping in the Hispanic countries is more similar to tipping in Germany.</td>
<td>Ld</td>
<td>Leader. This category is reserved to participants who received a greater number of replies to posts in the forums. In addition, based on findings in the pilot study, the role of leader appears to apply to learners who are able to connect information from various posts and provide a summary of the contents.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After coding each forum entry for the role of participants, the results were compiled to identify patterns in participants’ interactions so that connections could be made between the role of participant and the actions taken in the discussion. To establish patterns of interaction, I analyzed what contributions each participant made to the discussion based on the role they played in the activity systems/discussion. The procedures followed included looking for patterns, links, and relationships that would help establish general trends of the actions taken by participants and the form of engagement that corresponded to each role. For example, from the analysis of the interactions I noted how for the role of apprentice participants asked questions and elicited comments. For the role of leader, participants focused their interactions on assisting other learners understand cultural practices by answering questions made by participants in the role of apprentice.

A second set of data that was used in the analysis for research question one included the type of cultural knowledge used by the participants. Byram’s (1997) model of ICC model was used to develop the codes for the type of knowledge used. Three main codes were used: 1) one code corresponding to the use of knowledge of one’s own culture, 2) a code corresponding to the use of knowledge of the foreign culture, and 3) a code corresponding to the use of knowledge referring to information in the Intercultura materials. Knowledge about one’s own culture refers to the collective culture of the country or region of the individual (C1). However, a distinction between the collective and individual cultural practices was made since personal cultural experiences may differ from collective practices. Individual differences were taken into account during the analysis by noting the background of the participants. Individual differences were also considered for knowledge about the foreign culture. Students have not only varied degrees of knowledge about the foreign culture (C2),
but also varied individual experiences (C2s) in regard to contacts with the culture such as study abroad experiences, family connections, travel, and contact to the culture through mass media (e.g., television, Internet). These factors were taken into consideration when coding the data for cultural knowledge. Table 9 shows the pre-established codes for the types of cultural knowledge.

**Table 9. Pre-defined codes for the analysis of use of tools**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data [simplified]</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>What it means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We can decide which courses to take in our curriculum the majority of times.</td>
<td>C1</td>
<td>Knowledge about the native culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I take naps in the afternoon</td>
<td>C1s</td>
<td>Self-culture in the native culture. Experiences that may be unique to the individual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Spain most businesses close for lunch, from two to four. Some people take naps during this time.</td>
<td>C2</td>
<td>Knowledge about the foreign culture, reference to the foreign culture, experiences derived from various sources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While I was in Spain, I biked to school, but it was difficult because the traffic was very bad.</td>
<td>C2s</td>
<td>Self-culture in the foreign language derived from personal experiences that are unique to the individual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marisa explained the meaning of ‘re’ in Argentina, which means ‘a lot’.</td>
<td>ITC</td>
<td>Intercultura –Explicit reference to cultural contents in the Intercultura materials.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The information gathered from the type of cultural knowledge was used to determine the type of tools learners used in the interpretation of cultural information. This information was used to establish patterns correlating to the roles of participants. For instance, for the role of leader, participants used knowledge about the foreign culture (C2) in their interpretations of the foreign culture, whereas participants in the role of apprentice used their knowledge about their own culture (C1).
Codes used and analysis conducted for research question 2

To answer research question 2, the codes for ICC dimensions were used. Byram’s model was used to develop the pre-established codes of ICC dimensions. Table 10 shows the codes used with examples from the data (entries to discussion forums).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Number of instances found in forums</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>Exhibiting curiosity and openness.</td>
<td>I think Spaniards are very smart for asking family first when they need to borrow money. They can save a lot this way.</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Approaching the unfamiliar with imagination.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Valuing the attitudes and beliefs of others.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td>Developing ethnographic and research skills.</td>
<td>Marlene, when you were in Spain, where the buses fast? How accessible were they?</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exploring cultures.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpreting and relating</td>
<td>Interpreting things from other cultures.</td>
<td>In the US you can get a credit card when you are 18, but in Argentina you must be at least 21 to get one.</td>
<td>415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comparing them to own culture.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Developing new perspectives through comparison and contrast.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge and awareness</td>
<td>Knowledge of self and other.</td>
<td>In the US it is a bit difficult to get prescriptions for medications, and these can be very expensive…</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Awareness of relationship of individual to society.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The instances of ICC dimensions were compiled and compared across the eight discussion forums. This comparison served to establish differences in the number of instances of the four dimensions of ICC. These differences served to establish development. Differences were noted for the dimension of interpreting and relating between forums for in and out-of-class viewing. Contents of the forum postings were analyzed (content readings) to identify reasons for the increase of the dimension of interpreting and relating.

Codes used and analysis conducted for research question 3

To answer research question three, I developed codes that represented the goals pursued in activity systems. Based on Wells’ (2002) model of joint activity and considering the goal of the Intercultura materials (i.e., learning about Hispanic cultures to develop ICC), two types of goals were identified in the data: 1) goals related to Hispanic culture, and 2) goals related to non-Hispanic (i.e., US) culture. Table 11 shows the codes developed with the total number of instances found in the data (entries to forums).

Table 11. Codes for the analysis of the goals in activity systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Number of instances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Discussing issues pertaining to cultural practices in Hispanic countries.</td>
<td>Discussion about the practice of buying bread daily in Spain.</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>Discussing issues pertaining to cultural practices in the US.</td>
<td>Discussion about the availability of fresh produce in Ames.</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Upon coding the goals in activity systems, results were compiled and comparisons were made between the goals pursued in the discussion forums. This information was used in
conjunction with sociograms of the discussion forums to establish differences resulting from
the viewing of materials (in or out of class) as observed in the distribution of goals in the
discussion forums.

The sociograms were used to identify patterns of interactions. For example, clusters
of dots that appeared in the sociograms were compared to establish differences in the flow of
the discussions. Comparisons of the sociograms for the eight discussion forums were made
based on the number of clusters of dots. Sociograms corresponding to the viewing of
materials out of class showed fewer clusters of dots, which indicated that the discussions
focused on some main points. In contrast, sociograms for the in-class viewing of materials
showed numerous clusters of dots. There were no visible patterns of interactions in these
sociograms, which indicated that there was not a main focus of the discussions. The number
of topics discussed in the forums was considered in the explanation of the differences noted
in the way learners maintained focus in the forums.

Coding by second coders

In addition to the researcher, two coders collaborated in the coding of textual data in
this study. One coder worked on the data for research questions 1, 2, and 3 (i.e., coding
entries to the discussion forums), and another coder worked on the data set that contained the
textual entries to the exit survey, which were used to answer research questions 4 and 5. The
process followed by the second coders is described jointly in this section because both coders
followed the same process even though they worked with different data sets and used
different coding schemes. In both cases, I first coded 10% of the total for each of the sets of
data, and then the second coder marked the same 10% of data. Upon completing the coding,
inter-coder reliability (Kappa values) was established for each data set using NVivo’s coding comparison feature.

The two coders that participated in this study were chosen because they had had previous experiences coding. The first coder was a graduate (PhD) student in sociology. In addition to her experience coding, this coder was selected to work on this project because the first set of textual data corresponded to the original entries to the forums, which were written in Spanish. The first coder was a native Spanish speaker who is also highly proficient in English, as demonstrated by her pursuance of a doctoral degree at ISU. The second coder worked with the textual entries to open-ended questions in the exit survey. The entries were in English, and as in my case, the second coder was a non-native speaker of English. The second coder was also enrolled in the doctoral program in Applied Linguistics and Technology at ISU.

Considering that two distinct sets of data were used for coding, and given the fact that each set was coded following different coding schemes, the coders were trained separately. For the purpose of training, each coder was first familiarized with the general menus and layout of the software program NVivo. There were two training sessions given to each second-coder. In the first session, coders were informed on the goals of the study, the rationale for coding, and an explanation of the coding schemes. In addition, in the first training session coders were introduced to the functionality of NVivo. During the second training session, coders worked jointly with the researcher in the coding of three data entries. For example, for the coding of the text for the forums with the first coder, the researcher and the coder marked the first entry for each of the discussion forums (i.e., 8 forums total). With
the coder for the entries to the exit survey, we both coded the first three entries for each set of data (i.e., one for each of the three Spanish sections).

The second coders were instructed to code two entries for each of the data sets (e.g., entries to forums, responses to survey). I met with the coders a day after they completed the coding of this small sample to discuss any questions that they had in regard to the use of the coding schemes and questions related to the functionality of NVivo.

The second coders were asked to code a representative (10%) sample of the data, which varied depending on the set of data. For example, the coder of the forum entries coded a total of 88 forum entries. There were 941 forum entries made by 44 participants (from two sections) to 8 discussion forums. The coder for the forums marked 11 entries for each forum to have an equal distribution of entries. The coder for the responses to the exit survey was asked to code individually the responses of 15 participants, five from each of the courses. This number corresponded to 10% of the total number of participants (n=115). In both cases, the sample of data to be coded was chosen methodically: the coders were asked to code four entries, the first and last, and two entries from the middle. For example, for entries to the survey responses, the second coder marked entries in sections 5 and 6 for participants 1, 2, 41, 42, and 20, 21 (found in the middle).

The second coders had access to a description of the coding categories at all times while coding the data. Within NVivo, coders can access information about the code being applied to the data. This feature of NVivo was designed to maximize the accuracy of coders because at all times during the process of data coding, coders could read the descriptions to assure comprehension of the coding categories. I prepared a description of all coding
categories with examples from the pilot study to be used in NVivo. Figure 16 is a screen shot of the feature used in NVivo to access the description of coding categories.

Figure 16. Screen shot of the code description feature in NVivo.

All coders (including the researcher) followed the same process for coding the data within NVivo. Coders opened the raw data, selected text from the data to be coded, and marked the selected data into one of the coding categories. Figure 17 shows the coding interface in NVivo. All data was coded manually following coding schemes.

Figure 17. Screen shot of the interface for coding in NVivo.
Debriefing and inter-coder reliability

Upon completion of the coding of 10% of the data by the researcher and the second coders, NVivo’s coding comparison feature was used to calculate Kappa values to establish inter-coder reliability. Figure 18 is a screen shot of the results obtained in NVivo for comparisons of coding.

![Figure 18. Coding comparisons obtained in NVivo.](image)

NVivo calculates the coding comparisons (Kappa values) using the number of characters marked for each code entry. In other words, it compares how the codes were applied to the number of letters and words in each textual entry marked for a code. Due to this calculation, there were Kappa values calculated for each entry that was coded in the data. Considering the high number of codes used (over 40 different codes), over 400 Kappa values were obtained in total (i.e., the result of all code categories, including the comparisons with the two second coders). On average, the majority of the 400 Kappa values were in the range of 0.75 to 1, which are considered good to excellent inter-coder agreement. However, there were a few instances of low agreement (in ranges below 0.4) between coders. In the cases where low agreement was obtained, I verified the reasons for the low agreement. Upon accessing the specific data coded by both coders, it was noted that the second coders marked a lower or higher number of characters than the ones the researcher had marked, and
consequently a low agreement was calculated by NVivo. For example, in the case of the coding done for the Activity Systems, the second coder omitted the top portion of the forum entry as part of the text. Table 12 below shows an example of the omitted portion of the text to illustrate the differences in coding. In other words, the disagreement was in the segmentation of the text rather than the coding of the content.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text marked by researcher</th>
<th>Text marked by second coder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic: Foro Hispano Capítulo 8</td>
<td>De donde eres? Tu ciudad tienen muchos edificios y cosas que hacer!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject: Re:Capítulo 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author: Kristin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De donde eres? Tu ciudad tienen muchos edificios y cosas que hacer!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115 Characters</td>
<td>56 Characters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it can be seen in Table 12, the researcher marked the information that identified the post (i.e., topic, subject, author) as part of the coding category whereas the second coder did not include this information. There was a difference in the number of characters, which NVivo interpreted as a difference in coding and therefore attributed a low value ($k=0.247$) for inter-coder reliability.

A similar case to the differences in coding was noted in the coding by the second coder who marked entries to the text in the exit survey. In this case, the coder marked a higher number of characters for the code. NVivo reported a low degree of inter-coder agreement ($k=0.148$) due to the difference in characters, as shown in Table 13.
Table 13. Example of differences in markings of text in NVivo for coding of survey responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text marked by researcher</th>
<th>Text marked by second coder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I found the option to view the text very helpful.</td>
<td>I found the option to view the text very helpful. Also, it was helpful to be able to navigate backwards in the quiz because sometimes I wanted to re-watch the video after viewing the question.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

40 Characters | 156 Characters

As it can be seen in Table 13, there is a difference in the number of characters marked by the coders. In this case, the second coder had marked the whole entry by the participant as part of the code for Benefits for transcripts. However, the second sentence does not apply to the benefits of transcripts. The second sentence applies to “benefits of the interface”. There were 25 instances of disagreement in total, 17 occurred with the coder of the forums and 8 with the coder of the entries to the exit survey. After discussing the specific situations with the coders it was concluded that these instances were mistakes made by the coders in terms of how much text to select. Nonetheless, the differences were not due to the lack of knowledge about the coding schemes and their applicability to the text. For instance, even though the second coder in the example in Table 13 above had marked a sentence for the coding category of “benefits for transcripts”, the same coder marked the second sentence in the text as “benefits of the interface”. Considering the fact that the use of the second coders was to validate the applicability of the coding schemes, and given that these were proven to be valid as per the high intercoder reliability scores obtained, no changes were made to the coding schemes, and I used the schemes to complete the coding of the whole data sets, the forum entries, and the responses to the exit survey.
Selection of samples for inclusion in discussion

Upon identification of themes, I reviewed the data to identify extracts to incorporate in the narratives and descriptions in the discussion section of the study. The examples were purposely selected from the references of texts contained in NVivo. In selecting examples for inclusion in the discussion I considered the length of the text and the relation to the content of the research questions it addressed. The examples with longer text were chosen because they provided more information to draw upon for the construction and explanation of arguments that supported answers to the research questions. The examples chosen served to further explicate the themes encountered in the data and to reinforce arguments made in relation to the research questions.

3.6.2 Mixed methods approach

To answer research questions four and five in regard to participants’ preferences for, perceptions of, and attitudes towards the Intercultura materials (e.g., format, structure, usefulness of information, tools, interface), and the general approach utilized (e.g., viewing of materials in-class and out-of-class), answers to the Likert scale items in the survey were tabulated and descriptive statistics were obtained to explain general trends of the responses of participants. In addition, answers to open-ended items in the survey were analyzed using NVivo, a software program that allows for the identification of trends and themes. As described in section 3.6.1, qualitative approach, participants’ responses to open-ended questions were analyzed following these steps: coding, coding done by second coder, peer debriefing, determining themes, constructing arguments, going back to the data to find examples to illustrate themes (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2006; Holliday, 2010). A pre-
established set of codes was used to code all entries. The pre-established codes followed a simple scheme that considered positive, negative, neutral, and mixed comments. This pre-established set of codes was refined to reflect more specific comments provided by participants in their responses. Common language (i.e., word frequencies) was used to refine and add new codes based on the language used in the responses.

The combination of quantitative and qualitative data for answering research questions 4 and 5 provided a more comprehensive description of the perceptions of, preferences for, and attitudes towards that the participants had for the Intercultura materials. Furthermore, the use of a mixed methods approach (i.e., combining quantitative and qualitative data in the construction of arguments) warranted an accurate interpretation of the judgments reported by participants in their responses.

3.7 Chapter summary

This chapter has reported on the methodology used to investigate the research questions. Two methodologies were used, an overarching qualitative approach was implemented to answer research questions 1, 2, and 3, and a mixed-methods approach was employed for answering research questions 4 and 5. Quantitative data were used to describe trends while qualitative data were analyzed to help explain the trends in quantitative data, or as it was the case of the analysis of participants’ entries to forums, in-depth readings and content analysis were employed. Also, the chapter provided descriptions of the Intercultura materials, and the procedures followed and materials used to collect the data.
Chapter 4. Results and Discussion

This chapter presents and discusses the results regarding the roles of participants in their development of ICC in the context of the foreign language classroom, the differences in the development of ICC that resulted from interactions with the Intercultura materials in and out of class, and participants’ perceptions of, preferences for, and attitudes towards the Intercultura materials. The overarching question of how the Intercultura multimedia materials affect the development of ICC in intermediate Spanish learners in the context of the foreign language classroom was addressed by investigating five research questions. The questions were developed to guide data analysis by 1) considering the roles that participants take during interactions in ICC development, and by 2) examining the benefits or constraints of the Intercultura materials. Quantitative and qualitative data sources described in chapter 3 were used to answer the research questions. The first three questions are answered based on findings of qualitative methods. Data sources for these three questions include participants’ postings to discussion forums and sociograms obtained from the forums. Questions four and five are answered based on quantitative and qualitative data obtained through an exit survey. Likert-scale and open-ended questions were used to determine participants’ ratings of the Intercultura materials and the reasoning for their ratings. A discussion of the findings follows each question.

4.1 Participants’ roles in ICC discussions

The first research question investigated the roles that learners took during their interactions in activity systems for the pursuance of ICC development. Participants’ postings to 8 discussion forums and sociograms of the forums were analyzed from an activity
theoretical perspective to determine the roles of participants in the meaning making process of cultural information. Based on activity theory, the language of the discussion forums and the visual representations of the flow of discussions represented in sociograms were analyzed in terms of 1) the actions taken by learners in the meaning-making process, 2) the tools (e.g., knowledge about target culture [C2], their own culture [C1]) used during this process, and 3) the participants’ engagement with others in discussions for the interpretation of cultural information.

Results show that there were four main roles that participants took in their interactions: 1) leader, 2) apprentice, 3) finalizer, and 4) secluded poster. Leaders used as their tools the greater knowledge about foreign cultures that they possessed to perform actions such as assisting other learners in the interpretation of cultural information. Leaders had typically developed their knowledge about foreign cultures through their family or friends. This knowledge allowed them to engage substantially with other participants by responding to their questions about culture.

The role of apprentice was characterized by actions that showed the need these learners felt to learn more about the cultures. Participants in the role of apprentice were more inquisitive about the foreign cultures and also questioned the values and beliefs of their own cultures. Apprentices had less knowledge about the foreign culture than leaders, but they used the knowledge they had about their own culture as the tools they used to interpret cultural information. When the knowledge they had about the cultures was limited for making interpretations, they asked for assistance. The responses they received from leaders and other participants increased their knowledge about the cultures and therefore their repertoire of tools they used to interpret cultural information. As seekers of information,
apprentices were fully engaged in activity systems by starting conversations and eliciting responses from others.

The participants who took on the role of finalizer displayed actions such as summarizing points presented in the forums and they sometimes expressed their point of view about the information presented. Finalizers used the knowledge they gathered from the postings of other participants in the forums as tools in the interpretation of cultural information. These learners also relied on their knowledge about their own cultural practices and used this knowledge as the tools for comparing the cultural information of the foreign culture with that of their own. Finalizers had limited participation in the discussions, and therefore their engagement in the activity systems was constrained. Finalizers appeared to avoid dialoguing with others and they did not seek opportunities to engage others in discussions.

The actions of the secluded posters were limited to the writing of a response to the guiding questions for the forums. The secluded posters rarely expressed their opinions about the topics in their postings. Therefore, the tools used by these learners were limited to knowledge about the foreign culture obtained from the contents of the Intercultura materials. In some cases they used knowledge about their own culture as tools to express their point of view. Secluded posters did not engage in discussions with other participants and consequently could not take on an interactionally-defined role. Table 14 summarizes the actions, tools, and engagement of the four identified roles that helped defined them.
Table 14. Summary of the categories of analysis for each of the four roles of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Tools used</th>
<th>Engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leader</td>
<td>Assisted others in the interpretation of cultural information.</td>
<td>Knowledge about foreign cultures (C2) gained through personal connections with the foreign cultures.</td>
<td>Full engagement with other participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prompted others to ask questions by providing cultural insights.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Answered questions made by other participants and asked follow-up questions to continue discussions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprentice</td>
<td>Asked questions about cultural information.</td>
<td>Knowledge about the US culture (C1) and cultural information of the foreign cultures (C2) presented in Intercultura.</td>
<td>Full engagement with other participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Questioned his/her values, beliefs, and cultural practices.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Postings included questions to promote discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finalizer</td>
<td>Summarized main points presented in discussions.</td>
<td>Knowledge about the US culture (C1) and information about the foreign cultures (C2) presented in the forums.</td>
<td>Limited engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expressed his/her point of view of cultural information.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Postings did not include questions to interact with others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Avoided discussions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secluded poster</td>
<td>Wrote posts to forums to answer the questions that guided discussions.</td>
<td>Knowledge about the foreign culture (C2) presented in Intercultura and some references to the US culture (C1).</td>
<td>No engagement with other participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limited the text to answering the questions and not touching on other topics and rarely expressing points of view.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Remained isolated from discussions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The actions, tools used, and manner of engagement of participants were used to define the roles they took in the activity systems encountered in the discussion forums. The
four identified roles, leader, apprentice, finalizer, and secluded poster, appeared in all
discussion forums analyzed in this study. However, not all roles appeared in each activity
system. Table 15 below shows the total number of forum postings that exhibited each of the
four roles in the 8 forums considered in the analysis. The numbers in parenthesis indicate the
number of participants who took on the role for the different categories.

Table 15. Frequency of forum postings (and number of participants) for the four roles taken
by participants in 193 activity systems within eight discussion forums (n=42)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leader</td>
<td>4(4)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>193</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprentice</td>
<td>6(4)</td>
<td>20(16)</td>
<td>21(21)</td>
<td>27(24)</td>
<td>34(32)</td>
<td>34(20)</td>
<td>22(21)</td>
<td>24(23)</td>
<td>175(42)</td>
<td>166(30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finalizer</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>14(11)</td>
<td>26(18)</td>
<td>27(14)</td>
<td>21(14)</td>
<td>14(7)</td>
<td>15(8)</td>
<td>119</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secluded poster</td>
<td>38(38)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>5(5)</td>
<td>2(1)</td>
<td>10(7)</td>
<td>12(10)</td>
<td>69(38)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown by the number of participants that appear in parentheses next to the number
of forum postings for each role, participants switched roles throughout the semester. The
number of forum postings corresponds to the actual number of times that a role was
observed. For example, for the role of leader, there were 175 instances in which this role was
observed in total. Given that I analyzed the roles of the participants in each of the 193
activity systems individually, I was able to observe that the roles of participants were not
static. All 42 participants that were considered for analysis took on the role of leader at some
point during the discussions, but only a certain number took on the three other roles
(apprentice, finalizer, secluded poster).

For the role of leader there was a slightly higher number of forum postings than for
other roles, and in fact in the activity systems analyzed in this study, there was a leader
present in almost all of the 193 activity systems. Analysis of the activity systems showed that there were a leader and multiple apprentices or finalizers in each system. Therefore, with activity systems averaging 2.3 participants per system, it can be expected that the number of apprentices and finalizers is almost equal to the number of leaders. In sum, for each participant in the role of leader there were 1.6 participants in the role of apprentice or finalizer.

4.1.1 Participants in the role of leader

The actions, tools used, and engagement of leaders were considered in the identification of this role. In this section, I first provide an overview of the role of leader by discussing the distribution of coding references found for this role in the discussion forums. Then, I present two examples to show how the actions taken by leaders were intended to assist others in the interpretation of cultural information. Using the examples, I discuss the use of the tools (e.g., knowledge about the foreign cultures) used by leaders and explain that these tools had been acquired through different types of interactions with the foreign culture prior to taking the Spanish class.

Overall, forum postings for the role of leader appeared consistently in the eight discussion forums learners completed throughout the semester, except for the initial forum. As it can be observed in Table 13 above, in the initial forum there were fewer coding references (n=4) than in any other forum for the role of leader. Given that the roles of leader and apprentice are interactionally-defined, the lack of engagement of the participants in the discussions prevented them to take on the roles of leaders or apprentice more frequently than in other forums. The lack of engagement in the initial forum can be explained in relation to
the time in which this forum was produced. Since it was the first forum in which participants interacted, participants may not have had sufficient information from which they could draw upon to engage in further discussions, as it was the case in the rest of the forums. The tools available to participants were limited to their own knowledge and perceptions about Hispanics. Learners were not able to make references to knowledge about the Hispanic cultures gained through the Intercultura materials.

In terms of the actions in the activity systems, leaders tended to provide points (e.g., perspectives, judgments, descriptions) of interest for other participants that triggered reactions generally in the form of questions and comments asking for clarification. The information leaders provided in their postings generally offered a point of view that differed from the cultural information presented in Intercultura. These postings expanded on the information and provided information about daily cultural practices in the foreign cultures. In Example (1), we can see how with her actions Anna (the leader) assists other learners in the activity system to learn more about the cultural information related to the practice of buying bread daily in Spain. In exchange 1, Anna first states her interpretation of this custom, which she relates to information she learned from her sister who studied in Spain. Anna was able to engage other learners in the discussion because they found the information she provided useful, and consequently they asked questions to find out more about the cultural practice she described. For instance, in exchange 2, Nina asks Anna if the custom of buying bread daily can be interpreted as a social custom. In exchange 3, Kayla, who is planning to study abroad in Spain, asks Anna which city her sister visited and whether the practices that she experienced is something she may face when studying abroad in Spain.
Through the exchange of information and guided by Anna (the leader in the activity system), all participants appeared to develop a greater understanding of the practice of buying bread daily. For example, in exchange 4, Anna answers Kayla’s inquiry about the type of places she can expect to visit for shopping. Anna indicates that in Spain it is common to buy groceries at small shops commonly found in the neighborhood. The information provided by Anna would evidently increased the cultural knowledge of Kayla and the participants in the activity system because Anna was able to raise their awareness of the practice and to expand their knowledge of the practice by providing them with specific examples that she learned from her sister.

Example 1

Exchange 1 (Anna, Forum chapter 7, January 24, 2011)

Top: Foro Hispano Capítulo 7
Subject: Foro Hispano Capítulo 7 -- Las compras
Author: Anna

…Es importante para comprar "el pan de todos los días" porque el pan es muy fresco y en España, la gente come mucha pan. Mi hermana estudió en España el semestre pasado, y ella dice que ellos comieron el pan con el desayuno, el almuerzo, y la cena. Es una comida muy importante. Pienso que la idea es muy importante porque ayuda las tiendas en las mercadas también…

[It is very important to buy the ‘daily bread’ because bread needs to be fresh and in Spain people eat lots of bread. My sister studied in Spain last semester and she said that they have bread at breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Bread is a very important food item. I think that ‘the daily bread’ is important also because it helps/contributes to the gains of vendors]

Exchange 2 (Nina, Forum chapter 7, January 27, 2011)

Top: Foro Hispano Capítulo 7
Subject: Re:Foro Hispano Capítulo 7 -- Las compras
Author: Nina

1 All examples included in this study are from original entries to the discussion forums. The participants wrote the examples in Spanish. The examples have not been edited in any way. The researcher (native Spanish speaker) translated the texts into English. A native English

2 All names used in the study are pseudo names.
Anna, ¡Tú respuesta es muy bien! ¿Crees que sea posible que 'el pan de todos los días' es un costumbre social también? Como, las personas del mundo hispano hablan con sus vecinos cuando ellos hacen las compras. ¡Gracias! Nina

[Anna, your answer is very good! Do you think that is possible that ‘the daily bread’ is a social custom too? For example, people in Hispanic countries can talk with their neighbors when they go shopping. Thanks! Nina]

Exchange 3 (Kayla, Forum chapter 7, January 29, 2011)

Topic: Foro Hispano Capítulo 7
Subject: Re:Foro Hispano Capítulo 7 -- Las compras
Author: Kayla

Anna, Esta respuesta es muy informativa y tiene mucho contenido! ¡El hecho que tu hermana fue a España cogió mi atención porque este verano que iré a España también! ¿A cuál ciudad viajó? Mencionó las tiendas en las mercadas en su respuesta- ¿son esos los lugares normales de comprar comida? ¡Gracias! Kayla

[Anna, this is a very informative response with lots of good content! The fact that your sister was in Spain got my attention since I will be in Spain this summer too! Which city did she visit? You talked about the stores at the market in your answer. Are these places where people normally buy food? Thanks! Kayla]

Exchange 4 (Anna, Forum chapter 7, January 31, 2011)

Topic: Foro Hispano Capítulo 7
Subject: Re:Foro Hispano Capítulo 7 -- Las compras
Author: Anna

Kayla, El semestre pasado mi hermana estudió en Cáceres. Yo pienso que las tiendas en las mercadas son lugares normales. Desde que aprendimos en clase, en lugares hispanos, hay muchas tiendas con muchas cosas y los precios son baratos. Yo creo que las personas querrán gastar sus comida allí todo el tiempo. ¿A cuál ciudad viajaste este verano? ¿A ti te gusta España? ¿Comó era las compras? ¡Gracias! – Anna

[Kayla, last semester my sister studied in Caceres. I think that the stores in the market are normal places to buy food. As we have learned in this class, in Hispanic countries there are many shops with lots of things that you can buy at good prices. I think that people would want to get their food there all the time. Which city are you going to this summer? Do you like Spain? What would shopping be like? Thanks! Anna]

Exchange 5 (Anna, Forum chapter 7, January 31, 2011)

Topic: Foro Hispano Capítulo 7
Subject: Re:Foro Hispano Cap’ítulo 7 -- Las compras
Author: Anna

Nina, ¡Sí! Yo creo que "el pan de todos los días" posiblemente es un costumbre social. Muchas personas probablemente van a las tiendas para comprar comida muchas veces. Los vecinos tal vez van a las tiendas juntos.

[Nina, Yes! I think that ‘the daily bread’ is possibly a social custom. Many people probably go to stores to buy food many times a day. Maybe they even go together with their neighbors.]
In Example (1) we were able to see how with her actions Anna, the leader in the activity system, was able to assist less knowledgeable participants in the understanding of the cultural practice of purchasing bread daily in Spain. As proposed in the ZPD by Vigotsky (1978), more skilled participants possess abilities or knowledge than apprentices, and through collaboration and interaction the less skilled participant attempts to acquire a higher level of knowledge and skill.

In regard to the use of tools, the analysis of the cultural knowledge (e.g., knowledge about the foreign culture [C2] or their own [C1]) used by leaders shows that leaders used their knowledge about foreign cultures to assist others in the interpretation of cultural information. As shown in Example (7) above, Anna used her knowledge about the cultural practices in Spain to assist Kayla and Nina to understand the concept of buying bread daily. Anna acquired this knowledge from her sister, who studied abroad in Spain. Results of the analysis of the use of cultural information by leaders in the activity systems show that leaders had acquired this information from multiple sources and contexts. Leaders had primary (e.g., family) or secondary (e.g., friends) connections to foreign cultures. Some participants had access to the foreign culture through primary connections with the culture, from interactions with natives of the foreign culture or frequent visits to the foreign country. Other participants had become knowledgeable of the foreign culture through abroad experiences, extensive study of the target language, and personal interactions with natives of the foreign culture.

In Example (2) we can observe how the cultural knowledge that Jenna has about the use of alternative medicine was passed on from her grandmother and parents, who are originally from Laos. In a discussion about the use of alternative medicine, Jenna very openly shared her beliefs on alternative medicine and explained how such beliefs have been passed
on by her grandmother. In Example (2), Jenna describes her usage of alternative medicine.

The post describes how inherent the cultural practices of alternative medicine are in her family, and how all members of her family continue to follow this tradition.

Example 2
Exchange 1 (Jenna, Forum chapter 12, April 4, 2011)

**Topic:** Foro Hispano Capítulo 12

**Subject:** Foro Hispano Capítulo 12

**Author:** Jenna

My parents are not doctors as Nina’s. My parents would help me control my pain if I was hurt before taking me to the hospital. In my Asian family there are a lot of Asian home remedies that my parents and grandparents like using. My grandmother buys medicine from countries and my family uses it when we are sick. If the remedies of my grandmother do not cure me, then my parents take me to the clinic or to the hospital. The majority of medications that my family uses are what we can get at the supermarket or what my grandmother buys in her home country, Laos. She buys the medicine when she returns to Laos to visit family. My father suffers from high blood pressure and high cholesterol and he needs to get his medications with prescription at
the pharmacy. In Spain, people cannot buy medications without a prescription and it takes long to see a doctor because there are long waiting lists. Differently from Nina and Jeslyn, I use alternative medicine. In Spain and Chile people use alternative medicine such as massages and yoga. When I am sick, my parents make me drink hot tea with all sorts of herbs. When my sister suffered from backaches, my grandmother would prepare a bath with herbs. When I have a cold, my grandmother rubs some balm on my chest and my back. Sometimes if someone in my family is very sick my family has a ceremony in which we eat grilled pork and a shaman communicates with the spirits. My family uses a great number of alternative medicines. As Nina and Jeslyn said, there are some similarities in the alternative medicine used in the US and Hispanic countries]

Exchange 2 (Nina, Forum chapter 12, April 4, 2011)

Topic: Foro Hispano Capítulo 12
Subject: Re:Foro Hispano Capítulo 12
Author: Nina

Jenna, ¡Qué interesante! Me gusta aprender más sobre la medicina alternativa. ¿Te gusta esta tipa de medicina? ¿La te ayuda mucho? Gracias, Nina

[Jenna, This is so interesting! I love learning more about alternative medicine. Do you like this type of medicine? Does it help you a lot? Thanks, Nina]

In Example (2) Jenna provided an interpretation of the cultural practices of using alternative medicine in Spain. In her interpretation, Jenna used as tools the knowledge she had about the cultural practices of alternative medicine in Laos, which her family still uses and relies on. The experiences described by Jenna in connection to the use of alternative medicine prompted Nina (in exchange 2) to inquire about Jenna’s perceptions on the value and efficacy of alternative medicine. Moreover, it is clear that the information provided by Jenna expanded the knowledge Nina had about alternative medicine. The judgment expressed by Nina (“This is so interesting”) in regard to the information presented by Jenna provides evidence of the increased knowledge that Nina gained.

In the activity systems examined in this study, less knowledgeable participants took action to learn more about the Hispanic cultures by inquiring about information they wanted
to know or by asking for clarification. These learners were identified as taking the role of apprentices.

4.1.2 Participants in the role of apprentice

In the activity systems identified in the discussion forums, learners that took on the role of apprentice used questioning and inquiring as the most frequent linguistic strategies for the pursuance of goals in the meaning-making process. In this section, I first discuss the distribution of coding references for the role of apprentice. Then, I present and discuss two examples to illustrate the actions, tools, and involvement in the activity systems of apprentices.

The role of apprentice was found consistently in all discussion forums. As it can be observed in Table 14 above, the references for the role of Apprentice were present in all forum discussions, with similar references in all the forums. There were 166 forum postings corresponding to the role of apprentice, varying from 20 to 29 instances in each forum. Similar to the role of leader, for the role of apprentice there was a small number (n=6) of instances in the initial forum. Given that leader and apprentice are interactionally-defined roles, the fact that the majority of postings in the initial forum were single posts with no replies, the instances of these roles are lower than in other forums.

The actions taken by learners who took on the role of apprentice were characterized by their eagerness to dialogue with others and investigate the topic further. The use of questions by learners in the role of apprentice was found to be comparable to the skill of discovery identified by Byram (1987) as one of the four skills (i.e., discovery, interpretation, knowledge, and attitudes) that are indicators of ICC development. Such skill proved to be of
use in the interactions of the learners, and the exercise of this skill resulted in longer discussions and consequently in a greater understanding of the cultural information being studied. In Example (3), for instance, Nathan shares with Ryan his ideas about the practices for bill paying in the USA and how those compare to those of his own family. At end of the post, however, Nathan asks Ryan about his opinion in regard to the legal age for drinking in the US, considering that eighteen is the legal age to be considered an adult in the US. Nathan’s question provides evidence that he is not only interested in learning about Ryan’s views on the matter, but his inquiry serves also to identify the ‘questioning’ (e.g., making judgments, contrasting values, comparing) of the cultural practices in the US in regard to age and maturity, and this question serves as an indicator of the skill of discovery. Nathan wants to find out more information on the matter, and he turns to Ryan in his quest for more information.

Example 3 (Nathan, Forum chapter 10, March 1, 2011)

Topic: Foro Hispano Capítulo 10
Subject: Re:Foro Hispano Capítulo 10 - Argentina  Author: Nathan

Hola Ryan, estoy de acuerdo contigo. En los EEUU las personas son mas igual, entonces mujeres y hombres pueden pagar las cuentas. En mi familia mi papa paga las cuentas, pero mi mamá trabaja mucho con los negocios y ella puede hacerlo también. Porque en los EEUU la edad dieciocho de "ser adulto" aplica para todo menos beber? que piensas?

[Hi Ryan, I agree with you. In the US people are more or less equal, therefore men and women alike can pay bills. In my family, my dad pays the bills, but my mom works a lot in other business and she can pay bills too. Why is it that in the US eighteen years of age is the legal age to be considered “an adult” except for drinking alcohol? What do you think?]

In the case of the role of apprentice, learners exposed their eagerness to learn more about different topics, and to question their beliefs and cultural values, as well as questioning the interpretations made by their peers of cultural information. In Example (3), Nathan’s post
illustrates his eagerness to learn more about the issue of “being considered an adult”, and it also shows his awareness of the implications that this concept has on the cultural practices of individuals like himself who are affected by such determinations. The actions taken by the apprentice in this example can be linguistically identified by the use of questions, and in terms of ICC by the use of the skill of discovery. Furthermore, the use of cultural information (e.g., knowledge about their own culture) provides evidence of the tools learners in the role of apprentice utilized.

With respect to the use of tools, the fact that Nathan provides information about the cultural topic under study makes evident that he possesses knowledge about the cultural topic in his own culture (C1), but his need for information is guided by the inquiry made about a perspective from another member—and therefore providing a cultural perspective that may differ from Nathan’s own culture. In this sense, the request for an opinion suggests that Nathan is perhaps attempting to confirm his judgments in regard to the cultural practices of his own culture (C1). As Nathan attempts to learn more about this practice, he seeks to contrast his cultural knowledge (C1) with that of the target culture (C2) or the culture of another participant.

Similar to the contrasting of information based on knowledge about her own culture (C1), Kathy in Example (4) uses this knowledge as the tools to interpret the concept of ‘buying bread daily’, discussed in the forum for chapter 7. In her post, Kathy expressed confusion about this concept and requests assistance by asking the question “why” such practice exists. Kathy explains that her confusion derives from the comparison she makes of this cultural practice to her own. This example illustrates how the interpretation of cultural
practices of the foreign culture (C2) from the point of view of one’s own culture (C1) could create confusion and impedes learners to interpret the cultural information.

Example 4 (Kathy, Forum chapter 7, January 25, 2011)

Topic: Foro Hispano Capítulo 7
Subject: Re: Foro Hispano Capítulo 7
Author: Kathy

Emma, También estoy confundido sobre el pan de cada día! ¿Por qué necesitan para comprar el pan todos los días? Es tan diferente en Iowa porque realmente no tienen al día los mercados al aire libre. No me puedo imaginar ir al mercado en el invierno todos los días. Prefiero ir a HyVee cada dos semanas, es más conveniente.

[Emma, I am also confused about the daily bread! Why do Spaniards need to buy bread everyday? It is so different in Iowa because we really don’t have street markets. I cannot imagine going to the market in winter everyday. I prefer to go to HyVee every two weeks. It is more convenient.]

With regard to engagement, in Example (4) we can see how Kathy is commenting to a post made by Emma in which she expresses confusion about the concept of buying bread daily. Emma, another apprentice in the activity system, was able to engage Kathy in the discussion. As an action seen in the role of apprentice, Kathy asks a question asking for assistance. With the use of questions, apprentices are able to engage others in the discussion.

The actions taken by apprentices contrast with those of finalizers. Participants in the role of finalizer did not attempt to get involved in the discussions. The postings made by finalizers were intended to sum-up information and points made by others.

4.1.3 Participants in the role of finalizer

In the activity systems identified in the discussion forums, learners that took on the role of finalizer were characterized by the use of postings to the forum that did not include questions, as it was in the case of postings by participants in the role of apprentice. In this section, I first discuss the frequencies of postings for this role and then I present two
examples to show how the postings made by finalizers provided ideas about the cultural topics being discussed and how these postings were more intended as summaries of ideas presented by others in the discussion.

There were 119 instances for the role of finalizer. There were instances of this role in all discussion forums, but there were fewer instances in the initial forum (n=1) and the forum for chapter 7 (n=1). The rest of the forum had instances of finalizers ranging from 14 in the forum for chapter 8 which had the lowest number for this role, to 26 in chapter 9, the highest number for this role.

The actions of finalizers were to present commentaries and reactions to ideas presented in the discussion about cultural practices. Finalizers did not intend to elicit engagement of other participants. The postings made by finalizers were generally in the form of reactions to particular points presented in the post, such as a reaction to the veracity of information, applicability of the information, or showing surprise about the information presented. In Example (5), we can observe how David starts his post by agreeing with a point made by Ryan in regard to the age for obtaining a credit card. David continues his post by stating his thoughts about this issue.

Example 5 (David, Forum chapter 10, March 1, 2011)

   Topic: Foro Hispano Capítulo 10
   Subject: Re:Foro Hispano Capítulo 10 - Argentina       Author: David

   Ryan, Creo que estaría bien para la gente en los Estados Unidos a tener que esperar hasta que se veintiuno de tener una tarjeta de crédito. No creo que es porque la gente no son adultos sin embargo. Creo que se trata de ser responsable. Las compañías de crédito en los Estados Unidos probablemente piensa que es una edad bien.

   [Ryan, I think that it would be OK for people in the US to have to wait until they turn 21 to have a credit card. However, I don’t think this because people are not adults. I think it is more about being responsible. Credit card companies in the US probably think that this is a good age also.]
David was the participant in the role of finalizer who had the highest number of forum postings (n=14) for this role. From the analysis of David’s posts and of the participants in the role of finalizer, it was noted that made by finalizers followed a similar pattern to Example (5): a commentary related to a previous post is introduced, and a reaction or expression of point of view is stated afterward. The pattern followed by finalizers show the sharing of information with statements made to express their views on the topic, but without seeking to elicit responses or commentaries from other participants.

In a few cases, learners in the role of finalizer utilized questions in their posts, but the use of questions was more a strategy to indicate thinking aloud or self-questioning of a particular cultural aspect, as it can be seen in Example (6). We can see how David answers the question he stated in his post.

Example 6 (David, Forum chapter 9, February 15, 2011)

Topic: Foro Hispano Capítulo 9
Subject: Re:foro Capítulo 9  Author: David

Greg, ¿Qué pasa si los empleados quieren recordar por tu cara? Si no tienen una fotografía ellos te van a olvidar. Yo pienso que un foto puede estar importante en una entrevista pero no en una hoja de vida. Estoy de acuerdo con tu respuesta a la segunda pregunta.

[Greg, What would happen if the employers want to remember the face of the interviewee? If they don’t have a photograph to remind them, they will forget. I think that a picture can be important for an interview but not for a CV. I agree with your answer to question 2]

In forum 9, participants discussed the process for looking for a job in different Hispanic countries. As they learned in the Intercultura materials, in some Hispanic countries (e.g., Mexico, Colombia) it is common to include a picture in the CV, and in fact some employers require pictures. In this case, David’s post is not asking Greg about what would happen in the event that the employer (or interviewer) would like to remember the face of the
person, but David’s question serves as an introduction to his argument that there are situations in which a picture may be something useful to have in a CV.

In regard to the use of tools, considering that finalizers summarized information and expressed their own opinions, finalizers combined knowledge about the foreign cultures (C2) and their own (C1). The information gathered from the forum posts allowed finalizers to learn about the foreign culture (C2), and they re-used this information to present their interpretation of the information from their point of view, or in relation to their own cultural practices (C1).

The involvement of finalizers in the activity systems was limited. Finalizers did not attempt to elicit questions or commentaries, as it was the case of apprentices. However, a more contrastive role in regards to limited involvement in activity systems was that of the role of secluded posters.

4.1.4 Participants in the role of the secluded poster

Sociograms were used to identify clusters of exchanges of information. The visual representations of the flow of conversations obtained in the sociograms allowed for the identification of isolated dots that appeared in the discussion forums. The isolated dots corresponded to original entries that had no connection to other entries made by other participants. These learners who wrote entries that had no connection to other posts and that appeared isolated were categorized in the role of secluded posters. In this section I first explain the frequency of postings for the role of secluded poster in relation to the distribution of this role in the forums, and then I provide two examples to illustrate actions taken by participants in this role.
There were 69 forum postings for the role of secluded poster. The secluded poster was the role with the lowest number of instances, which indicates that this was the least common role taken by participants. The majority of forum postings for this role were found in the initial forum (n=38) and the last two forums of the semester, the forum for chapter 12 (n=10) and the final forum (n=12). It is no coincidence that the majority of instances for this role occurred in these forums. In the first forum, participants posted mostly original entries to the forums; there were very few replies, however. In the last two forums of the semester, participants were less active in the forums. There were fewer entries in the forum for chapter 12 and the final forums (n=106 and 90 respectively) than in other forums. For example, there were 174 entries to forum 7 (which had the highest number, compared to 55 entries to the initial forum (which had the lowest number). In addition, it could be that given that forum 12 and the final forum were the last forums of the semester, participants were focused on other tasks preparing for the end of the semester and therefore taking less time to participate in the forums. On average, participants posted 3.11 entries to forum 12 and 2.64 to the final forum, compared to an average of 4 entries per participant in forum 7 that had the highest number of entries and which took place on the third week of classes (see Appendix E for a full presentation of number of posts and averages).

Postings made by secluded posters were limited to following the guidelines for postings provided to participants. The entries followed the guidelines for posting comments to the forums in terms of responding to the questions used to guide the discussions in the forums and writing an entry of around 200 words. These were the minimum requirements for entries to the forums. However, the main characteristic of the actions of secluded posters was that they limited their postings to answering the questions and not interacting with others.
In Example 7, we observe how Kayla organized her post based on the questions posted for the forum. Kayla uses numbers to mark the particular information she provides for each question. The tools used by Amanda in the interpretation of cultural information are knowledge about her own culture and knowledge about the foreign culture (C2) she acquired from the Intercultura materials. We can see this by her mentioning of the cultural practices in Chile, the country she reviewed.

Example 7 (Kayla, Forum chapter 10, February 28, 2011)
Topic: Foro Hispano Capítulo 10
Subject: Foro Hispano Capítulo 10 Chile
Author: Kayla

1. En los Estados Unidos es normal para ambos padres trabajar. La responsabilidad para pagar las cuentas es dividir entre el hombre y la mujer. Es el mismo en Chile también. Los ambos padres trabajan independiente y dividen los gastos. En mi familia normalmente es el mismo pero ahora mi madre está desempleada y está buscando para un puesto. 2. En los Estados Unidos cuando quiere pedir un préstamo ir al banco. Normalmente para pedir dinero necesita una clasificación de crédito. El préstamo tiene una tasa de interés y un pago mensual. Si se encontrar de mora o se declara en quiebra el banco tomará su casa. En Chile cuando quiere un préstamo ir a un de dos lugares. Ir al banco o las financieras. 3. En los Estados Unidos es común para obtener una tarjeta de crédito cuando entrar la universidad. Es el mismo en Chile también y es muy fácil para obtener una tarjeta de crédito porque no hay muchos requisitos. Obtengo mi primera tarjeta de crédito cuando fui a Inglaterra y Francia porque necesité retirar y cambiar dinero.

[1. In the US, it is normal for both parents to have jobs. The parents shared the responsibility of paying bills. This is the same in Chile. Both parents work and they share paying the bills. In my family, that was normally the case but now that my mom is unemployed this is not the case, but she is looking for a job. 2. In the US when one wants to ask for a loan he needs to go to the bank. Normally, you will need a credit score to request a loan. The loan has an interest rate and monthly payments. If you delay payments or go bankrupt, the bank can confiscate your house. In Chile, for getting a loan you can go to the bank or the ‘financieras’. 3. In the US it is common to get a credit card when you start college. This is the same in Chile and it is very easy to get a credit card because there are not many requirements. I got my first credit card when I went to England and France because I needed to withdraw and exchange money.]
As in the case of Kayla, in Example (8), we can see how the Amanda makes reference to the content of the Intercultura materials she reviewed and how she connects this information to that of her own by comparing the downtown area of Caceres, Spain, with her hometown, Eagan, Minnesota. Secluded posters, as demonstrated by Amanda in Example (8), achieved ICC due to the fact that the inclusion of what/how questions prompted them to compare the aspects of the Hispanic culture with those of their own. In forum 8, participants were asked to explain what elements were present in the downtown areas of the Hispanic countries they reviewed, and to comment on which of these elements were present in the downtown areas of their cities. In Example (8), Amanda expresses appreciation for the history of the downtown area of Caceres and indicates her desire to have access to the places for entertainment that they have in Caceres. This statement shows how Amanda was able to develop ICC given that she developed an appreciation for the foreign culture from her interactions with the Intercultura materials.

Example 8 (Amanda, Forum chapter 8, February 9, 2011)

Topic: Foro Hispano Capítulo 8
Subject: Foro Hispano - España  
Author: Amanda

En el centro de Cáceres, se parece haber mucho entretienimiento y turismo. Hay una avenida grande con zonas de recreos y se llama Paseo de Canovas. También hay una plaza mayor y está en obras. Se tienen museos diferentes como, por ejemplo, para arte contemporáneo. Se encuentran servicios públicos en el centro y hospitales cerca del centro. Cáceres es antigua y bonita. La mayor diferencia entre la ciudad que soy de y las ciudades hispanas como Cáceres es el turismo. Eagan, Minnesota, es un suburbio y tiene muy frío en el invierno. No hay muchas tiendas o restaurantes en comparación a ciudades hispanas. No hay entretienimiento como galerías, parques bonitos, o tauromaquia. Eagan no tiene una mayor plaza tampoco. Hay muchas menos residentes de Eagan que hay residentes de ciudades hispanas. Espero que Eagan habra muchos monumentos y historia de la indigena como ciudades hispanas. Muchos de los edificios son de ladrillo y cemento y son moderno. Los edificios en ciudades hispanas usualmente son de ladrillo y las aceras son de piedra.

[In the downtown area in Caceres there are many places for entertainment and tourism. There is a large avenue with recreational areas that is called “Paseo de
Canovas”. Also, there is a main square, which is being remodeled. There are different museums, for example, the museum of contemporary art. There are public offices in the downtown area and also hospitals nearby. Caceres is an old and very pretty city. The main difference between the city where I am from and Caceres is tourism. Eagan, Minnesota, is a suburb, and it gets very cold. There are not many places for entertainment such as galleries or nice parks. Eagan does not have a main square either. The population of Eagan is smaller than the population in cities in Hispanic countries. I wish Eagan had monuments and the history of cities in Hispanic countries. Many of the buildings in Eagan are made of brick and concrete and look very modern. The buildings in cities in Hispanic countries are usually made of brick and the sidewalks are made of stone.]

Secluded posters, as exemplified by Amanda in Example (8), utilized knowledge about the foreign culture (C2) gained from the Intercultura materials. References that they made to compare the foreign culture with that of their own provide evidence of gaining a greater understanding of the foreign culture. These comparisons were made based on the knowledge about their own culture (C1).

Even though learners in the role of secluded poster were able to develop their ICC, they did not participate in the discussion forums and therefore they did not benefit from the interactions with other learners to expand their views and perspectives of the Hispanic cultures. In sum, due to their lack of engagement in discussions secluded posters were unable to increase their opportunities for ICC development.

4.1.5 Section summary

In answering research question 1, this section has discussed the roles that participants took during their interactions in the activity systems pertaining to this study. From the analysis of the actions, tools, and engagement of participants in the activity systems, four main roles were identified: leader, apprentice, finalizer, and secluded poster. Each of these roles was defined through analysis of actions, tools and engagement of displayed in the
forum postings. Having access to cultural knowledge of the target culture and diverse cultures (e.g., cultures different from the mainstream culture) provided leaders with knowledge they used to assist others in the interpretation of cultural information. Furthermore, this knowledge was used as tools that leaders utilized to engage others in the discussion of cultural topics. In the case of apprentice, the actions these learners took were related to the strategies used in the skill of discovery (e.g., inquiring, questioning, comparing cultural practices) described by Byram (1987). Apprentices used knowledge of the foreign culture that they learned in Intercultura to as their tools for the interpretation of cultural information. Apprentices actively sought opportunities to engage others in the discussions. A third type of role was the finalizer. The actions taken by these participants were summarizing points presented by others and stating agreement or disagreement. The forum postings of finalizers provided a sense of ‘closure’ to the discussions. Finally, participants in the role of secluded posters limited their actions to write answers to the guiding questions in the discussion forums. Secluded posters used references to information presented in Intercultura as the tools for interpreting cultural information. These participants did engage in the discussion forums.

4.2 Examination of participants’ ICC development and the Intercultura materials

Research question 2 investigated participants’ development of ICC by examining changes in the numbers and types of contributions participants made to the discussion forums over the sixteen weeks of the study. The forum contributions for each participant were analyzed in each discussion to identify instances of the four dimensions (attitudes, discovery, interpreting and relating, and knowledge) of ICC (Byram, 1997). The frequencies of each of
the four dimensions were compared across eight discussion forums to establish development and to seek evidence concerning what components of the Intercultura materials were associated with increased instances of the four dimensions. The comparisons were made considering two variables: 1) viewing of the Intercultura materials in-class, and 2) viewing of the Intercultura materials out-of-class. Results showed that participants exhibited instances of ICC across all forums. Based on the comparisons of the number of instances of the four dimensions of ICC, a change in development was observed for the dimension of interpreting and relating. Results indicated that the dimension of interpreting and relating had the highest (n=415) number of instances exhibited by participants. For this category, the number of instances differed between the forums for which participants viewed materials in-class and out-of-class. Instances of interpreting and relating increased when participants viewed the materials out of class. The contents of the forum entries demonstrated that two components of the Intercultura materials increased the number of instances of interpreting and relating: 1) what/how questions and 2) the integration of materials from four Hispanic countries. First, the use of what/how questions (Belz, 2003) allowed participants to draw upon their own cultural experiences to establish differences and similarities between their culture and the practices in the foreign culture. Second, having access to a variety of information about the four countries (Argentina, Chile, Spain, Colombia) presented in the Intercultura materials allowed participants to develop their ICC by comparing and relating to the different perspectives on the information about the four countries and their own.

In this section, I provide a summary of the instances of the four dimensions of ICC exhibited by participants to illustrate achievements of ICC. Then, I explain the changes in development observed for the dimension of interpreting and relating between the forums for
in and out-of-class viewing of materials. Furthermore, I describe how the use of what/how questions facilitated an increase in the number of instances for the dimension of interpreting and relating due to the use of participants’ own knowledge as the tools to discuss information about the foreign culture. Finally, I discuss the increase in the number of instances displayed of the dimension of interpreting and relating over the eight discussion forums, and demonstrate that these differences are due to the viewing of materials from four Hispanic countries.

4.2.1 Participants’ development of ICC

Following Byram’s (1997) model of ICC, postings to forums were coded to identify instances of the four dimensions of ICC in Byram’s model: attitudes, discovery, interpreting and relating, and knowledge and awareness. The identification of instances of the four dimensions in Byram’s model provided evidence of achievement of ICC. Instances of all four dimensions were found throughout the forums. Table 16 summarizes the distribution of the dimensions identified in the eight discussion forums. Results of the analysis of the instances of ICC showed that the dimension of interpreting and relating had the highest number of instances (n=415).

Table 16. Summary of number of instances of the four ICC dimensions exhibited in forum postings made by participants (n=42) in eight discussion forums

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Initial forum</th>
<th>Forum 7</th>
<th>Forum 8</th>
<th>Forum 9</th>
<th>Forum 10</th>
<th>Forum 11</th>
<th>Forum 12</th>
<th>Final forum</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpreting &amp; relating</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge &amp; awareness</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Differences were observed in the number of instances of the four dimensions of ICC across forums. The number of instances fluctuates with no apparent pattern for all dimensions, except for the dimension of interpreting and relating. Instances of interpreting and relating increased when participants viewed the materials out of class. The number of instances of the dimension of interpreting and relating corresponding to the viewing of materials in class, forums 7, 9, and 11 (n=31, 41, 47), are lower than those for out of class, forums 8, 10, 12 (n=59, 97, 77). The graph in Figure 18 provides a visual representation of the differences observed in the number of instances for the dimension of interpreting and relating. The initial and final forums serve as baselines for the comparisons made.

Participants did not view any Intercultura materials for these two forums. The number of instances of the dimension of interpreting and relating is higher than the baseline forums in all forums in which participants viewed Intercultura materials. Participants viewed in class Intercultura materials for one country for forums 7, 9, and 11, and the number of instances of interpreting and relating for these forums are higher than for the initial and final forums (the baselines). However, the number of instances for forums 8, 10, and 12 for which participants viewed out-of-class four Intercultura materials is higher than the instances for in-class viewing and the baseline forums.
The number of instances of interpreting and relating decreased in the forum for chapter 12. This can be explained based on the number of entries to this forum. Even though the number of postings made to forums was similar, forum 12 had the lowest number of postings. Table 17 displays a summary of postings to forums.

Even though participants did not view any Intercultura materials for the initial and final forums, instances of the dimension of interpreting and relating were found in these forums as in all other forums. Examination of the content of forum postings showed a direct connection between the dimension of interpreting and relating and the use of what/how questions in the forums. The use of what/how questions prompted participants to interpret cultural information of the foreign cultures from the point of view of their own culture.
Table 17. Summary of participants’ (n=42) postings made to eight discussion forums

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forum</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>Number of entries</th>
<th>Average number of entries per participant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial forum</td>
<td>44(^3)</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>3.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>3.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>3.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>3.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final forum</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>2.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next section discusses how these interpretations were made and provides examples of postings from the data to illustrate the direct connection between the content of the forum and what/how questions.

4.2.2 What/how questions as source of production of the dimension of interpreting and relating

What/how questions (Belz, 2003) were used in the discussion forums as a way to prompt learners to interpret the cultural information of the foreign culture from the point of view of their own culture. Participants in this study used the knowledge about their own culture (C1) as the tool to interpret cultural information about the foreign cultures (C2). Through the use of this tool, participants were able to relate to the cultural information of the foreign cultures by explaining the concepts and practices from the point of view of their own culture. The type of interpretations participants made corresponded to the dimension of interpreting and relating in Byram’s model of ICC (1997).

\(^3\) There are 44 participants for the initial forum. This forum was completed during the first week of classes. Two students dropped the class after the first week and therefore did not continue to participate in the subsequent forums.
On average, each forum contained three guiding questions. There were two main types of questions that were consistent in all forums: 1) a question to ask *what* was observed in the Intercultura materials, and 2) a question to ask about *how* this information related to that of their own culture. For example, in the discussion forum for chapter 7 that dealt with the topic of shopping, the Intercultura materials presented information related to the factors that affect the selection of products (e.g., fresh produce, groceries, clothing) when shopping in Hispanic countries. The forum questions asked participants to explain *what* factors affected their decisions for shopping preferences (e.g., places for shopping, products) in their own practices (C1) and *how* their shopping preferences differ or were similar to the practices in Hispanic countries (C2).

In the discussion forum for chapter 7, participants were able to discuss their shopping preferences and relate this information to the contents of the Intercultura materials. In the forum, participants had to give advice to Hispanics about shopping for produce in the US based on the information they learned about shopping practices in Spain and considering their own practices. In Example (9), we can see how each of the three participants that were engaged in this activity system was able to discuss their cultural practices (i.e., shopping habits) from the point of view of their own practices and relate them to the practices of shopping in Spain. In exchange 1, for instance, Kayla discusses her shopping habits (i.e., preferences for places to shop, things to consider in the selection of products) and compares them to the practice described in Intercultura about shopping for food in Spain. Kayla points out that some of the differences that Hispanics may face when shopping in the US is that in the US bargaining is not an acceptable practice in most places for shopping, and that the quality and freshness of fresh produce would differ from those of Spain. In exchange 2,
Marlene follows up the discussion and explains that from the point of view of her own experiences, there are options for fresh produce of good quality available in the US, a point that contradicts the statement made by Kayla in regard to the quality of fresh produce. In exchange 3, Nina joins the discussion explaining her preferences for shopping for food, asking Marlene about her experience and presenting a different option based on her knowledge about shopping for fresh produce. The contradiction that arose and the different perspectives presented by the participants in the discussion provide evidence that the interpretations participants made were based on their own cultural experiences: the knowledge they had about their own culture (C1). This evidence supports the argument that with the use of what/how questions participants were able to produce instances of the dimension of interpreting and relating.

Example 9
Exchange 1, Kayla, Forum chapter 7, January 24, 2011)

Topic: Foro Hispano Capítulo 7
Subject: Foro Hispano Capítulo 7
Author: Kayla

Cuando se busca un lugar a comprar mi comida yo miro a los precios más baratos. Yo consideras muchos factores cuando compra mi comida, incluyendo: el precio, la marca, la calidad, el valor nutricional, cuánto tiempo dura, y más importante el sabor de la comida. Cuando you busco por una tienda de comida me gusta cuando es barato, limpio, y los dependientes son muy alegre y ayudar a mí. Es muy importante a comprar el pan de todos los días porque es tradición. Sino que también mantiene viva la cultura española a través de las generaciones. Yo pienso la idea detrás de el pan de todos los días representa como la cultura y el patrimonio de España es muy importante a todas las personas que viven allí. Cuando yo compro mis zapatos y ropa yo no considero que la moda o los promoción de productos como la mayoría de la gente. Yo en vez buscar funcionalidad y lo cómodo la cosa es. La mayoría de la gente sigue lo que es popular en la moda y promoción de productos porque ellos se preocupan por encajar. Yo creo que esta creencia es similar en el mundo hispano. En primer lugar consejo un Hispano que visitar los Estados Unidos que dependiente's en el centro comercial no se trueque cualquiera de sus bienes a un precio diferente. Todas cosas tienen precios fijos que no se puede negociar. Otra diferencia es la fruta y verduras no será tan fresca o estar en tan buena calidad.
[When I look for a place to buy food I consider the stores that offer lower prices. I consider a lot of factors when buying foods such as: price, maker, quality, nutritional value, how long it lasts, and above all flavor. When choosing a store, I like stores that are inexpensive, clean, and that have helpful and friendly workers. In Spain, it is important to buy bread daily because it is a tradition. This also keeps the tradition alive through generations. I think that this tradition shows how cultural traditions are important for people who live there. When buying clothing and shoes I do not consider fashion or advertising as most people do. Instead, I focus on functionality and comfort. Most people focus on fashion because they want to ‘fit in’. I think this practice is similar in Hispanic countries. First of all, I recommend to Hispanics who visit the US that you cannot bargain at the mall. Everything has a fixed price that is not negotiable. Another difference is that fruits and vegetables will not be as fresh and of good quality as in Spain.]

Exchange 2 (Marlene, Forum chapter 7, January 25, 2011)

Topic: Foro Hispano Capítulo 7
Subject: Re:Foro Hispano Capítulo 7
Author: Marlene

Kayla, Me dijo lo mismo acerca de consejando un hispano que visita los Estados Unidos en relación a las compras. Pero también, usted puede comprar frutas y vegetales de buen calidad en una tienda llamada "Wheatsfield Co-op". La mala calidad es de los preservativos y el tiempo en el camión antes de llegar a la tienda. Gracias por tus comentarios! Marlene

[Kayla, I gave the same advice to Hispanics visiting the US in relation to shopping. However, you can also buy fruits and vegetables of good quality in a store called Wheatsfield Co-op. The bad quality in produce is from preservatives and the time it takes to transport them. Thanks for your comments! Marlene]

Exchange 3 (Nina, Forum chapter 7, January 25, 2011)

Topic: Foro Hispano Capítulo 7
Subject: Re:Foro Hispano Capítulo 7
Author: Nina

Marlene, Yo estoy de acuerdo contigo sobre la calidad de las frutas y vegetales de "Wheatsfield Co-op." Pero los precios allí son muy altos, me encanta el precio y el sabor de la comida fresca en Fareway. ¿Has visto esta tienda? Nina

[Marlene, I agree with you about the quality of fruits and vegetables from Wheatsfield Co-op. But, the prices there are very high. I love the price and the flavor of fresh produce at Fareway. Have you visited this store? Nina]

Exchange 4 (Marlene, Forum chapter 7, January 25, 2011)

Topic: Foro Hispano Capítulo 7
Subject: Re:Foro Hispano Capítulo 7
Author: Marlene

Nina, Sí he estado a Fareway. Para mí, la problema con la comida barata esta son los costos ocultos. La nueva investigación demuestra los enlaces entre los problemas de salud / riesgos y nuestro sistema de agricultura actual. Yo prefero a pagar para la calidad. Gracias! Marlene
[Nina, yes, I have been to Fareway. For me, the problem with inexpensive food is the hidden costs. New research shows the connection between health problems/risks and our agricultural system. I prefer paying for quality. Thanks! Marlene Exchange 5 (Kayla, Forum chapter 7, January 25, 2011)

In the interpretation of cultural information about the foreign culture, participants who took on the role of secluded posters provide further evidence of how the interpretation of cultural information was done through the use of knowledge of the participants’ own culture (C1) as the tool for interpretation. Furthermore, the postings of secluded posters demonstrate how the use of what/how questions assisted participants to produce instances of the dimension of interpreting and relating, even in the case when participants did not interact with others in the discussions. In Example (9) we saw how the knowledge that participants in this example had about the topic differed among themselves. However, in the case of secluded posters the comparing of information in relation to the Hispanic cultures was more evident since the views presented correspond to those of the poster and his interpretations of the Hispanic cultures. In Example (10), we can see how Anton uses his knowledge about his own culture (C1) as the tool to interpret the shopping for clothing in Spain based on his own practices. Anton also compares the practices of bargaining in Spain with the practices in the US and notes that this practice may occur in the US in some small shops. The interpretation and comparison that Anton makes in Example (10) are direct responses to the what/how questions used in the forum.

Example 10 (Anton, Forum chapter 7, January 25, 2011)

Topic: Foro Hispano Capítulo 7
Subject: Foro Hispano-ch.7 Author: Anton

1. Al seleccionar un lugar para comprar comida, miro el precio antes de la calidad. Soy un estudiante universitario pobre y no puede comprar la buena comida. Me gusta
ir de compras a Hy-Vee o Wal-Mart. Tienen comida buena y barata. 2. El Pan de Todos los Días en España es muy importante. En España se dice, Si no hay pan, sin comida. Creo que esta idea es importante porque se ha pasado de generación en generación. Ahora es normal que cada comida que tienen abundancia de pan. 3. Nunca compro ropa nueva. Yo compro mi ropa de goodwill o tienen que estar a la venta. Me gusta estar a la moda y cómodo. Asimismo, no tengo dinero para comprar ropa nueva. No sé si soy diferente a los españoles. Creo que vestir i diferente, pero creo que todo el mundo quiere ropa baratos. 4. Estados Unidos no es tan diferente de los países hispanos. Usted hace compras en un centro comercial o tiendas independientes. La mayoría de las veces usted tiene que pagar el precio completo. En las tiendas independientes a veces se puede negociar el precio. Yo recomiendo comprar en Wal-Mart. en Wal-Mart se puede comprar comida, ropa, electrónica, y todo lo que necesita.

[1. When selecting places to buy food, I consider the price and not so much the quality. I am a poor college student and cannot afford buying good food. I like shopping at Hy-Vee or Wal-Mart. They offer good inexpensive food. Buying bread daily in Spain is very important. In Spain, it is said that without bread, there is no meal. I think that this idea is important because it has been passed on from generation to generation. Today it is normal that people buy bread for every meal, so there is an abundance of bread. 3. I never buy new clothes. I buy clothes at goodwill or on sale. I like being fashionable but also comfortable. However, I do not have money to buy new clothes. I am not sure if this makes me different from Spaniards. I think I dress differently than people in Hispanic countries, but I also think that everybody wants to buy clothes that are inexpensive. 4. The US is very different than Hispanic countries. You can shop at malls or small shops. Most of the time you have to pay full price for things. At small shops sometimes you can bargain. I recommend shopping at Wal-Mart. At Wal-Mart you can buy food, clothing, electronics, and everything that you need.]

What/how questions provided learners with opportunities to use the knowledge they had about their own culture (C1) to interpret the cultural information presented to them in the Intercultura materials. In Example (10) we see more clearly how participants could make interpretations based on the use of their own tools (C1), whereas in Example (9) we can see how even in the case of discussions with other participants, each participant utilized his own experiences and knowledge to make interpretations and to come to an understanding of the cultural information of the foreign culture (C2). In both examples we can see that the content
of the postings are in close connection with the what/how questions used in the forum. These questions caused participants to produce instances of the dimension of interpreting and relating since participants were able to relate the information to that of their own culture and interpret the content based on the knowledge they possessed about their culture and the foreign culture.

Based on the differences in the number of instances between in and out-of-class viewing of materials, it became evident that access to a higher number of Intercultura materials resulted in a higher production of instances of the dimension of interpreting and relating. In the next section, I discuss the numerical differences and explain how the contents of the postings support the numerical differences observed.

4.2.3 Access to materials from four Hispanic countries as contributing factor of production of the dimension of interpreting and relating

In the process of interpreting and relating to cultural information, learners utilized the tools available to them (i.e., knowledge about their culture and other cultures). Having access to a wider range of information prompted learners to compare information from different perspectives, which enriched their understanding of the foreign culture and their own.

As seen in Table 16, the dimension of interpreting and relating was present in all discussion forums. Interestingly, the number of coding references fluctuated from 30 to 97, a considerable difference. Comparisons of the difference in numbers of instances were found to be connected to the method utilized for the viewing of the Intercultura materials in this study. For forums 7, 9, and 10, which are the forums with the lowest number of references for the skill of interpreting and relating, participants had access to materials for one country.
On the other hand, the forums with the highest number of references (forums 8, 10, and 12) correspond to the forums for which participants had access to information from four Hispanic countries. In the interpretation of these figures, it should be noted that entries to forums were similar across all forums. For example, for forum 9 (in-class viewing) there were 127 entries and for forum 10 (out-of-class viewing) there were 127 entries. Even though the number of entries is almost the same across forums, the number of instances for the dimension of interpreting and relating for these forums is completely different. There were 97 instances of interpreting and relating in forum 10, and 41 (less than half) for forum 9.

Upon examination of the forum postings it became evident that access to a greater amount of cultural information (i.e., information from four countries compared to one country) had an effect on the number of instances for the dimension of interpreting and relating. The contents of the forums showed that in the forums for which participants had access to four countries, participants discussed the topic of the forum from different perspectives: The participants discussed the practices of the cultural topic in the four countries, US culture, and their own culture. However, for forums for which they had access to one country, the discussion centered on the interpretation of the cultural practices in the Hispanic country being focused upon and also on the point of view of US culture and their own culture. In Example (11), for instance, we can see how in their interaction, Rick, who takes on the role of apprentice, is able to draw comparisons between the information of the country assigned to him (Chile) and the information about Colombia described by Mark. In addition, Rick is able to compare the downtown area of his home city and Mark’s hometown. The interpretation of the information provides evidence that having access to information from four countries increased the opportunities participants had to interpret and relate to
more points of the foreign culture presented since more information was available to them for the making of comparisons.

Example 11
Exchange 1 (Mark, Forum Chapter 8, 2011)

Topic: Foro Hispano Capítulo 8
Subject: Capítulo 8 - Colombia
Author: Mark

En Colombia hay muchas cosas en el centro de la ciudad. El centro de la ciudad tiene un plaza principal que tiene un catedral y usualmente un club social. También la ciudad tiene edificios modernos. En las avenidas principales hay vendedores que venden muchas cosas como electrodomésticos, ropa, y mucho más. También hay cafés, bares, y restaurantes. Mi ciudad Chariton, Iowa es más similar que Colombia. En mi ciudad hay un plaza principal. Tiene restaurantitos y las pequeñas empresas y tiendas de abarrotes. También tiene barres y cafés. Hay una diferencia entre mi ciudad y Colombia. La plaza principal en mi ciudad tiene edificios antiguos y apartamentos. Las catedrales están cerca del centro de la ciudad, pero no en el propio centro. No hay transporte público o un gran club social pero hay un hospital. Mi ciudad es más similar a Colombia de lo que pensaba. Gracias.

[In Colombia there are many things in the downtown area of the city. In the downtown area there is a main plaza with a cathedral and there is usually a social club. There are also modern buildings in the city. In the main avenues (in downtown) there are vendors that sell household appliances, clothing, and many other things. There are also coffee shops, bars, and restaurants. My city of Chariton, Iowa, is similar to Colombia. In my city there is a main plaza. There are small restaurants, small shops, and grocery stores. There are also bars and coffee shops. There is a difference between my city and Colombia. There are old buildings and apartment complexes in the main plaza in downtown. The cathedral is near downtown, but is it not in downtown. There is no public transportation or a social club but there is a hospital. My city is more similar to Colombia than what I thought. Thanks]

Exchange 2 (Rick, Forum chapter 8, 2011)

Topic: Foro Hispano Capítulo 8
Subject: Re:Capítulo 8 - Colombia
Author: Rick

Su ciudad no es similar a la mía. Yo vivo en una ciudad grande que tiene muchas diferencias respecto a Colombia, pero suena interesante y es muy similar a Chile.

[Mark, your city is not similar to mine. I live in a big city that has more differences with Colombia, but your city sounds interesting and similar to Chile].

The noticing of the similarities and differences by Mark and Rick in Example (11) provides evidence of how participants were able to interpret information about the foreign
cultures (C2) using their knowledge about their own (C1). In addition, the comparisons made by Mark and Rick demonstrate how exposure to a greater number of cultural perspectives on the same topic increased the noticing of similarities and differences between the native culture and the different perspectives of the Hispanic cultures.

4.2.3 Section summary

This section discussed participants’ development of ICC across eight discussion forums. Differences in the number of instances for the dimension of interpreting and relating across forums provided evidence of development. The differences in the number of instances of the dimension of interpreting and relating were caused by the use of what/how questions and access to materials for four Hispanic countries. These two components increased the ability of participants to produce instances of interpreting and relating by using knowledge of their own culture (C1) as a tool to interpret the foreign culture (C2).

4.3 Differences in the production of activity systems derived from the viewing of the Intercultura materials.

Research question 3 studied differences in the development of activity systems encountered in the discussion forums that resulted from the viewing of materials in or out of class. The examination of the flow of the discussions as shown in sociograms and confirmed in the analysis of goals of activity systems that developed in discussion forums showed that the focus of goals of activity systems diverted more in topics where participants viewed the materials in class and had access to information of only one country. In the forums in which participants had access to information for one Hispanic country, participants engaged in the
pursuance of more varied goals, whereas in the forums in which they had access to information of different countries they focused on the same goals as those related to the topic of the forum. The conversations were more focused in forums where participants viewed the materials outside of class and had access to more information (more countries).

In this section, I report on the differences that were observed in the development of activity systems as observed in two analyses: 1) differences noted in sociograms, and 2) differences in activity systems based on the analysis of the pursuance of goals.

4.3.1 Differences in the development of activity systems noticed in sociograms

In this study, participants had access to information about Hispanic cultures in two ways. For each of the chapters 7, 9, and 11, participants were presented (in class) with information about one Hispanic country (Spain in Chapter 7 and 11, and Colombia in chapter 9). In contrast, for chapters 8, 10, and 12, participants had access to information (outside of class) from four Hispanic countries (Colombia, Spain, Argentina, and Chile). Even though access to information varied in the number of materials, participants completed the same number of tasks for all chapters. Participants watched a video, completed a comprehension quiz, and posted comments to a discussion forum. As explained in the description of the Intercultura materials and approach in chapter 3, in the viewing of materials out of class participants completed the comprehension quiz while working with the materials (i.e., answering a question after each video clip). On the other hand, in in-class viewing, participants completed the comprehension quiz after watching all video clips pertaining to one country as a class. The posting to the discussion forums was done outside of class.
Analysis of the sociograms obtained from 8 discussion forums revealed differences in the way the discussions in the forums developed based on the type of viewing of materials throughout the semester. These differences were noted in the two groups compared: in and out of class viewing of materials. The analysis consisted of comparisons of activity in the forums (e.g., number of posts, average number of postings), comparisons of sociograms in terms of the appearance of nodes (i.e., cluster of dots) and flow of discussions as illustrated by dotted lines. Content readings of the forum postings served to identify the topics discussed in the forums. Results showed that the interactions of the participants varied by the way they focused on different aspects of the discussions. In the forums in which participants had access to information for one Hispanic country, the discussion covered multiple topics. For example, in Figure 20 based on the sociogram for chapter 7 (in-class viewing) we can observe the presence of multiple clusters of interactions, which reveals that the discussion covered multiple topics. The arrows between the dots point to multiple directions indicating the different flows of the discussion. The general topics in the forum for chapter 7 was shopping practices in Spain in regard to the availability of fresh produce, and the concept of buying bread daily. In the discussion of these general topics, participants discussed their preferences for shopping in regard to types of stores, location, selection of products available, and prices (e.g., “Cuando seleccionar un lugar para comprar comida, miro el precio, calidad, y el servicio. Me gusta vendedores contentos. Me gusta ir de compras a Fareway, Hy-Vee o Target. No me gusta ir de compras a Wal-Mart porque hay personas locas” [When I choose a store for shopping for food I consider the price, quality, and the service offered at the store. I like shopping at a place where workers are happy. I like shopping at Fareway, Hy-Vee or Target. I don’t like shopping at Walmart because there are a lot of crazy people
there], Kevin, Forum Chapter 7, January 26, 2011). Other topics included the discussion of the factors (e.g., transportation cost, production costs) that affect the pricing, taste, and quality of fresh produce (e.g., “…usted puede comprar frutas y vegetales de buen calidad en una tienda llamada Wheatsfield Co-op. La mala calidad es de los preservativos y el tiempo en el camión antes de llegar a la tienda”, [You can buy fruits and vegetables that are of good quality at a store called Wheatsfield Co-op. The bad quality of fresh produce comes from the use of preservatives and the long distances (and time) that food travels before getting to the store], Marlene, Forum Chapter 7, January 25, 2011). The participants discussed these topics in relation to the fresh produce in Spain, but the topics focused on practices and issues in the US.

Figure 20. Sociogram for the in-class discussion forum for chapter 7 (based on 164 postings made by 41 participants. The average number of posting was 4).
In contrast, in Figure 21, the sociogram for chapter 10 (out-of-class viewing), we can observe a clear flow of the discussion, revealing a pattern of focus of the discussion. In the sociogram for chapter 10 in Figure 21 there are four clusters, each of which represents one focus taken by participants in the discussion. In contrast, in the sociogram for chapter 7 shown in Figure 20, there is no observable pattern of the flow of the discussion. The general topic of the discussion forum for chapter 10 was the management of the finances in the family (i.e., bill paying practices) and the age for obtaining a credit card. Participants focused on the discussion of three topics: 1) the person in the family who is responsible for paying bills (e.g., “En los estados unidos el padre es la persona quien maneja las cuentas y el dinero en la familia. Sin embargo, en otras situaciones, si sólo hay uno de los padres en el hogar, que el padre se encargará de las cuentas y dinero de la familia” [In the US, the father is the person responsible for paying bills and handling money in the family. However, there are other circumstances that determine who pays for bills and handles money. For instance, when there is only one parent, he or she is responsible for both tasks], Kevin, Forum Chapter 10, March 3, 2011), 2) comparing the difference in the age for obtaining a credit card in Hispanic countries and the US, and 3) practices for borrowing money. In the second topic, participants focused their discussion on the issue of the age that will be appropriate for obtaining a credit card in the US and the reasons for this (e.g., “Pienso que la edad en los estados undidos debe ser vientiuno años, porque muchos jovenes estan endeudado ahora” [I think that the in the US the age for getting a credit card should be 21 because a lot of young people nowadays carry big debts], Nina, Forum Chapter 10, March 4, 2011). For the third topic discussed, participants described the practices in their families for borrowing money (“Pienso que pediendo prestado en Argentina es tan extraño. Allí, se puede ir a un familiar o un amigo por
eso. En comparación, los estadounidenses van a un banco a menudo. Es normal hacer eso. No creo que yendo a un familiar es la elección mejor. Los problemas ocurren a menudo cuándo se pregunta un amigo por dinero” [I think that the practices for borrowing money in Argentina are very strange. In Argentina you can ask to borrow money from a relative or friend. In contrast, in the US people go to banks to borrow money. I don’t think that asking for money from a relative is the best choice. Problems come up often when people ask for money], Ryan, Forum Chapter 10, March 1, 2011).

Figure 21. Sociogram for the out-of-class discussion forum for chapter 10 (based on 126 postings made by 41 participants. The average number of postings was 3.07).
The difference in the sociograms in Figure 20 and 21 exemplifies how participants were able to focus on certain aspects of the discussion in the forums in which they had access to information from more than one country, whereas the participants did not have a clear main focus in the discussions in the forums for which they had access to information for only one country. The difference observed in Figures 16 and 17 in regard to the focus of discussions is representative of the 8 sociograms. The same difference was observed in comparisons made between the sociograms for in-class viewing (7, 9, 11) with out-of-class viewing (8, 10, 12). Table 18 illustrates the differences in patterns of the flow of the discussions between forums for in-class and out-of-class viewing of materials. As it can be observed in the sociograms for in-class forums, there is no visible pattern of flow: the discussions took multiple directions due to the multiple topics discussed. On the other hand, the sociograms for out-of-class viewing show patterns of focus of the discussions: there is a clear flow of the lines that appear in the sociogram. For example, in the sociogram for chapter 12 (bottom right on Table 18), we can clearly identify a line that moves in the same direction, from top to bottom in the sociogram, which provides evidence of staying focused in the discussion.

As it was observed in the topics discussed for forums 7 and 10, the same differences were identified in the rest of the forums. As shown in Table 18, there are fewer clusters of dots in the sociograms for out-of-class viewing. As discussed in the topics for forum 10 above, the fewer number of clusters in the sociograms indicates a lower number of topics discussed. Differences in the focus of the discussion were based on the number of topics
discussed. However, there were also differences observed in terms of the type of goals pursued in the activity systems. These differences are explained in the next section.

**Table 18. Comparisons of the sociograms of four discussion forums by viewing of materials - in and out of class**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In-class viewing of materials</th>
<th>Out-of-class viewing of materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Sociogram for chapter 9" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Sociogram for chapter 11" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociogram for the discussion forum for chapter 9 (based on 127 postings made by 42 participants. The average number of postings was 3.02).</td>
<td>Sociogram for the discussion forum for chapter 11 (based on 134 postings made by 39 participants. The average number of postings was 3.43).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Sociogram for chapter 8" /></td>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Sociogram for chapter 12" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociogram for discussion forum for chapter 8 (based on 139 postings made by 41 participants. The average number of postings was 3.39).</td>
<td>Sociogram for the discussion forum for chapter 12 (based on 106 postings made by 34 participants. The average number of postings was 3.11).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.2 Differences in activity systems based on the analysis of the pursuance of goals

Analysis of the goals of 193 activity systems showed that there were differences in the goals due to access and viewing of materials. There was one goal in each activity system. The goals of activity systems were coded as Hispanic or non-Hispanic. Hispanic goals were those in which participants worked towards the understanding of cultural information about Hispanic cultures, such as understanding cultural practices in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, and Spain. Non-Hispanic goals were those in which participants worked towards understanding cultural information about non-Hispanics, such as cultural practices of the US/American culture. Results show that overall participants pursued non-Hispanic goals because they focused on the understanding of cultural information related to the American/US culture. There were differences associated with the number of goals in each forum. These differences were due to the number of Intercultura materials viewed. The number of non-Hispanic goals was higher in forums in which participants viewed the materials in class and had access to one country (7, 9, 11). Access to one country resulted in a higher number of non-Hispanic goals. Table 19 shows the distribution of the types of goals pursued in the activity systems by forum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity systems</th>
<th>Initial</th>
<th>Forum 7</th>
<th>Forum 8</th>
<th>Forum 9</th>
<th>Forum 10</th>
<th>Forum 11</th>
<th>Forum 12</th>
<th>Final</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it can be observed in Table 19, overall the pursuance of non-Hispanic goals in activity systems predominated over the pursuance of Hispanic goals in the majority of
forums, except in the initial and final forums. Considering that for both of these forums the questions asked participants to discuss the concept of Hispanics, it is understandable that the conversations focused on the topic of Hispanics and consequently there were no systems that discuss issues related to the US (non-Hispanic) culture.

In addition to the difference observed based on the viewing and access to materials across all forums, there was a difference in the number of instances of Hispanic and non-Hispanic goals within each forum. Even though the number of instances of non-Hispanic goals was higher across all forums, the number of non-Hispanic was higher in the forums in which participants had access to one country. For example, for forum 9, the number of non-Hispanic goals (n=24) was three times higher than the number of Hispanic goals (n=8). In contrast, in forum 12 for which participants had access to four countries, the number of non-Hispanic (n=12) and Hispanic (n=13) goals was almost the same.

The pursuance of non-Hispanic goals in activity systems was motivated by the discussion of cultural information from the point of view of the participants’ own culture, the US culture. In making sense of the cultural information of the Hispanic culture, participants engaged in conversations that compared the Hispanic culture with that of the US, and while doing this they pursued goals that did not relate to the Hispanic culture directly. For example, in the forum for chapter 7 participants discussed the giving of advice to Hispanics visiting the US in regard to shopping practices (i.e., availability of fresh produce of good quality in supermarkets in the US). The participants compared the practices of shopping in Spain to the practices in the US. The goals achieved in this discussion forum were related to the agreement on the differences that exist in the availability, price, and quality of fresh produce in the US. There were nine activity systems in the forum for chapter 7 in which the goals
were in close connection with the Hispanic cultures in that the topic dealt with information pertaining to a cultural practice of Hispanics (i.e., purchasing fresh products of good quality in Spain). However, the majority of goals (n=14) in the forum for chapter 7 dealt exclusively with cultural practices of the US.

Example (12) demonstrates the interactions of participants in the pursuance of a non-Hispanic goal in an activity system in the forum for chapter 7. In Example (12) the goal was to realize how the limited number of options for shopping in some cities constrains the ability to find bargains or good options for shopping. The participants in Example (12) achieved this goal by discussing their shopping habits and the options for products and stores available in their cities. In Exchange 3 Ryan mentions how his shopping options are limited to certain types of ethnic food stores (i.e., Chinese and Mexican) even though he is interested in shopping at Italian stores. Alice in Exchange 5 explains how other cities in the US offer more options for shopping. The discussion focuses on shopping options available in the US. Evidently, the goal of the activity system was not related to understanding cultural information about cultural practices in Hispanic countries.

Example 12
Exchange 1 (Ryan, Forum chapter 7, January 24, 2011)

**Topic:** Foro Hispano Capítulo 7
**Subject:** Foro Hispano Capítulo 7: Las Compras  
**Author:** Ryan

*Yo selecciono el lugar dónde compro mi comida por decidirse a muchos factores. Primero, el lugar debe tener una variada de comidas como verduras, frutas y la comida de muchas culturas como china y italiana. En casi todo, voy a Hy-Vee o Super Walmart para comprar la comida. Estos lugares tienen todo que necesito…*[I select the places where I shop for food based on different factors. First, the place must have a good selection of produce such as fruits and vegetables and food from other cultures such as Chinese and Italian. Most of the time I go to Hy-Vee or Super Walmart to buy food. These places have everything I need… (original text continues)*]
Exchange 2 (Jeanne, Forum chapter 7, January 24, 2011)

Topic: Foro Hispano Capítulo 7

Subject: Re:Foro Hispano Capítulo 7: Las Compras Author: Jeanne

_Hola Ryan! Compras en supermercados de China o Italiana o Mexico? Pienso que hay supermercados solo de los países diferentes? Gracias por tus ideas! Jeanne_

[Hi, Ryan! Do you shop at Chinese or Italian or Mexican stores? I think that there are shops for ethnic food? Thanks for your ideas! Jeanne]

---

Exchange 3 (Ryan, Forum chapter 7, January 24, 2011)

Topic: Foro Hispano Capítulo 7

Subject: Re:Foro Hispano Capítulo 7: Las Compras Author: Ryan

_Hola, Jeanne. Espero que estás bien. En general, sólo voy a compras en supermercados asiático y mexicano. Hay muchas tiendas de los dos en Des Moines y Ames. Sin embargo, quiero voy a un supermercado italiano algún día. Quizás, voy a visitar un barrio italiano cuando visito una ciudad grande como Chicago o Nueva York. ¿Y tú?_

[Hi, Jeanne. I hope you are well. In general, I only shop at Chinese and Mexican supermarkets. There are a lot of these stores in Des Moines and Ames. However, I would like to shop at an Italian supermarket some day. Maybe I will visit an Italian neighborhood when I visit a big city such as Chicago or New York. What about you?]

---

Exchange 4 (Jeanne, Forum chapter 7, January 25, 2011)

Topic: Foro Hispano Capítulo 7

Subject: Re:Foro Hispano Capítulo 7: Las Compras Author: Jeanne

_Hola Ryan, En general, solo voy a compras en supermercados de Target o Hy-Vee o Farway. Pero, a veces voy a compras en supermercados especialidad de mexicano. Hay algunos supermercados en Des Moines. Esos mercados son muy divertidos y diferentes! Gracias! Jeanne_

[Hi Ryan, In general, I only shop at supermarkets such as Target or Hy-Ve or Fareway. But, sometimes I shop at Mexican supermarkets. There are some of these in Des Moines. These supermarkets are very fun and different! Thanks! Jeanne]

---

Exchange 5 (Alice, Forum chapter 7, January 27, 2011)

Topic: Foro Hispano Capítulo 7

Subject: Re:Foro Hispano Capítulo 7: Las Compras Author: Alice

_Ryan, Yo fui a Nueva York el verano pasado y la selección de ropa en el mercados son muy increíbilidade. Hay muchas tipos, hay mercados de ropa pero hay unos mercados de joyas y bolsas y accesorios. Yo compro muchas cosas por que el precio fue muy barato._

[Ryan, I visited in New York City last summer and the selection for clothing and the supermarkets are just incredible. There are many types; there are shops for clothing but also for jewelry, handbags, and accessories. I purchased many things for a low price]
Exchange 6 (Nina, Forum chapter 7, January 28, 2011)

Topic: Foro Hispano Capítulo 7
Subject: Re:Foro Hispano Capítulo 7: Las Compras  Author: Nina

Ryan, ¡La comida italiana es absolutamente fantastica! Te recomiendo que visites un restaurante italiano cerca de aquí, no espera para visitar Chicago o Nuevo York. ¡Gracias!

[Ryan, Italian food is absolutely fantastic! I suggest that you go to an Italian restaurant someplace near, don’t wait until you visit Chicago or New York City. Thanks!]

Even though the participants in the activity system in Example (12) were able to compare their cultural practices and to develop a greater understanding of the issues affecting their shopping habits (both of which are indicators of ICC development), the goal of the system (as made evident by the information in the forum) is not connected to the Hispanic cultures, and therefore it was coded as non-Hispanic. Example 18 was selected for inclusion because it provides a clear representation of the process that participants follow in the pursuance of goals that result in the development of ICC, but that are not related to Hispanic cultures.

4.3.3 Section summary

This section discussed the differences observed in the development of activity systems based on the viewing of materials. Comparisons of the sociograms suggest that there were differences in the focus of discussion as made evident in the flow of the conversations in sociograms. The discussions appeared to be more focused in forums for which participants viewed the materials outside of class and had access to more information. Furthermore, there were differences associated with the pursuance of goals, which were determined by access to the number of materials. Overall, in the 8 discussion forums participants tended to pursue
goals that were related to the US culture (non-Hispanic). In the forums for which participants viewed the materials in-class and had access to one country, the difference between Hispanic and non-Hispanic goals was more significant.

4.4 Participants attitudes towards the Intercultura materials

Research question 4 investigated the attitudes of participants towards the Intercultural materials in regard to their perceptions of 1) their overall satisfaction, 2) the relevance of information presented, 3) the structure of video materials, 4) the usefulness of tools, and 5) the quality of the discussion forums. Quantitative and qualitative sources were used to answer this question. The quantitative data were the participants’ ratings of features of the Intercultura materials were recorded in Likert scale items in an exit survey. The qualitative data were the responses of participants to 8 open-ended questions in the exit survey, which were analyzed for content. I present the findings organized in five categories: 1) Overall impression of the Intercultura materials, 2) Relevance of information presented, 3) Structure of video materials, 4) Usefulness of the tools integrated in the Intercultura materials, and 5) Attitudes towards discussion forums. The majority of participants reported positive experiences working with the Intercultura materials and found benefits associated with various features of the materials, such as the availability of transcripts.

4.4.1 Participants’ overall impression of the Intercultura materials and their implementation in the Spanish course

Quantitative results show that the majority of the participants (n=115, 96.51%) reported a positive overall impression of the Intercultura materials and its implementation in the course. These 115 participants responded “excellent,” “good,” or “average” to a question
asking them to give their overall perception of the Intercultura materials. Sixteen participants (13.91%) rated their impression of the materials as excellent. Out of 115\textsuperscript{4} participants who completed the exit survey, only one participant (.08%) rated his/her experience as ‘bad’.

Table 20 summarizes the distribution of ratings by course sections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Sections 1 &amp; 2 (n=30)</th>
<th>Sections 3 &amp; 4 (n=43)</th>
<th>Sections 5 &amp; 6 (n=42)</th>
<th>Total (n=115)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16 (13.91%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>67 (58.26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28 (24.34%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3 (2.60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 (.08%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even though the participants reported a considerably high positive impression of the Intercultura materials, the experiences that participants had were influenced by individual and collaborative interactions with the materials and their implementation in the course.

Research question four asks about the attitudes of participants in regard to multiple components of the materials. To fully understand the benefits and limitations of the Intercultura materials, I next describe more specific areas of the materials to provide a more in-depth analysis of participants’ attitudes as described in comments made to open ended questions.

\textsuperscript{4} There were 116 participants in this study. However, one participant did not complete the numerical (Likert-scale) items in the exit survey. Therefore, the numbers reported in this section correspond to 115 participants. The participant was not eliminated from the study given that he/she contributed to the forum discussions and provided answers to the open-ended items in the exit survey.
4.4.2 Attitudes of participants towards the relevance of information of Intercultura materials

Question 15 in the exit survey asked participants to rate the relevance of information presented in the Intercultura materials for learning about Hispanic cultures. In addition, question 19 asked participants to elaborate on their judgments by explaining why or why not they found the information presented in the Intercultura materials relevant for their learning about Hispanic cultures. In question 15, the majority of participants (n=111, 96.52%) rated the information presented in the Intercultura materials as relevant, by responding. Over half (53.04%) of the participants rated the information as good, and almost twenty percent (19.13%) rated the information as excellent. None of the participants rated the relevance of information as ‘bad,’ and only 3.47%, 4 participants, rated the materials as below average.

Table 21 shows the distribution of ratings by course.

As shown in Table 21, the participants in this study had predominantly positive attitudes toward the relevance of information presented in the Intercultura materials for the learning of Hispanic culture, as demonstrated by their ratings to the relevance of information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Sections 1 &amp; 2 (n=30)</th>
<th>Sections 3 &amp; 4 (n=43)</th>
<th>Sections 5 &amp; 6 (n=42)</th>
<th>Total (n=115)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22 (19.13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>61 (53.04%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28 (24.35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below average</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4 (3.47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M=2.16</td>
<td>M=2.13</td>
<td>M=2.07</td>
<td>M=2.12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD=0.87</td>
<td>SD=0.67</td>
<td>SD=0.74</td>
<td>SD=0.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of the responses of participants to item 19 in the exit survey, an open question asking participants about their rationales for finding the information relevant or not relevant, revealed the emergence of six categories of comments. Table 22 summarizes the comments made by participants in regard to the attitudes they had about the relevance of information of the Intercultura materials.

Table 22. Summary of participants’ (n=115) comments towards relevance of information of the Intercultura materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number of comments</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive attitudes towards the content of materials</td>
<td>General positive statements about the relevance of information</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Yes. The information was interesting and I think that the videos covered things that I would need to know if I were to visit a Hispanic country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicability of information</td>
<td>Statements about possible uses of the information</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Yes, usually the videos dealt with everyday occurrences or important information in order to be a contributing member of society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linking Intercultura contents to course contents</td>
<td>Finding connections between the Intercultural materials with course</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>It was relevant in that it covered different countries and that the topics were aligned with the book material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personally relating to contents</td>
<td>Indicating a personal connection to the contents</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Yes, because it was relatable to my life. I was able to see differences and similarities between my culture and the Hispanic culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making connections</td>
<td>Connecting the contents of Intercultura to other aspects</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Much of the information beneficial, because it showed similarities and differences between Hispanic and “Iowa Culture” (loosely used term) which I find very interesting.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 22 (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finding contents useful for the future</th>
<th>Expressing ideas for future uses of the information</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It currently is not extremely relevant, however in the future I feel that having some idea of the culture will prove very vital as I plan on traveling as part of my job.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The categories of comments show two main positive aspects that participants found beneficial in relation to the information presented in the materials: 1) the potential for use of the information, and 2) the connection of the information to the topics studied in the course. I next discuss these two main categories providing examples of the comments made by participants.

_Potential for use of the information in the Intercultura materials_

One of the goals of the Intercultura materials was to present information that was relevant to day-to-day interactions given that such information was found to be limited in textbook materials, and also given that this type of information has been found to be beneficial in the development of ICC (Sercu, 2010). Some participants in the study came to the realization that the nature of the information was in closer connection to day-to-day interactions, as stated by one of the participants in Example (13):

**Example 13**

_Yes, usually the videos dealt with everyday occurrences or important information in order to be a contributing member of society_ [Reference 4, Sections 5 & 6]

---

5 The section number of the Spanish 202 course identifies the text shown in the examples from which they were taken. The reference number is the number of the example as listed in the coding category in NVivo.
As evident in Example (13) above, participants understood that the information was important for communication exchanges that take place in everyday interactions. Furthermore, participants also noticed that the information could be applicable to future endeavors or (intercultural) communication exchanges, as shown in Example (14):

Example 14

*I think it was relevant, basic information that people should learn about when studying a culture. I thought it to be very helpful if I were ever to travel to that country. Knowing things about the transportation system, hotels, banks, etc, is essential day-to-day information that you should know when learning about a culture [Reference 2, sections 5 & 6].*

The participant in Example (14) was able to connect the relevance of the information in Intercultura with the knowledge of the foreign culture and with the value that this type of information has for successful cultural interactions. In addition, the statement of future applications (e.g., traveling to the foreign country) of this information stated in Example (14) emphasizes the value that this participant gives to the information presented in Intercultura.

Example (14) provides evidence that suggests that the information that participants obtained from the Intercultura materials may have implications in future cultural interactions for these learners. All comments in the category of “future applications” reported intercultural (e.g., in the US and abroad) experiences as possible scenarios for potential use of the information encountered in the Intercultura materials. However, ‘abroad experiences’ was the most common application mentioned in the comments.

Some participants wrote about the option of using the cultural information from Intercultura in future experiences at work. It was interesting to see that learners reported ‘work experiences’ as a potential venue for the applicability of the information obtained in
Intercultura. It is not known what elements specifically prompted this usage of information based on the data collected, but considering the large number of Hispanics in the USA, it can be argued that learners may realize the high probability to interact with Hispanics at the workplace and the value that the information in the Intercultura materials (i.e., knowing about day-to-day interactions) can provide for successful intercultural encounters in this context.

Connecting the cultural information from Intercultura to course contents

The topics of the Intercultura materials were aligned with the topics in the textbook. This thematic alignment became evident to some students, and they perceived this alignment as beneficial. There were 15 comments about the connections of the Intercultura materials to the topics of the course and textbook materials. In Example (15), for instance, we can see how the participant summarizes the approach followed in the Intercultura materials in terms of the topics covered and how these topics were developed.

Example 15

*The information in the videos basically followed along with our class work. Whatever chapter or topic we were on at the time, the videos would cover the same material*

[Reference 6, Sections 5 & 6]

The connection that the learner in Example (15) made provides evidence of the awareness that learners possess in regard to the topics covered in class and the Intercultura materials, but most importantly, it shows the importance that this connection may have for learners. When the topics of texts used for elicitation and development of ICC are not thematically aligned with the course contents learners may not feel connected to such texts.
Results gathered about participants’ views about the relevance of information from both quantitative and qualitative sources suggest that providing learners with materials that are in close connection to the topics they are studying promotes positive views of the materials and facilitates the making of connections between the topics covered in class and those covered in materials used for the promotion of ICC development.

4.4.3 Attitudes of participants towards the structure of Intercultura video materials

Question 14 in the exit survey asked participants to rate their impressions on the structure of the materials. Results show that the majority of participants (76%) indicate that they thought the structure was “excellent” or “good.” There were no participants who graded the structure as bad (n=0). Table 23 summarizes participants’ ratings for the structure of the Intercultural materials.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Sections 1 &amp; 2 (n=30)</th>
<th>Sections 3 &amp; 4 (n=43)</th>
<th>Sections 5 &amp; 6 (n=42)</th>
<th>Total (n=115)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26 (22.60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>62 (53.91%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21 (18.26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below average</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6 (5.21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to Question 17 in the exit survey, participants explained their reasons for their ratings about the structure. Analysis of their responses confirmed that the majority of participants had positive attitudes towards the structure of materials. There were 80 comments made by participants that show positive attitudes, whereas only 13 comments were
negative. Table 24 summarizes the comments made by participants about the structure of Intercultura video materials.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of comments</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive attitudes towards structure of materials</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>You hear how Hispanics speak directly from their mouths instead of through formal forms of writing or pre-written dialogues. It is really helpful to learn about the Spanish culture in this way because hearing someone answer the questions is like you asking them the question and they are responding to you with an authentic answer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral attitudes towards materials</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>It was an interesting approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation for accents</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>I loved being able to listen to them answering questions. This is because they spoke in their dialect and their accent. Both of these change depending on which country you are in and sometimes it gets hard to distinguish what they are trying to say. Being exposed to the different accents now help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed attitudes towards materials</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>I thought that this was a good idea and I sometimes learned things from it, but I also felt that the Hispanics interviewed often gave responses that didn't really help me to recognize differences between my culture and theirs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative attitudes towards structure of materials</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>The speaking was generally too fast to process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resembled authentic contexts</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>I liked it; it made the material more real rather than some scripted movie or tv show. It applied to real world stuff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure facilitated learning</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>I thought it was helpful because not only did we get to learn about the culture but we also were able to work on our comprehension skills as well while we listened to the speaker.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A significant number of comments (n=15) were found for mixed attitudes. As it can be seen in the example in Table 21 for the category of mixed attitudes, some participants had a positive attitude towards the structure of the materials, but they felt that the responses given by the informants in the Intercultura materials did not assist them in finding differences between the Hispanic cultures and their own.

Three categories of comments were identified based on the analysis of the responses: 1) the video materials assisted learners to develop appreciation for accents, 2) the video materials resembled authentic contexts, and 3) the structure videos facilitated learning. Next, I discuss these three categories in detail and provide examples of comments made by participants.

The video materials assisted learners to develop appreciation for accents

There were 11 comments made by participants that stated that the video materials assisted them to notice the use of different dialects and develop appreciation for different accents of Spanish. The Intercultura materials integrated cultural information of four Hispanic countries (Argentina, Spain, Colombia, Chile) presented by native Spanish speakers from those countries. The informants spoke in their native dialects, which provided learners with a variety of accents and vocabulary in addition to the differences in responses and cultural information provided. Participants in the study noticed the differences in dialects, and overall they perceived these differences as a positive component of the materials because they allowed for the participants to become familiar with regional variations of Spanish, as stated in Example (16).
Example 16

*I enjoyed hearing from individuals from different Spanish-speaking countries so I could become familiar with the different dialects and accents.* [Reference 1, Sections 1 & 2]

Even though there were positive comments made about the use of different accents and the use of ‘normal’ speed when talking by informants in the video materials, a small number (n=3) of participants reported that they felt challenged by the structure of the video materials considering that the speed when speaking and the variation in vocabulary made it difficult for some learners to completely understand the contents of the materials, as explained in Example (17).

Example 17

*It was more difficult than traditional ways of learning because the Hispanic speakers spoke so fast. Sometimes they would use slang words that I didn’t know and it made it difficult to understand.* [Reference 1, Sections 5 & 6]

*The structure of Intercultura video materials resembled authentic contexts*

Another category of participants’ comments shows that the structure of Intercultura video materials provided them with a format similar to what they would experience in a real-life situation. This finding suggests that the use of an interview-like format in the Intercultura materials, and all the connotations that the use of this format conveys (e.g., casual talk, faster speed, pausing, redundancy), assisted learners in becoming aware of the value of unscripted materials. The comments made by participants in this category stated that they appreciated the integration of unscripted materials that resembled conversations in the real world. Participants compared their experiences interacting with the Intercultura materials to those that they may find in the real world, as we can see in Example (18).
Example 18

*It prepared me for what I should expect in the real world.* [Reference 4, Sections 5 & 6]

*This format allows for students to get real-life experiences from citizens of the specific place to get cultural information.* [Reference 6, Sections 5 & 6]

The structure of Intercultura video materials facilitated learning

Twelve comments made by participants in regard to the structure of the Intercultural video materials show that participants conceived of the materials as a tool that assisted them to not only learn about culture, but also to work on their listening comprehension skills and increase their opportunities to learn more vocabulary. This finding suggests that the use of video materials may have provided additional opportunities to further develop listening skills. Furthermore, the finding suggests that it may be that there are participants who prefer to use video materials for the learning of culture, as seen in Example (19).

Example 19

*It helped me learn a lot of helpful information, rather than just having to read through it on my own.* [Reference 1, Section 3 & 4]

The presence of different dialects exposed participants to a wide range of linguistic forms. The informants in the Intercultura materials not only offered a personal and distinct point of view about the cultural topics, but they also offered different linguistic forms, some of which represented new vocabulary items for participants. Participants saw the use of new vocabulary as a feature in the Intercultura materials that facilitated their learning. In Example (20), we can see how participants considered the inclusion of new vocabulary as a positive aspect.
Example 20

*I think that learning from this style helped teach new vocabulary and make it easier to understand while still being in context.* [Reference 1, Section 5 & 6]

The participant in Example (20) stated that comprehension of new vocabulary was facilitated by the context. It is important to note that the Intercultura materials were thematically aligned with the contents of the textbook. Therefore, the structure of the Intercultura materials may have facilitated the understanding of new vocabulary given that participants were already familiar with the topic and consequently new vocabulary was easier to identify and to be comprehended.

4.4.4 Tools of the Intercultura materials that participants found useful

The Intercultural materials integrated multiple tools: comprehension quizzes, play functions, transcriptions, and a search function. Participants took advantage of these tools and reported benefits associated with their use. Question 25, an open-ended question in the exit survey, asked participants to report what tools (i.e., transcripts, navigation buttons, search function, quiz) they found to be useful for them and why they found them useful. Analysis of responses showed that the majority of participants (n=62) found the transcriptions of videos to be very helpful, as demonstrated by the number of comments for this category as seen in Table 25. In addition to transcripts, a large number of participants (n=19) reported benefits associated with comprehension quizzes.
### Table 25. Summary of comments about usefulness of tools in the Intercultura video materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of comments</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transcripts</strong></td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Transcripts definitely! It was a backup if I didn't catch what the speaker said.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comprehension quizzes</strong></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>The most useful tool was the quiz portion of Intercultura because it helped me better understand the videos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Play functions</strong></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>The navigation button was VERY useful because it allowed me to go back and re-watch the videos so I can better understand the information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External tools</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Yes I did because I could review it several times at my own pace. Also, if I needed to look up a word in my dictionary I could pause the video, search the word, and then continue so that I could better understand what was being said.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Search function</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>The search function helped to find things much faster.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The categories with the smaller number of comments in Table 25 correspond to the benefits of play functions (n=12), external tools (n=6), and the search function (n=5).

Participants found the play options available in the interface to be useful because they could pause the video to look up words they needed to learn or rewind the video to review the material. These two benefits reported by participants are very important because they show that there are actions that learners want to engage in when viewing materials, which may not be possible in the context of the foreign language classroom in which video materials for the learning of culture are typically shown ‘as a class’.

There were many benefits associated with the use of transcripts and comprehension quizzes. These categories had the highest number of references in relation to the benefits of tools used and are discussed in two separate sections that follow.
**Benefits of transcripts in Intercultura video materials**

In the Intercultura materials, participants listened to four different speakers, each with a different accent and dialect. Providing learners with transcriptions of the videos proved to be a beneficial resource that participants could rely on when needed. As stated in the example for the category of transcripts in Table 25, participants used the transcripts as “a backup” if they “didn’t catch what the speaker said”. More than half of participants (n=62, 53.9%) provided a statement about the benefits they encountered from the availability of transcripts. In addition to using the transcripts as a resource to clarify misunderstandings, some participants, as the statements in Example (21) show, use this resource to facilitate the understanding of different accents, new vocabulary, and spelling.

Example 21

*I found the transcripts the most helpful. Some of the people speaking had very strong accents, and when I couldn't understand what they were saying I could always just look at the transcript to better understand the sentence.* [Reference 4, Sections 5 & 6]

*I found the transcripts the most useful. It helped me understand what was being said and I was able to learn new vocabulary, and learn how words were spelled.* [Reference 15, Sections 3 & 4]

It is important to consider that similar to the experiences reported by participants in this study, learners in the foreign language classroom can have similar experiences in regard to the challenges imposed by the exposure to different or new accents. Providing learners with a resource that they can utilize to overcome this challenge could be of great benefit for learners, as participants reported in this study.
**Benefits of comprehension quizzes in Intercultura video materials**

Question 16 in the exit survey asked participants to rate the comprehension quizzes integrated in the Intercultura materials. The majority of students (n=75, 65.21%) rated the comprehension quizzes very high (as excellent or good). Only fewer than 2 per cent (n=2, 1.73%) of participants rated their experience as bad. Table 26 provides a summary of the distribution of ratings.

**Table 26. Summary of ratings for comprehension quizzes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Sections 1 &amp; 2 (n=30)</th>
<th>Sections 3 &amp; 4 (n=43)</th>
<th>Sections 5 &amp; 6 (n=42)</th>
<th>Total (n=115)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8 (6.95%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>67 (58.26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30 (26.08%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below average</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7 (6.08%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (1.73%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

M=2.6          
SD=0.96

M=2.37          
SD=0.72

M=2.16          
SD=0.65

M=2.35          
SD=0.78

Question 25 in the exit survey asked participants to provide comments about the tools they found most useful. Some comments for this question show that participants were able to focus on specific information and to identify information that was relevant in the contents covered in the materials. In Example (22), for instance, we see how this participant was able to come to the realization of the function of the quizzes, and reported a positive experience with this tool.

**Example 22**

*I found the quiz most useful because it did a good job in testing our understanding on a specific subject. This allows us to know what we need to work on and what we learned from the videos.* [Reference 7, Sections 5 & 6]
Other comments about the benefits of comprehension quizzes described how the sequencing of the questions (e.g., a question appearing after a shot clip) helped participants in the understanding of the materials. A main difference between the quizzes in the Intercultura materials and comprehension quizzes in video materials that accompany textbooks is the sequencing of the presentation of questions. In the Intercultura materials, the comprehension quizzes were integrated in the video, presenting learners with a question after each short video clip. On the other hand, the majority of assessment materials that accompany textbooks provide a comprehension quiz at the end of the video segment. Traditionally, in the foreign language classroom learners complete a pre, while, and post-viewing activity: learners briefly talk about the topic of the video, watch the video, and respond to comprehension questions. This sequencing contrasts with the format of the quizzes in the Intercultura materials. The sequencing of the comprehension quizzes may have influenced the benefits reported by participants in this study in regard to the comprehension quizzes.

4.4.5 Attitudes of participants towards discussion forums integrated in the Intercultura materials

Question 12 in the exit survey asked participants to rate the discussion forums integrated in the Intercultural materials. Results show that participants had a positive attitude towards the discussion forums, 82.59% rated their experiences highly. However, a significant number (n=20, 17.38%) rated their experiences as below average or bad. Table 27 provides a summary of the distribution of ratings of the discussion forums made by participants.
Table 27. Summary of distribution of ratings for discussion forum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Sections 1 &amp; 2 (n=30)</th>
<th>Sections 3 &amp; 4 (n=43)</th>
<th>Sections 5 &amp; 6 (n=42)</th>
<th>Total (n=115)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3 (2.60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above average</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>43 (37.39%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>49 (42.60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below average</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14 (12.17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6 (5.21%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

M=3 SD=0.98    M=2.93 SD=0.96    M=2.52 SD=0.63    M=2.80 SD=0.88

Question 24 in the exit survey asked students to explain their ratings for the forums based on the challenges they experienced working on the discussion forums and the usefulness of the questions that were included to guide the discussions. The responses of participants were coded and five categories of comments were identified. Table 28 shows the categories identified and the distribution of comments made by participants.

Table 28. Summary of comments made by participants about discussion forums

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of references</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benefits of forum questions</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>I liked having the guiding questions. They kept me on track and helped me take more away from the Interculatura assignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive comments about forums</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>The discussions were a good way to talk to classmates on their opinions on the videos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed opinions about forums</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>It was good to share thoughts, but it was a lot of work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantages of forum questions</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>They were often long and instead of having a conversation with other students I felt pressure to be sure to cover all necessary parts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative comments about forums</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>I thought the writing board was not the best way to have a discussion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interestingly, in comments made by participants for their explanations of their perceptions of the discussion forums, we can observe a similar pattern to the numerical data obtained from the ratings shown in Table 27: Participants found benefits associated with the forums (e.g., questions, forum), but also had negative experiences while working on this task.

As shown in Example (23), part of the benefits that some participants reported were finding the use of discussion questions helpful since the questions guided the discussion and provided a good starting point for the discussion.

Example 23

*The questions are nice to have so we know what kind of information the discussion should be about.* [Reference 13, Sections 5 & 6]

*I liked having the questions so that I knew what to write about and could interact with other students easily.* [Reference 3, Sections 1 & 2]

The disadvantages of discussion questions reported by participants expressed an opposite view of the benefits: participants found the questions to be a limitation for their writing. Some participants felt pressured to provide a certain amount of words needed for a grade. As part of the guidelines for posting (see Appendix C), participants were advised to post a minimum of 200 words in their original entry. This requirement made some participants feel pressured for writing and consequently had a negative impact on their perceptions of the questions, as it can be observed in Example (24).

Example 24

*It was hard to come up with all of the words when the questions were pretty specific. Often times I would run out of things to say and feel like I was putting a lot of unnecessary words to get my correct amount.* [Reference 1, Sections 3 & 4]

The comments provided by participants in relation to the overall experience of the forums were predominantly negative. There were 28 negative comments and 13 positive.
Upon examination of the comments it was noted that this difference was due to the particular goals of students in regard to the learning of the language. For example, in Example (25), the participant provides a strong argument about her reasons for suggesting for the forums to continue to be included as part of the curriculum. Her experiences were positive, and she realized the benefits that such tasks can have on her learning. This participant states that the forums provided her with an opportunity to practice her writing skills in an informal setting but with an authentic purpose. In contrast, other participants conceived of the forums as ‘busy work’. As it can be seen in Example (26), one participant went further to state that he limited his participation to getting credit for completion.

Example 25

*I enjoyed the discussion forums a lot! The guided questions were extremely helpful. It was nice to be able to read what other classmates thought, felt, or had learned. Also, we could be free just to practice writing in Spanish without the fear of being graded as if we were writing an essay. I would say this should definitely continue in the curriculum.* [Reference 4, Sections 5 & 6]

Example 26

*The Forums were very time consuming and not always the most enjoyable things to do.* [Reference 9, Sections 3 & 4]

*Just annoying tedious work. I just wrote in the forum to get the points, I really didn't use it for anything more.* [Reference 10, Sections 3 & 4]

There were other factors that impacted the negative attitudes that some participants had for the forums. In Example (27), we can observe how this participant did not have a positive experience due to the lack of responses she received from her peers in the discussion. In her opinion, the use of online forums was not an effective way to conduct the discussion, and she recommended having the discussions as part of an in-class activity.
Example 27

I thought the writing board was not the best way to have a discussion. Often I would ask someone a question and they would not respond. It would have been better to have an in-class discussion or have a partner who you discussed with instead.

[Reference 1, Sections 5 & 6]

4.4.6 Section summary

This section has discussed the attitudes and perceptions that learners had towards the Intercultura materials. Quantitative data was used to provide a summary of the perceptions and judgments of participants, and qualitative data was used to explain the quantitative results. Through both the quantitative and qualitative data, the participants reported overall positive attitudes towards the materials and their various features, but variation was also apparent in regard to the perceptions of various features of the materials. Participants reported benefits associated with the inclusion of help options such as transcripts, play buttons, and comprehension quizzes. However, there were some negative attitudes reported in connection to the completion of the discussion forums. The results are useful for informing of the specific features of materials for the learning of culture that learners find useful and beneficial for their learning.

4.5 Participants attitudes about the viewing of materials: in-class and out-of-class

Question 5 studied the attitudes of participants towards the delivery preference for viewing materials: in-class and out-of-class viewing. Similar to research question 4, question 5 was addressed through the use of a mixed method approach that included quantitative and qualitative data sources. Participants were asked in the exit survey about their preferences for the location for viewing the materials. Participants first indicated which form of delivery they preferred, and then they explained their preferences in an open-ended question included in
the exit survey. The participants should have been able to make an informed judgment about their preferences because all of them had experienced both in-class and out-of-class viewing of the materials. The in-class viewing was implemented to simulate traditional approaches for the teaching of culture in the foreign language classroom. Out-of-class viewing was implemented to provide learners with a platform for a more individualized interaction with the materials.

Overall, participants reported to have a preference for viewing materials outside of class. However, they identified benefits with both locations for viewing. This section reports overall preferences of participants for viewing of materials using the quantitative data collected in the exit survey. In this section, I also present quantitative data that shows the distribution of the number of comments made about the viewing of materials in open-ended questions in the exit survey. Next, I discuss participants’ comments about their experiences with in-class and out-of-class viewing of materials based on their responses to the open-ended questions. Finally, I discuss comments participants made about how they chose materials in out-of-class viewing.

4.5.1 Overall preferences for viewing of materials

Question 18a in the exit survey asked participants to indicate which location of viewing the Intercultura materials they preferred -in or out-of-class. Results show that the majority of students (n=77, 66.95%) preferred to view the materials outside of class. Table 29 summarizes participants’ preferences for viewing of the Intercultura materials divided by course. As indicated in Chapter 3, on the description of the participants, there were three
instructors of Spanish 202. Table 29 shows the two sections taught by each instructor. Each instructor had one webCT course.

Table 29. Delivery preferences of three groups of Spanish 202 participants (n=115) for viewing of the Intercultura materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Delivery preference</th>
<th>Sections 1 &amp; 2 (n=30)</th>
<th>Sections 3 &amp; 4 (n=43)</th>
<th>Sections 5 &amp; 6 (n=42)</th>
<th>Total (115)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-class</td>
<td>10 (33.3%)</td>
<td>20 (46.5%)</td>
<td>8 (19%)</td>
<td>38 (33.04%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-of-class</td>
<td>20 (66.6%)</td>
<td>23 (53.4%)</td>
<td>34 (81%)</td>
<td>77 (66.95%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questions 18 and 18b in the exit survey asked participants to provide an explanation of their preferences for the viewing of the Intercultura materials. Analysis of the responses to open ended questions considered participants’ preferences for their delivery preference, in or out-of-class. Table 30 displays the total number of comments made by participants organized by their preference of delivery.

Table 30. Summary of distribution of comments made by participants (n=115) about viewing of materials organized by delivery preference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitudes</th>
<th>Number of comments made by participants who prefer in-class viewing</th>
<th>Number of comments made by participants who prefer out-of-class viewing</th>
<th>Total number of comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>About in-class viewing of materials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About out-of-class viewing of materials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In terms of positive attitudes reported by participants, it can be noted that even though the majority of participants preferred viewing the materials out-of-class, for both categories (in and out-of-class) there were participants from the opposite preference for delivery who found benefits for the delivery preference that was not their preferred choice. In this way, for example, 13 participants, who preferred out-of-class viewing expressed (i.e., provided comments showing positive attitudes) positive attitudes for in-class viewing. Similarly, 9 participants who preferred in-class viewing expressed positive attitudes towards out-of-class viewing. This tendency was also observed for negative attitudes. However, a drastic difference can be observed in the data in the number of participants who preferred in-class viewing: no participant expressed a negative attitude towards in-class viewing.

4.5.2 Participants comments about in-class viewing of Intercultura materials

Question 18b asked participants to explain their preferences for viewing materials in-class. Overall 46 comments participants made indicated positive aspects of viewing the materials in class such as that participants found the viewing of materials in-class as an opportunity to challenge them. As part of the benefits for in-class viewing, 13 comments provided examples of the challenges participants encountered when viewing the materials in-class. In Example (28) we can see how the comment made by this participant indicates that a benefit of viewing the materials in-class was the cognitive demands that viewing the materials in class presented. In his view, the participant sees the pressure posed by the viewing of the materials twice as a mechanism that requires him to listen more closely. Some participants perceived this experience as a benefit for viewing the materials in-class.
Example 28

*I found the in-class viewings more beneficial because I would be challenged to only view it twice and therefore I listened more intently to get the information I needed in those two views.* [Reference 4, Sections 5 & 6]

However, not all participants shared the views expressed in Example (28). A substantial number (30) of comments expressed negative attitudes towards in-class viewing, explaining that it was precisely the pressure of viewing the materials twice that made them not to prefer in-class viewing. As expressed in the comments in Example (29), some participants felt that the in-class viewing represented a challenge that was rigid and did not allow them to be better prepared nor give them opportunities to revisit areas they felt they needed to review.

Example 29

*I liked the work at your own pace because if i wanted to I could rewatch the videos and try to slowly figure out my problems where as with the in class video...its pretty much a one shot deal where we could only watch once and had to answer the questions based from that.* [Reference 18, Sections 1 & 2]

Yes but I felt a little more pressured to understand everything in class. Sometimes when I was able to review at home I felt more comfortable going back and reviewing what I missed or didn't understand. In class we went really fast or I didn't feel comfortable asking questions. [Reference 7, Sections 3 & 4]

*I didn't like it as much as out-of-class. It was more rigid and occasionally I was unprepared and caught off guard.* [Reference 7, Sections 5 & 6]

For the most part, the comments that participants expressed as negative attitudes towards in-class viewing were characterized by the time constraints participants experienced in their interactions with the materials during in-class viewing. In comments such as those included in Example (30), participants reported feeling rushed and pushed during in-class viewing and according to them, this approach was not conducive to learning and processing...
the material. In Example (30) we can see that one of the participants went further to express his recommendation for the materials to be completed out-of-class in the future.

Example 30

*You could work at your own pace outside of class, whereas it seemed like we would always be pushed to finish as fast as we could in class. Taking one's time on any assessment proves to be more useful than being pushed around to just hurry up and complete something.* [Reference 1, Sections 1 & 2]

*I didn't like doing Intercultura in class. I felt as though it went too fast and I couldn't catch up to answers the questions and learn the material. I would definitely recommend doing them out of class. It is much more beneficial.* [Reference 4, Sections 5 & 6]

The comments participants provided in response to in-class viewing preferences suggest that there seems to be a connection between the challenges raised by the controlled factors (e.g., number of times for viewing materials) and challenges presented in in-class viewing which have an impact in the judgments of participants in terms of preferences. It is important to consider that the majority of the students in this study had a preference for out-of-class viewing, and the smaller group of participants who preferred in-class viewing appeared to conceive as beneficial the challenges and demands encountered while viewing the materials in class.

4.5.2 Participants comments about out-of-class viewing of Intercultura materials

In response to Question 18 in the exit survey, participants expressed their views about the benefits associated with out-of-class viewing. Participants reported two main benefits in viewing materials out of class that were associated with the interface of the materials: 1) the opportunity to manage their own learning since they had the ability to control the playing of video materials, and 2) the ability to review materials. There were 36 (31.6% of participants)
comments from participants discussing the opportunity to manage their own time, and 21
(18.2% of participants) comments about the ability to review materials. In a smaller number
(n=3) than these two main categories, participants reported that out of class viewing provided
them with opportunities for reflection.

The inclusion of play buttons on the interface for the out-of-class materials allowed
participants to have control over the display of the materials, which in turn allowed
participants to manage their own learning by controlling the pacing of materials. As
explained in Example (31), participants could watch the videos at their own pace and review
materials they thought they needed to review.

Example 31

*I liked working at my own pace because I could go back and watch the videos as many times as I wanted to in order to understand better.* [Reference 1, Sections 1 & 2]

The interface of the Intercultura materials not only allowed for self-pacing, but it was
also intended to promote repetition and an understanding of the materials. Participants
reported as a benefit the ability to review materials as indicated in the statements in Example
(32).

Example 32

*Yes, it was nice to be able to listen as many times as I wanted, and I believe I gained a more complete understanding of what was said in each clip.* [Reference 1, Sections 5 & 6]

*I think I liked working outside of class more because I could watch the videos as many times as I needed.* [Reference 1, Sections 1 & 2]

Participants commented that having the ability to review materials increased their
opportunities to understand the materials better. Considering that participants had access to
materials from four countries in out-of-class viewing, it is understandable that with the exposure to different accents and dialects participants felt the need to review materials.

4.5.3 Participants’ ability to choose their own materials in out-of-class viewing

As part of the method implemented for the viewing of materials online, and in an effort to ensure that participants had access to information from different Hispanic countries (Argentina, Spain, Chile, Colombia), participants were assigned a particular country for the viewing of out-of-class materials. For Question 22 in the exit survey participants explained their preferences in regard to the assignment of videos, whether they liked materials to be assigned, or if they would prefer to choose their own materials. Results indicate that the majority of participants (n=51, 44.3%) preferred having the ability to choose their own videos, whereas a slightly lower number (n=37, 32%) liked having materials assigned to them. Almost 15 per cent of participants (n=17, 14.7%) indicated neutral stands for the assignment of videos. In the comments for neutral stand participants’ wrote comments such as ‘no particular preference for either method’. Table 31 summarizes the distribution of preferences for assignment of videos.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preferences</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Favoring assignment of videos</td>
<td>37 (32%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having the ability to choose videos</td>
<td>51 (44.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed preferences for assignment of videos</td>
<td>4 (3.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral about assignment of videos</td>
<td>17 (14.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference for watching one country</td>
<td>5 (4.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watching one video with mix countries</td>
<td>1 (0.8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The participants who preferred assignment of videos stated that they liked this method since it gave them the opportunity to be exposed to different countries, as can be seen in Example (33).

Example 33

*It's probably better if we are assigned because then it can be assured that everyone is exposed to each country rather than just doing the same one every time.* [Reference 2, Sections 5 & 6]

One participant raised an interesting point regarding the assignment of videos, as stated in Example (34); if given the opportunity to choose videos, participants may base their decisions on the level of difficulty that the materials have for them for understanding the particular dialects (and accents) of speakers. In the case of the participant in Example (34), she reported that she would not select materials from Spain since she felt that for her it was difficult understanding this accent.

Example 34

*Assigning was good, otherwise I probably wouldn't have watched any videos from Spain, since I find Spanish accents the most difficult to understand.* [Reference 5, Sections 5 & 6]

Participants who reported having a preference for choosing their own materials presented interesting arguments for their preference. As it can be noted in the statements in Example (35), participants felt that by choosing their own materials they would have better control towards directing their own learning. In addition, participants had personal reasons (e.g., traveling to the preferred Hispanic country) for wanting to work on one particular country of their choosing.
Example 35

I would prefer to choose, there are certain countries I am more interested in. [Reference 1, Sections 1 & 2]

I think it would be better if you got to choose which ones to watch. For example, I am going to Spain this summer, so I really wanted to watch the Spain ones, but I was assigned Argentina. I think it would better if you could choose. [Reference 2, Sections 1 & 2]

I would have preferred to choose my own rather than being told which was to watch because I would have picked a different country and I would have had more flexibility in directing my own learning. [Reference 15, Sections 5 & 6]

The arguments presented by the participants for choosing their own materials are valid considering that the choosing of particular countries would benefit the particular goals that they have for the learning of the culture of a specific country.

4.5.4 Section summary

In this section I have discussed results from quantitative and qualitative data sources about attitudes participants had towards the method for the viewing of Intercultura materials: in-class and out-of-class viewing. Overall, participants reported to have a preference for viewing materials outside of class. However, there were benefits associated with both locations for viewing. Participants found that the challenge of having two opportunities to view the materials in class was a factor that made them listen more carefully and pay more attention. On the other hand, participants found that viewing the materials outside of class allowed them to control the viewing to fit the pace for their learning and reviewing of information. Personal interests such as preferring a certain accent or future travel plans also played a role in the preferences of participants for choosing certain materials.
Chapter 5. Conclusions

In this study I proposed and investigated an innovative approach for teaching culture in the context of the foreign language classroom. Using an activity theoretical perspective (Wells, 2002), I examined the effects that the approach had on the learners’ development of ICC (Byram, 1997) as one aspect of their Spanish learning in a second-year university class. The investigation focused on the roles that learners took and the tools used in the discussion of cultural information, and the relationship of the Intercultura materials with participants’ ICC development as made evident by the exhibition of the four dimensions of ICC (Byram, 1997). In addition, the perceptions of, attitudes towards, and preferences for viewing and use of the Intercultura materials were investigated.

In this chapter, I first summarize main findings of the study. Then, I discuss the pedagogical implications of the results obtained. Next, I address the limitations of the study explaining how methodological considerations affected the limitations of the study. In the next section, directions for future research suggests areas for further study of the topic of ICC development and the teaching of culture with consideration of the limitations faced in this study. Finally, I provide general conclusions of the study at the end of the chapter.

5.1 Summary of main findings

Important findings resulted from investigating each of the five research questions. First, the varying roles taken by participants in the discussion of cultural information were identified and some evidence suggested the factors that affected role-taking. The tools used by participants (i.e., knowledge about foreign cultures and one’s own) and the way
participants engaged in discussions assisted in the identification of four roles: leader, apprentice, finalizer, and secluded poster. The results obtained from research question one showed that participants who had a stronger connection to the target culture, or to a culture that differed from the mainstream US culture (i.e., as it was the case of first and second generation of immigrants, and students who had experiences abroad), were able to take on the role of leaders and assist others in the development of a greater understanding of the cultural information presented to them, and consequently developed ICC.

Second, analysis of the four dimensions of ICC (Byram, 1997) in eight discussion forums revealed that development occurred for the dimension of interpreting and relating. The number of instances for the dimension of interpreting and relating differed between the forums for which participants viewed materials in and out-of-class. Instances of interpreting and relating increased when participants viewed the materials out of class. Differences in the number of instances for the dimension of interpreting and relating were connected to two components of the Intercultura materials: 1) use of what/how questions, and 2) method for viewing of materials (in and out-of-class). What/how questions and access to a greater number of materials allowed participants to establish differences and similarities between their culture and the practices in the foreign cultures.

Third, findings indicated differences in the development of activity systems that were observed based on the viewing of the materials in and out-of-class. Results of the examination of activity systems revealed that various factors affected the interactions and goals of participants. In the discussion forums for which participants had access to information from four Hispanic countries that were viewed outside of class, participants interacted more actively focusing on specific goals for the interpretation of cultural
information. However, in discussion forums where participants viewed materials for one country in class, participants pursued more goals that seemed to affect and disperse the focus of the discussion. In in-class viewing of materials participants pursued goals that were more in connection with cultural practices in the US. Nonetheless, these goals assisted them to become aware of their own culture and to develop a greater understanding of the Hispanic cultures.

Fourth, findings allowed for conclusions to be drawn about the perceptions that participants had about the Intercultura materials, and the features that they encountered to be beneficial. Overall, the participants’ impression of the Intercultura materials was very positive, with a high number (n=115, 96.51%) rating the materials as “excellent” or “above average.” Participants found benefits associated with particular features of the interface, such as the use of transcripts and the play functions. Participants indicated that these features allowed them to pace the materials to suit their learning styles and to attend to their level of proficiency. The inclusion of different dialects and accents of Spanish was viewed positively by participants. Participants developed awareness of dialectical variations of Spanish and expressed interest in learning more about the vocabulary of the four countries represented.

Finally, the majority of participants (n=77, 66.95%) preferred the viewing of materials outside of class. Participants found that viewing the materials outside of class allowed them to control the viewing to fit the pace for their learning and reviewing of information. Participants also offered valid reasons for preferring to choose their own materials. Personal connections with a particular country such as an interest to study abroad in that country or having family connections were listed as reasons for having a preference to choose specific countries for the learning of culture.
5.2 Pedagogical implications

The findings uncovered in this dissertation revealed seven important implications for the teaching of culture, and in particular for the development of ICC in the context of the foreign language classroom.

The first implication is that the backgrounds of learners should be taken into consideration when planning activities that aim at the discussion and interpretation of cultural information for the development of ICC. Results from this study showed that learners who possess a higher knowledge about foreign cultures took on the role of leaders and assisted others in the interpretation and understanding of cultural information. Learners who possessed cultural knowledge of a culture different from the mainstream culture (e.g., US culture) were able to engage other learners in the discovery of cultural practices that are more in connection with daily interactions and practices in the target culture. Therefore, when planning group or class interactions, instructors should consider grouping learners in consideration of the potential advantages that more culturally skilled learners can bring so that instructors increase the opportunities for learners to engage in meaningful and more beneficial interactions that are conducive to ICC development. Instructors should evidently make an effort to learn more about the cultural background of students considering the influence that these have on the development of ICC.

Another implication of the findings of this study is that task type in teaching ICC should be explicitly considered so that learners can make cultural interpretations from their own culture through comparisons, descriptions, and noticing cultural differences. In this study it was found that the inclusion of what/how questions (Belz, 2003) in discussion forums allowed learners to draw upon knowledge of their own culture in the interpretation of
cultural information of the target culture. In this way, learners were able to develop an awareness of the factors affecting the cultural products and practices of the foreign culture and of their own.

Course designers and materials developers should take into consideration the inclusion of spaces for the discussion of cultural practices. In this study it was found that allowing learners the opportunity to interact with others in online discussion forums promoted opportunities for the interpretation of materials from the point of view of the learners’ own culture. Results of the analysis of participants’ interactions in discussion forums showed that participants were not only able to compare the cultural practices of the target culture with their own, but they also compared them with the practices of their peers. In turn, the comparisons participants made resulted in a deep and comprehensive understanding of the cultural practices of the foreign culture and their own. Traditional in-class discussions may not provide learners with opportunities for comparisons and sharing of information that online discussion forums afforded.

The challenges posed by the variety of dialects of Spanish should be taken into consideration when developing materials for the development of ICC. Results from this study showed that participants experienced benefits and difficulties associated with the presence of multiple dialects of Spanish. Some participants reported benefits from the exposure to different dialects given that this provided them with opportunities both to practice their listening skills in a controlled environment and to learn different vocabulary associated with the dialects. Some reported challenges associated with the dialects considering that listening to new dialects is difficult for some participants. Materials developers should weigh the benefits associated with the presence of a variety of accents and consider the implementation
of help tools (e.g., subtitles, transcriptions) to better assist learners who experience challenges and difficulties with the presence of different dialects and accents. In the case of the Intercultura materials, for instance, transcripts were integrated for on-demand access. In this study, the majority of participants (n=62, 54%) found the availability of transcriptions to be an extremely helpful tool.

The assessment tools used in the teaching of culture should take into account the division and pacing of information to increase the ability of learners to interpret the cultural information presented in materials for the teaching of culture. In terms of assessment tools, the Intercultura materials presented learners with comprehension quizzes that were divided up and distributed throughout the materials (i.e., video activities). This sequencing of comprehension checks facilitated the understanding of the materials. The majority of participants (76%) had a positive attitude towards the structure of the materials and reported benefits associated with the division and pacing of the information and the format of the comprehension quizzes (i.e., favoring questions right after each short video clip). The parsing and sequencing of comprehension checks should be taken into account in the development of materials considering that in everyday interactions communication takes place over the sharing of pieces of information, as opposed to long discourses. It is important to consider that when integrating materials for the teaching of culture, the goal of the task should be the comprehension of cultural information. It may be the case that other skills such as listening comprehension can be integrated. However, when the goal is to assist learners in the development of ICC and learning about culture, consideration of the effect that the challenges imposed by the high cognitive demands for processing big pieces of information (i.e., as it may be the case when listening to long video recordings) should take precedence so
that the challenges can be cautiously diminished. There is, therefore, a need to consider the division and pacing of information in assessment tools for the purpose of facilitating comprehension of content and information when the assessment tools are included to assist learners to develop ICC.

Whether materials for the teaching of culture are viewed in or out of class should be decided based on the intended goals of instruction and with consideration of the learners’ language proficiency. Participants in this study offered valuable insights about the factors that affect learners’ preferences for viewing of materials, and these can help language teachers to better understand the reasons behind their preferences. For example, some participants felt that with the exposure to different accents and vocabulary, it was more beneficial to have the opportunity to individually interact with the materials (e.g., pausing, re-watching, reviewing) so that they could understand the content better and consequently be able to interpret the cultural information. The findings in this study raise questions concerning traditional approaches for viewing of cultural materials as a whole group in the foreign language classroom. As some participants stated, viewing the materials as a class brings pressure, challenges learners, and interferes with their ability to comprehend the materials in their entirety. Some learners may favor these factors, but others may feel that their opportunities for learning are decreased by these factors.

CALL and commercially available products such as those that accompany textbooks for the teaching of culture should allow learners to choose cultural materials from countries they are interested in so that they can pursue their own goals for the learning of culture. The majority of participants (n=77, 66.95%) in this study reported a preference for choosing their own materials that would fit their personal learning goals. As Chapelle (2001) suggests,
CALL materials should allow for the tailoring of activities to fit the learner (i.e., learner fit, p. 55). Findings in this study showed that learners had personal motives such as study abroad opportunities and family connections that motivated them to learn about a particular Hispanic country. As Liaw (2006) has pointed out, with the potential of CALL applications for the teaching of culture, opportunities to provide learners with a more individualized learning experience have increased.

5.3 Limitations

Findings obtained from the investigation of five research questions brought about important and practical implications for the area of ICC and the teaching of culture in the context of the foreign language classroom and the teaching of culture in general. However, a number of limitations need to be noted in this study. Limitations resulted from the theory used for analysis and also practical limitations related to data collection procedures and the scope of the Intercultura materials.

First, the study of Activity Theory as framework for analysis allowed for the identification of four distinct roles that learners took during the discussion of cultural information. However, the features identified for the roles of participants do not include a description of the language that participants used while discussing the cultural information because the scope of the study was not specifically designed to analyze the linguistic strategies that learners used during the discussion of cultural information. A different approach for the analysis of the roles could consider the linguistic devices used by learners in their interactions, and in particular the language used that characterizes the roles of participants. Such investigation would provide a clear description of the particular linguistic
resources utilized in the process of developing ICC. For example, participants who took on the role of apprentice tended to use questions as linguistic strategies for the elicitation of comments. A linguistic analysis of this role would consider the type of questions used, the context in which they were used, and the type of responses that they elicited.

Second, variation in language proficiency may have impacted participants’ understanding of materials (e.g., comprehending different Spanish accents included in the materials) and consequently the perceptions participants had of the Intercultura materials. Results of the study showed that some learners felt pressure due to the exposure to different Spanish dialects and accents. It may be that less proficient learners experienced this feeling. However, it is uncertain to say if proficiency was an issue since it was not considered a variable in the study. In this study the participants were taken from a convenience sample. All participants who were enrolled in intermediate Spanish courses at Iowa State University during the Spring semester of 2011 were invited to participate. The students enrolled in this level of Spanish came from different school backgrounds. For the purposes of enrollment, students who have taken previous Spanish courses must take a placement exam to determine the level of proficiency. This gate keeping strategy is in place to prevent students who are highly proficient in Spanish from enrolling in this intermediate course. Therefore, it was assumed that the language proficiency level of students was similar. However, course placement is not a valid measure of proficiency.

Third, this study did not take into consideration learners’ preferences for instruction (i.e., preference for online, hybrid, or traditional courses), which may have had an impact on the preferences of participants in the delivery of Intercultura materials. Results showed that participants preferred viewing the Intercultura materials outside of class. However, it is not
clear if the participants in this study had a preference for accessing course related materials online, and therefore this preference may have prevailed in their preference for the viewing of Intercultura materials out-of-class as opposed to in-class. Participants’ preferences prior to this study were not taken into consideration, and therefore the interpretation of the results in regard to the preference of participants to view the materials outside of class should be interpreted in the context of the viewing of materials for this study.

Fourth, the cultural information presented by the informants in the Intercultura materials has the potential of representing single-person views. Even though the informants in the materials provided comprehensive answers in their responses to the interview questions, there is a potential for their views not to be representative of the entire population of the country they belong to and represented. It would be extremely difficult and complex to provide a generalist view on different topics as they apply to one population. However, the purpose of the Intercultura materials was to expose learners to the views of a person representing a Hispanic country. Nonetheless, the potential for cultural bias or single person views should be acknowledged.

Finally, technology was used for the purpose of instruction and data collection. This dual purpose of the integration of technology may have had an effect on the perceptions of participants. For instance, two participants reported having difficulty playing the video materials. The participants attributed the problem to their Internet connection at home since they had no problems playing the videos on campus. This issue affected the perceptions of the Intercultura materials that these participants reported. However, with the use of mixed methods (e.g., quantitative and qualitative data), I was able to identify this type of issue and to interpret the results based on the information provided in multiple sources of data.
5.4 Directions for future research

Based on the findings and limitations encountered in this dissertation, the following directions for future research are proposed.

First, future research could help to discover the effects that exposure to different Spanish dialects can have on Spanish learners. In this study participants reported an awareness of the variety of Spanish dialects to which they were exposed. Participants were able to identify differences in the accent of the informants and also variations in terms of vocabulary usage. Considering that participants noticed these differences, future research could investigate linguistic gains of Spanish learners and, in particular, the acquisition of vocabulary derived from exposure to different dialects of Spanish.

Another possible area of investigation with regard to exposure to different dialects of Spanish is the issue of the level of difficulty of dialects as they relate to the development of ICC. For example, future studies could analyze the level of difficulty of the various accents as they relate to the understanding and interpretation of cultural information and gains in development of ICC. Such a type of investigation would shed light on the issue of the levels of difficulty of regional dialects and how these impact the understanding and interpretation of cultural information and the understanding and processing of information in general.

In the Intercultura materials, what/how questions (Belz, 2003) were used to promote identification of differences and make comparisons of cultural information. Results showed that the use of the skills of interpreting and relating was directly linked to the what/how questions used in the discussion forums. Participants were able to interpret cultural information using their knowledge about their own culture. However, it is unclear if the use
of other types of questions would yield the same or similar results obtained in this study. Therefore, a possible investigation along the lines of this study would consider the integration of different types of eliciting devices (e.g., questions, statements) for the promotion of comparisons and identification of similarities and differences between cultures. In this way, the area of ICC would benefit from the identification of specific linguistic forms that serve as elicitation devices for the promotion of ICC.

Finally, another line for future research should consider the potential benefits that the choosing of materials could have in the development of ICC and in the achievement of personal learning goals (i.e., learning more about the country of interest) that are motivated by external factors (e.g., visiting the country, study abroad, family connections). Findings from this study showed that participants preferred choosing their own materials for learning about Hispanic cultures. Participants indicated that they had personal reasons for choosing their own materials, such as plans for studying abroad or family connections to a particular country. Based on their personal reasons, participants proposed choosing their own materials as a method for the viewing of materials. An investigation that considers a method that allows participants to choose the materials they wish to review would provide insights into the relationship between the content studied and the achievements made by learners.

5.5 Conclusion

In the area of SLA and foreign language teaching it is well accepted that culture should take a more central role in the teaching of languages, and in particular the teaching of culture in the context of the foreign language classroom. Current approaches for the teaching of culture have proposed the development of ICC as a goal of instruction. In this dissertation,
I developed and investigated an innovative approach for the teaching of culture that takes into consideration findings from empirical studies that have investigated the development of ICC. I have used the findings to develop materials for use in the foreign language classroom. This investigation is the first empirical study that has looked at learners’ interactions and ICC in the context of the foreign language classroom.

Results obtained in this study contribute significantly to the area of ICC and in particular to the practices for the teaching of culture in the foreign language classroom. The study provided significant insights on the roles of participants in the discussion of cultural information, which will serve to better inform practices for the teaching of culture. In addition, the insights reported by participants in regard to the Intercultura materials can better inform future approaches for CALL and textbook materials that aim at the development of ICC. Furthermore, the perceptions that participants had about the viewing of the Intercultura materials and assessment tools implemented show evidence that suggests that commercially available materials limit the opportunities of learners to develop their ICCs. Even though there were some methodological limitations, this dissertation provides practical and pedagogical implications for the area of ICC and the teaching of culture.
Appendix A

Interview questions used in the development of the video materials for Intercultura

Chapter 7. De compras [Shopping]
1. En tu país, ¿Qué te gusta comprar? ¿Qué tipo de productos? [In your home country, what do you like to shop for? What type of products?]
2. ¿En qué lugares compras comida? ¿Ropa? ¿Otros productos? [Tell me about the places where you shop, for instance, food, clothing]
3. En la actualidad ¿Se prefiere mercado al aire libre o el centro comercial? [Nowadays, do people prefer to buy in open-air or street markets or malls/grocery stores?]
4. En tu país ¿Se regatea? ¿La gente negociar el precio de los productos? ¿Dónde? ¿Quién? Explica circunstancias [In your country, do people bargain? Please explain under which circumstances this happens, who, how, and why]
5. ¿Qué factores consideras cuando seleccionas los productos que compras? ¿por ejemplo, para comprar comida, en qué te fijas? [What factors do you consider when selection products to buy? What do you look at? Price, place of origin, something else?]
6. ¿Qué tal para electrodomésticos, en qué te fijas? [What about when shopping for appliances, what do you consider?]
7. ¿Hay influencia de los comerciales o propaganda en las compras que tú haces? ¿Qué medios tienen más influencia en tu opinión? ¿Por qué? [Do you pay attention to information on TV commercials or propaganda when deciding what to buy? What mass media do you think is more influential for shopping in your country and why?]

Chapter 8. En la ciudad – [City life]
1. ¿Cómo es el centro de la ciudad? [How is the downtown area in your city? Please describe it]
2. ¿Hay una plaza o parque central? ¿Cómo es y qué se puede hacer en este lugar? [Is there a central square or ‘plaza’? How is it? What do people do there?]
3. ¿Cómo está dividida u organizada tu ciudad? ¿En barrios, avenidas, cuadros? [Can you tell me how is the downtown area or the city/town divided/organized? For instances, are there avenues, streets, squares?]
4. ¿Dónde se encuentran los hospitales? [Where are the hospitals located?]
5. ¿Qué servicios públicos son importantes en tu ciudad? como transporte, bancos, comercios. [What type of public services/commodities do you think are important in your city? For instance, banks, businesses, transportation]
6. ¿Qué espacios culturales existen en tu ciudad? Como centros culturales, museos, galerías de arte [What cultural spaces are there in your city, such as cultural centers, museums, art galleries]

Chapter 9. Los empleos [The job market]
1. Háblame del proceso de conseguir un empleo, ¿qué se necesita? ¿qué pasos se siguen? [Please tell me about the process for getting a job in your country. What do you need to do to get a job? What steps do people normally follow?]
2. ¿Qué información se requiere en la solicitud de trabajo? [What information is included in the CV or is required in the job application form?]
3. ¿Qué harías en una entrevista de trabajo? ¿qué no harías? [What would you do at a job interview and what you wouldn’t do? Please provide advice for job interviews in your country]
4. ¿Qué beneficios sociales / prestaciones se ofrecen como parte de la ley en tu país? [What employment benefits are commonly offered, particularly those required/demanded by law?]
5. ¿Cuál es el promedio de días de vacaciones que puede tener un profesional en el trabajo? por ejemplo, un ingeniero o médico? [What is the average vacation days that a person with an educational degree (e.g., BA) such as a doctor or engineer can have as demanded by law?]
6. ¿Cuál sería un sueldo promedio para un profesional? [What do you think it is an average salary for a person with an educational degree?]
7. ¿Cuál sería un sueldo promedio para un trabajo técnico? [What about a person that does not have a degree such a technician/electrician, plumber?]

Capítulo 10. La empresa multinacional [The multinational company/banking]
1. ¿Con qué frecuencia usas los bancos en tu país? [How often do you bank in your country?]
2. ¿Cómo es el acceso a los bancos? ¿Existen restricciones de algún tipo en transacciones, por ejemplo? [What would you say is the availability of banks? Are there any restrictions for any type of transactions? Please give examples]
3. ¿Es común tener una cuenta de cheques? ¿por qué? [How common is it to have a checking account? Why do you think this is?]
4. ¿Qué formas de pago son comunes al pagar las cuentas, como la luz, el teléfono? [What forms of payment are common for paying bills for services such as electricity, phone, cable?]
5. ¿Se usan cheques para pagar? ¿En dónde? ¿Qué productos o servicios? [Do people use checks for payment? Where, on which cases?]
6. ¿Hay tarjetas de crédito? ¿Es difícil o fácil conseguirlas? [Are there credit cards? How easy or difficult is it to get one?]
7. ¿A qué edad consiguen su primera tarjeta de crédito las personas en su mayoría? [At what age can people get a credit card?]
8. ¿Se acostumbra usar crédito para comprar bienes? ¿De qué tipo: casas, autos? [When do people use ‘credit’ or loans? For example, to buy a house, a car? Please give examples]
Chapter 11. De viaje [Travel]
1. ¿Qué medios de transporte existen para viajar dentro de la ciudad? [What means of transportation exist to travel within/in your city or hometown?]
2. ¿Qué nombres existen para referirse a un autobus de pasaje en la ciudad? [What name do you use to refer to a bus, are there different words or just one?]
3. ¿Cuánto cuesta un viaje en autobus? qué distancia se recorre en promedio? [How much does it cost to travel in the city by bus? What would you say is a typical distance that a bus travels in the city?]
4. ¿Qué frase o frases usas para indicar que vas a viajar en autobus en la ciudad? [What phrase or phrases do you use to indicate that you are going to ‘ride the bus’ or ‘travel by bus’?]
5. ¿Qué medios de transporte existen para viajar dentro del país? [What means of transportation exist to travel within your country, such as from town to town?]
6. ¿Se acostumbra viajar en avión? ¿Por qué sí o por qué no? [Is it popular or customary to travel by plane? Why do you think this is?]
7. ¿Qué tipo de seguridad hay para viajar en avión en los aeropuertos? [What kind of ‘security measures’ exist at the airports in your country that you are aware of?]

Chapter 12. En el consultorio médico [At the doctor’s office]
1. ¿Qué tipo de servicios médicos (como hospitales, clínicas) hay en tu ciudad? [What type of medical services are there in your hometown?]
2. ¿Con que frecuencia se visita al médico? [How often do people (in general) go to the doctor and why?]
3. ¿Cómo es el proceso para hacer una cita médica? qué hay que hacer para ver al médico? [What is the process for getting an appointment to see a doctor? What steps do you follow?]
4. ¿Cuáles son las enfermedades más comunes por las que se va al médico? [What would you say are some common illnesses for which people go to see a doctor?]
5. Describeme los síntomas de alguna enfermedad común como gripe [Please describe the symptoms of a common illness or condition, such as a cold]
6. ¿Existe remedios caseros que la gente use? ¿Para qué enfermedades? [Do people use home remedies? Please explain why or why not, for which illnesses or conditions]
7. ¿Qué otros tipos de formas para curarse de enfermedades usa la gente? [What are other types of medicine people use, such as alternative medicine?]}
8. ¿Qué se dice cuando una persona está enferma para desearle cosas buenas? [What expression do you use to ‘wish well’ to someone’?]
Appendix B

Grading rubric used for the discussion forums

Grade distribution and descriptors
(0 points)
There is no post to the forum.
(0.5 points)
The post is not related to the writing prompt and/or shows limited understanding of the video materials.
(1 points)
The post shows some understanding of the video materials and it does not accurately respond to the writing prompt.
(1.5 points)
The post shows understanding of the video materials and it partly responds to the writing prompt.
(2 points)
The post demonstrates understanding of the video materials. It presents good ideas that respond to the writing prompt but can be further developed. The text provides no comments to other postings.
(2.5 points)
It is clear that the post draws on information presented in the video materials. The student demonstrates understanding of the contents of the videos and fully responds to the writing prompt. The text includes limited comments about other postings.
(3 points)
It is clear that the post draws on information presented in the video materials. The student demonstrates understanding of the contents and fully responds to the writing prompt. The text includes comments about other postings by summarizing other posts, responding to questions, and encouraging participation.
Appendix C

Guidelines for posting to the discussion forums

Intercultura Project Forum Discussion Guidelines

This semester, as part of your assignments for this course you will need to post a short (about 200 words) entry to discussion forums integrated in webCT. In order to facilitate these discussions, there are some guidelines you should consider. Please read the following information carefully, and keep these recommendations in mind when writing a post.

1. The purpose of the discussion forums is to promote conversations about the concept of Hispanics and Hispanic culture. The content of the postings must be related in some way to this central topic. Please keep in mind that you are highly encouraged to relate the content of the video materials to your own experiences. Therefore, you may write about your own experiences as they relate to those of Hispanics.

2. As part of a community of learners, all students are expected to maintain proper etiquette. This etiquette includes writing a post on time, signing your post with your name, reading all or most postings, providing thoughtful responses, addressing replies to people by name, and criticizing politely. The general expectation is that you read all postings. You are the audience for the forum, and as such, you should make a good effort to read all postings. Even though writing guidelines (e.g., correct grammar and spelling) should be of your concern, posting in the forum should not be polished pieces of writing. The most important part of the posting is the content. Therefore, do not be afraid to write even if you do not have perfect grammar and spelling.

3. Keep in mind that the discussion forum is a space for the sharing of ideas, thoughts, and feelings in regard to the concept of Hispanic. The information contained in the video materials should assist your understanding of the concept of Hispanic. To facilitate your interactions, avoid the one post-one response syndrome. Make every attempt to address several posts at once by citing names and information of others. Whenever possible, go back to the forum and try to respond to any questions addressed to you. Remember that a true dialogue develops over a number of turns/posts. Most importantly, keep the conversation going!
Appendix D

Text of survey administered in webCT for data collection

Instructions
Intercultura Project - IRB Approval #10-387 This survey will ask you about your experiences working with the materials of the project Intercultura – videos, online quizzes, and discussion forums. Please note that your answers to the survey will have NO effect on your grade for the class. Your answers will be confidential and will not affect your grade in any way. The information you provide will be used to determine the effects that the materials for Intercultura have on language learning. Please reflect on your experiences working with the materials for Intercultura and provide as much detailed information as possible – be explicit. Your instructor will NOT have access to this survey until after the final grades have been reported. Please respond to all questions and provide comments when requested.

1. Major
   Major (if known). If undecided, please write ‘undecided’.

2. Class
   Class. Years in the University:
   *Please mark one
   a. 1
   b. 2
   c. 3
   d. 4
   e. Graduate student

3. Study of Spanish
   Previous study of Spanish (in years). If less than a year, mark the higher number. For example, if only one semester of study, mark 1.
   a. 1 year or less
   b. 2 years of less
   c. 3 years or less
   d. 4 years or less
   e. Over five years

4. Spanish schooling
   Previous study of Spanish.
   Please mark where you studied Spanish prior to this course: [Mark all that apply]
a. High school
b. Community college
c. University (four-year college)
d. Study Abroad
e. Living in a Spanish-speaking country
f. Living in a Spanish-speaking community in the USA
g. Other

5. First language
Please enter your first language – the one you speak at home with your parents and siblings.

6. Other languages
Please enter any other languages that you also speak and the level of proficiency (beginner, intermediate, proficient, native).
Example: Spanish - Intermediate, French - Beginner

7. Language learning settings
Please indicate in which setting you learned your second (or third, fourth) language: schooling, immediate family, relatives, peers, other (please explain).

8. Abroad experiences
Have you been in a Hispanic country?
Where and for how long?
Please indicate the country and period of time you stayed. Example: Mexico – 2 weeks

9. Other materials
Based on your experiences in language courses, how would you rate materials (not from Intercultura) used for the learning of cultural information.
a. Excellent
b. Good
c. Average
d. Below average
e. Bad

10. Overall impression
**Please rate the following items according to your experience with the video clips for the project Intercultura and your experience collaborating in the discussion forums**

**Overall impression of the video materials of the project Intercultura.**

a. Excellent
b. Good
c. Average
d. Below average
e. Bad

11. Delivery
Overall impression of using WebCT as a platform for accessing the video clips.

a. Excellent
b. Good
c. Average
d. Below average
e. Bad

12. Impression of discussion forums
Overall impression of online discussion forums.

a. Excellent
b. Good
c. Average
d. Below average
e. Bad

13. Use of video
Usefulness of video materials for the learning of cultural information.

a. Excellent
b. Good
c. Average
d. Below average
e. Bad

14. Structure of videos
Structure (interview format) and organization of the video materials.
15. Usefulness of information
Usefulness and relevance of the information provided in the video materials for the learning of Hispanic culture.

a. Excellent  
b. Good  
c. Average  
d. Below average  
e. Bad

16. Comprehension quizzes
Overall impression of the comprehension quizzes.

a. Excellent  
b. Good  
c. Average  
d. Below average  
e. Bad

17. Comparing materials
The video materials used in the Intercultura project allowed you to interact at your own pace with the cultural information presented to you. The video materials used an interview-like format for the delivery of information. Compared to your experiences with traditional materials used for the learning of culture (e.g., magazines, reading selections, general videos), what is your impression of learning from Hispanics in an interview-like format?

18A. Materials viewing
Which form of working with the Intercultura materials did you prefer?

a. In-class  
b. Out-of-class
18. Materials viewing
How did you like working with materials for the learning of culture on your own pace outside of class as opposed to in-class working as a class? Did you find this approach beneficial? Why or why not? Please explain.

18 b. How did you like working with the materials for the learning of culture in-class? Did you find this approach beneficial? Why or why not? Please explain.

19. Relevance of information
Was the information presented in the videos relevant to you for the learning of Hispanic culture? Why or why not?

20. Understanding of information
Was the information presented in the videos difficult to understand? Why or why not? Please explain.

21. Contradictions
Did you experience any contradictions (i.e., contrasting previous beliefs with new information, variation of interpretation of the materials from peers) in regard to the information presented in the video materials? If so, what do you think triggered these contradictions?

22. Distribution of materials
In this project you were assigned videos to watch. Did you like this method or would you prefer to choose the videos you wanted to watch? Why or why not? Please explain.

23. Video materials
What challenges did you have when working with the video materials? Please explain.

24. Discussion forums
What challenges did you have working in the discussion forums? Did you like answering questions or would you prefer not to have questions to guide your discussion? Please explain.

25. Other tools
What tool or tools (i.e., transcripts, navigation buttons, search function, quiz) did you find MOST useful?

26. Other comments
What comments, suggestions, or ideas concerning the video materials and forum discussions can you provide?
Appendix E

Summary of forums including question prompts, number of posts, participants, and average number of postings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forum</th>
<th>Discussion questions</th>
<th>Number of Posts</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>Average Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial</td>
<td>1. ¿Qué es un hispano? [How would you define Hispanic? What is a Hispanic]</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. ¿Qué factores consideras para una persona como hispana (e.g., lengua, vestido, físico, etc)? [What factors do you consider when identifying a Hispanic (e.g., language, clothing, physical appearance, etc.)]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. ¿Qué te hace diferente de un hispano? [What do you think differentiates from a Hispanic?]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 7       | 1. ¿Cómo seleccionas el lugar donde compras tu comida? ¿Qué factores consideras para seleccionar el lugar donde compras? [How do you go about choosing the place where you buy food? What factors do you consider for choosing this place?]
|        | 2. ¿Por qué es importante comprar “el pan de todos los días” en España? ¿Qué piensas que significa esta idea? [Why is it important to buy “the daily bread” in Spain? What do you think this means?]
|        | 3. Cuando compras ropa y zapatos, ¿qué factores influyen tu decisión: moda, promoción de productos? ¿Es diferente o similar en el mundo hispano? [When buying shoes or clothing, What factors affect your decision: fashion, advertising of the goods?]
|        | 4. ¿Qué consejo [advice] o recomendación puedes dar a un hispano que visita los Estados Unidos en relación a las compras? [What advice or recommendation would you give a Hispanic who is visiting the US in relation to shopping?] | 164             | 41                     | 4            |
1. Después de escuchar las ideas sobre el centro de la ciudad en los países hispanos, ¿Qué cosas piensas son importantes en el centro de la ciudad? After listening to the ideas about the downtown areas in the Hispanic countries, What do you think is important to have in this area of the city?
2. ¿Qué cosas son similares o diferentes a tu ciudad? Piensa en organización de la ciudad, servicios públicos, espacios culturales. ¿Hay algo que sea muy/completamente diferente? ¿Por qué? What things are similar or different from your city? Think about the organization of the city, public services, cultural centers. Is there anything that is completely different from your city? Why?

En el video de Colombia, Mayra explica que en la hoja de vida se incluye información biográfica. En la hoja de vida, puede [might be requested] ser requerida una fotografía y datos personales como estado civil (marital status). [In the video about Colombia Mayra explains that biographical information is included in the CV. In some CVs, a photograph and other personal information such as marital status are requested].

1. ¿Piensas que esta información es necesaria? ¿Por qué sí o por qué no? Justifica tu respuesta desde el punto de vista de la cultura hispana y de tu punto de vista personal. [Do you think that this type of information is necessary? Why or why not? Explain your answer from your point of view of the Hispanic culture and your own ideas].
2. ¿Qué consejos puedes dar a una persona que busca trabajo en Estados Unidos? Piensa en las diferencias de los pasos para conseguir/obtener empleo en los países hispanos. [What advice would you give a person who is looking for a job in the US? Think about the differences in the steps for looking for a job in the Hispanic countries].
1. En Estados Unidos ¿Quién maneja las cuentas, el dinero en la familia? ¿Es similar o diferente en los países hispanos? ¿Por qué? [In the US, Who takes care of paying bills and money matters in a family? Is it similar or different in the Hispanic countries? Why?]

2. ¿Qué idea tienes de las costumbres hispanas de 'pedir prestado'? Habla sobre a qué personas piden dinero, cobro de intereses. ¿Tienes costumbres similares en tu familia? [What do you think about the “money borrowing” practices in the Hispanic countries? Talk about to whom people asks to borrow money and if any interests are charged. Are these practices similar in your family?]

3. ¿A qué edad pueden tener una tarjeta de crédito en Estados Unidos? ¿Y en los países hispanos? ¿Por qué piensas que son diferentes? [How old do people in the US need to be able to have a credit card?]

1. Habla de las opciones que existen en España para viajar dentro y fuera de la ciudad. [Talk about the options that exist in Spain for traveling in and outside of the city.]

2. Habla de las opciones que existen en tu ciudad y país para viajar. [Talk about the options that exist in your city and your country for traveling.]

3. ¿Consideras el costo del transporte para viajar dentro y fuera de la ciudad? Explica tu respuesta, da ejemplos. [Do you take into consideration the cost of transportation when traveling in and outside of the city?]

4. En España existen diferencias en la seguridad en el aeropuerto dependiendo del destino. ¿Por qué piensas que existen estas diferencias? [In Spain, there are differences in the security at airports varying by destinations. Why do you think these differences exist?]
1. ¿Cómo es el proceso para visitar al doctor en tu experiencia? Habla sobre los pasos que tú sigues y si es algo fácil o dificil. ¿Hay diferencias en el tipo de seguridad [health insurance] que tienen las personas? ¿Es un proceso similar o diferente en los países hispanos? [How is the process for going to the doctor based on your experiences? Talk about the steps you need to take and discuss if these are easy or difficult. Are there any differences in the type of health insurance that people have? Is it a similar or different process in the Hispanic countries?]

2. Describe tu postura en relación a las medicinas en Estados Unidos y en los países hispanos. ¿Es fácil adquirirlas? ¿Se necesita receta médica? ¿Se puede comprar medicinas sin receta médica? ¿Es bueno o malo requerir receta médica? [Discuss your opinion about prescription drugs in the US and the Hispanic countries. Is it easy to get them? Do you need a prescription to get them? Can you get medications without a prescription? Is it good or bad to require a prescription?]

3. ¿Usas medicina alternativa? ¿Qué tipo? ¿Qué prácticas de medicina alternativa y remedios usan en los países hispanos? ¿Existen remedios caseros en Estados Unidos similares a los países hispanos? ¿Por qué? [Do you use alternative medicine? What kind? What type of alternative medicine and home remedies are used in Hispanic countries? Are there any home remedies in the US that are similar to those in Hispanic countries? Why or why not?]

Final

1. ¿Qué es un hispano? ¿Cómo defines a un hispano, qué factores consideras (lengua, apariencia física, etc.)? [What is a Hispanic? What factors do you consider when identifying a Hispanic (language, physical appearance, etc.)]

2. ¿Qué te diferencia (hace diferente) de un hispano? ¿Tienes algo en común con los hispanos? Explica [What differentiates you from a Hispanic? Do you have anything in common with Hispanics? Please explain].
References


