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THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL NETWORKS ON INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND AWARENESS: THE FACEBOOK CASE

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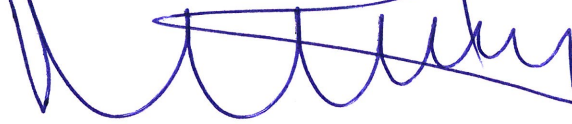Doç. Dr. Mustafa Naci KAYAOĞLU (Başkan-Danışman)

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Yukarıdaki imzaların, adı geçen öğretim üyelerine ait olduklarını onaylarım.

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This study is dedicated to my family.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate the effect of social networking websites on intercultural communication and awareness among English majoring students, Facebook as the case. The study covered three main steps; the data collection process through 14 week Facebook Group page activity and interviews and Intercultural Awareness Test, the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data gathered. There were two groups of participants, one for experimental group with whom the Facebook Group page activities are held in accordance with the formal instruction process, and control group who took traditional instruction without any extra aid or application. In the study, both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used through questionnaires and focus group interviews. The qualitative data of focus group interviews were transcribed and analyzed according to content analysis techniques and quantitative data of Intercultural Awareness test were analyzed using SPSS software. The results of the data analysis showed that Facebook has a significant effect on developing intercultural awareness and communication among university students. The study also showed that the participants are both curious and fancy about using Facebook as an educational tool. It is concluded that Facebook, among the social networking websites, seems to be very feasible and effective tool to be used by both instructors and students to establish and develop intercultural awareness and communication.

Keywords: Social Networking Websites, Facebook, Intercultural Awareness, Intercultural Communication, ELT

ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı Facebook örneği üzerinden sosyal medya sitelerinin, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı bölümü öğrencilerinin kültürlerarası iletişim ve farkındalığa etkisini incelemektir. Çalışma başlıca üç kısımdan oluşmaktadır, 14 haftalık Facebook grup sayfası etkinlikleri eri, mülakatlar ve Kültürlerarası farkındalık testinden elde edilen veriler ve bu verilerin nitel ve nicel olarak değerlendirilip analiz edilmesi. Çalışmada iki grup katılımcı vardır, birinci grup resmi öğretim süreciyle eşgüdümlü olarak Facebook Grup sayfası etkinliklerin yapıldığı deney grubu, ve ikinci grup olarak ta fazladan hiçbir uygulamaya tabi tutulmaksızın gelenksel öğretim sistemiyle eğitim alan Kontrol grubu. Çalışmada anket ve mülakatlar ile hem nitel hem nicel araştırma metodları kullanılmıştır. Nitel veriler nitel veri analiz yöntemleriyle, nicel veriler ise SPSS yazılımı kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Sonuçlar Facebook'un üniversite öğrencileri üzerinde kültürlerarası farkındalık ve iletişimi güçlendiren önemli düzeyde bir etkisinin olduğunu göstermiştir. Bunula birlikte, çalışmadaki katılımcıların Facebook'un eğitim aracı olarak kullanılmasıyla ilgili meraklı ve istekli oldukları gözlemlenmiştir. Sonuç olarak, Facebook'un hem üniversite öğretim elemanları hem de öğrenciler tarafından kültürlerarası farkındalık yaratmak ve geliştirmek için kullanılabilecek en etkili ve uygulanabilir araçlardan biri olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyal paylaşım siteleri, Facebook, Kültürlerarası Farkındalık, Kültürlerarası iletişim.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CA   : Cultural Awareness

CALL   : Computer Assisted Language Learning

CMC   : Computer Mediated Communication

EFL   : English as a Foreign Language

ELT   : English Language Teaching

FB   : Facebook

IC   : Intercultural Communication

ICA   : Intercultural Awareness

ICC   : Intercultural Communicative Competence

ICT   : Information and Communication Technology

LMS   : Learning Management System

NS   : Native Speaker

ODF   : Online Discussion Forum

CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

Along with economic globalization and the rapid growth in intranational and/or international contacts beyond face-to-face communication opportunities such as social and electronic media, computers and the Internet have become an inevitable part of all spheres of our daily life. Castells (1996) acknowledged that the effect of the widespread use of Internet technologies seems to be "the reinforcement of the culturally dominant social networks, as well as the increase of their cosmopolitanism and globalization" (p. 363). Especially with the advent of Web 2.0 technology, communication and Internet technology have considerably changed the way people learn, teach and access education. Learners go beyond their limited exposure to information browsing, and a dynamic use of web technologies has come to dominate the social interactions of learners, enabling them to collaborate, share and interact through networking tools (Warschauer and Grimes, 2007).

> People use the Internet for various purposes including enjoying themselves, getting information relevant to a hobby or personal interest, communicating with friends, doing school work, getting product information, purchasing something, making money, joining groups, doing research, getting personal help, downloading software, getting educationally-oriented information, reading (viewing) news, playing games, listening to music, and meeting new people, sustaining personal relationships, corresponding by electronic mail and sending instant messages. (Kayaoğlu and Saltaş, 2013:137)

Therefore, technology, information and communication are becoming inextricably interwoven in such a way that "communication from one side of the world to the other has become virtually instantaneous, crossing national boundaries and connecting the world on an unprecedented scale and with a previously unimaginable speed" (Kayaoğlu and Akbaş, 2011: 282). In line with the growing opportunities contributing much to improved communication, it is much easier for people to find new friends, or communicate with each other more frequently or even share things in common when compared with the past. Therefore, the Internet may be said to help people to create a world in which there is no place or time limit (Hinduja and Patchin, 2008). Consequently, this technological revolution in Intercultural Communication (IC) technology has significantly changed the

distribution, use and speed of information. Facebook, among many social networking services, has become one of the largest and most frequently used social networking platforms for people to build and reflect social relations.

However, the use of Facebook is not limited to interpersonal communication and hedonic purposes. As one might suspect, this social networking site may not have the same appeal to teenagers, adults and students alike. It has far-reaching implications with respect to education as stated by Kayaoğlu (2009) "multimedia computers and the Internet give the potential for active and interactive learning experiences such as peer tutoring, self-directed learning, experiential and real-world-learning, problem-based learning and reflective teaching" (p.49).

It is important to create the sustainability of technological innovations for teachers, managers, teacher trainers and the other members of educational society. It is no longer an option, but, rather, it is a must for those who do not want to stay behind the new technological advancements in the field of education. Therefore, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), including the Internet which is the base of ICT, provide lots of opportunities for practitioners and users to make lifelong learning happen. Therefore, it is of great importance to seek the hidden effects of modern technologies on people, societies and countries all over the world.

Internet users functionalize its communication characteristics not only for individual purposes like mailing and messaging, but also for sharing issues about anything taking those websites as a social networking tool (Wise et al. 2006). Today, one of the biggest tools for people to socialize and communicate with each other in a borderless world is the social networking websites in which users can communicate with each other much more easily than in the past. People using these social networking websites have different interests but the main aim seems to be more or less the same: sharing. People who use social networking websites generally share photos, videos, events and as there is a possibility for the sharing to reach many people all over the world, social networking websites, in a sense, open new gateways for establishing new friendships.

Regarding this communication technology, today educators and practitioners feel compelled to face the constant challenge of understanding the nature of technology and its potential uses along with its strengths and weaknesses. However, some teachers in the educational field are somewhat hesitant about using these new tools for their activities, as they believe that the power of the physical teacher will begin to be demolished due to technological advances in the educational field. Nonetheless, these technological advances, all in all, seem to be affecting people's life positively. Web 2.0 technologies which assist people in terms of cooperation and natural socialization provide evidence of these positive effects (Huijser, 2008). For instance, Medina (2007) states that it is the Internet which stirs up the socialization of people in virtual worlds like social networking websites and blogs. There are millions of websites on the Internet for different purposes but it is the social networking websites which trigger the communication and socialization process most. Therefore, it is becoming an area of interest to investigate the communication and socialization role of the Internet in social sciences.

The 21st century is at its peak in terms of globalization (Schulz, et al., 2005) as cross border relations and the borderless world where cultures affect each other mutually are expanding. The 21st century with its globalization issue seems to bring more advantages in terms of communication through technology. People are in need of adapting these huge technological advances into their daily interactions. A very similar trend is observed among educators who attempt, without delay, to integrate these technological advances into their teaching environments. Educational technology "can be applied to formal and informal schooling. Any piece of information conveyed through any kind of technology has a great impact on people's personalities and attitudes, and also can enrich their mind and knowledge (Kayaoğlu, 2009: 49).

Another dimension of social networking, in terms of communication, is foreign or second language development and culture. Regarding the intercourse between culture and language, Byram and Fleming (1998) state that learning a language is not just an acquisition process but learning the mutual meanings, ideas and practices of the target group as they are covered in the language itself. The fundamental problem here is not to be able to go beyond learning the facts as packages. When it comes to culture and intercultural communication, the issue becomes more critical and challenging. Therefore,

many EFL teachers do not feel at ease with the issue of addressing culture in their instruction as they apparently fail to provide genuine means to engage students in meaningful tasks. At this point social networking takes learning out of classroom and extends it throughout life, providing an extension of the curriculum into ordinary life and experiences since students can be a part of the outside world and can take their lives to the outer circles through social networking.

It is not, however, surprising to see that students tend to use these advances more effectively as they are computer natives, which means they were born in a globalized world where technology is widely used among individuals. There are many different ways for teachers to teach students how to communicate with the outer world, but the first and the base aim is to teach them their intercultural competence in terms of linguistic and cultural skills. As Christie (2007) states, it is important for university students to learn a foreign language, but it must also be kept in mind that knowing a foreign language does not assure effective communication with people from different cultures. What enables people to communicate easily and effectively is indeed intercultural competence itself (Schulz et al., 2005). Schulz (2007) claims that intercultural competence should be taught to students in foreign language classrooms in order to be victorious in the modern and technologically globalized world. This can be realized through social networking websites as they serve as a medium for connecting billions of users. Using social networking websites to enhance the intercultural awareness of EFL learners will also assist the self-awareness with an emphasis on the native culture of the language learners.

Due much to time and space constraints, language learning classes of the day suffer much from inadequate exposure to language especially out of the classroom. This need is made visible in Wang (2013), who pointed to the limited class hours, lack of sufficient opportunities for direct interaction and limited freedom to initiate and sustain discussions. Especially in countries where large class size stands as a handicap preventing sufficient individual attention, providing learners with opportunities of equal interaction to empower them outside the class remains essential. What may be ignored in the tightly-structured classes or in Belz's (2002) terms "serious business of language learning" might lead to a lack of the freedom individuals need? Therefore, any tool, platform or media that will equip learners with this freedom might help them go beyond the four walls and scheduled timetable.

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In a similar study conducted on Facebook (Wang, 2013), the theoretical foundations of Facebook in language teaching were traced back to two seminal theories, namely Halliday's functional perspective of language and a learner-centered approach to the use of technology. According to the former perspective, language is a system of meanings. Halliday (1985) uses the term language from a social semiotic perspective. When conceptualizing social semiotics, Halliday (1985) reacts against the isolated nature of Saussurean division of sign and builds on it focusing on the use of language in social contexts rather than in decontextualized situations. Therefore, taking the immediate learning environment into consideration is of great importance.

There are numerous studies on computer-mediated communications tools, which are still believed to be in their infancy and developing (Ellison, et al, 2014). Kord (2008) states that social networking websites are preferred by people in order to communicate with friends, relatives, parents and even colleagues but students using social networks as a communications tool may not see its pedagogic value as it seems to be a place of amusement and enjoyment for spare time. Thus, Kord (2008) suggests that it is a must for researchers to focus on using social networks especially the Facebook and the interaction between instructors and students in universities. Therefore, taking Facebook as an educational tool in terms of intercultural communication, few studies have shown that there is an organic connection between the most crowded social networking websites like Facebook and intercultural communication. By doing so, this research will broaden the common understanding of the connection between the effect of Facebook as an intercultural communications tool and its effect on foreign language development.

1.1. Purpose of the Study

Understanding and initializing the power of the Internet and especially of social networks is a need for human beings living in the 21st century. Social networking websites have become a social phenomenon which we cannot afford to ignore. Today both teachers and students use Facebook extensively, with the numbers increasing day by day. Thus, it is important to investigate the potential use of social networks by students and teachers. Besides, social networking websites seem to enhance teachers' understanding of the new generation. By integrating the knowledge and cultures of new generations, teachers will

make a greater impact upon students' achievements and success in classroom (Mazer et al., 2007).

Facebook is explicitly an average social networking website with a standard membership system (Lampe et al., 2008). In spite of some legitimate and sharp criticism leveled against Facebook in terms of online privacy, child safety, privacy invasion, and the "real face behind Facebook", the use of Facebook as an intercultural communication tool is both valuable and feasible. It is valuable as it has the largest population in terms of users, and it is feasible because today most students use Facebook in different locations and cultures (Towner et al., 2007). Social networking websites like Facebook, with its emphasis on immediate interaction, seem to be a viable option in teaching culture and interacting with different cultures all over the world. Facebook, the biggest social networking website, serves different purposes for different people. As Facebook is the biggest virtual world on the Internet, instructors and even students can make use of it positively in terms of communicating and interacting with different cultures. Therefore, this study encourages instructors and students to utilize this tool to the fullest extent by showing the impact of Facebook on intercultural communication with its positive and negative effects.

1.2. Research Questions

With the advances in technology and web based communications systems, social networking websites have gained much recognition in the sense that they create a limitless and borderless world for users around the world. People from different countries or cultures interact with each other via social networking websites. As it is easy to access, people prefer to connect and interact with people and even with their friends while at home sitting on a chair. As there are millions of users from different countries and cultures, these social networking websites can also be used as a tool to assist and enhance intercultural communication. Regarding this purpose, this study focuses on understanding how effective a social networking website can be for intercultural communication. Among the social networking websites is Facebook which, which is the most popular and has the most users. Therefore, Facebook has been selected as a case study, due to its popularity and potential among university students in Turkey.

The main aim of the study is to seek the fundamental uses of a social networking web site in terms of intercultural communication, with Facebook as the case study, and the possible advantages and challenges of Facebook in assisting intercultural communication. The major purpose of this research is to correlate social networking websites with intercultural issues and foreign language development. This study will focus on the following research question:

1. What are the possible effects of Facebook on EFL students' intercultural awareness?

Minor Research Questions

1. Is there a relationship between gender and intercultural awareness for those using social networking websites regularly and actively?

2. Does Facebook have an effect on the mastery of English as a foreign language or the lingua franca?

Hypothesis

1. A positive relationship exists between the use of Facebook and intercultural awareness.

2. A positive relationship exists between gender and intercultural awareness in using Facebook and Intercultural awareness.

1.3. Significance of the Study

Today, people in all phases of life are in need of effectiveness. In what we use, in what we buy and even in what we are trying to cope with there is a need to be effective. The more efficient a product or an idea becomes the lower the cost it involves in terms of lost benefit and profit. This is also true for educational and communicational products and tools of teaching. Therefore, the main goal of this study is to identify effective communicational activities using the most popular social networking web site for all users from all over the world.

Siemens and Tittenberger (2009) stress the importance of technology in enhancing the effectiveness of learning. Therefore, studies are still being carried out to verify optional tools, which can be taken advantage of in an educational framework (Munoz and Towner, 2009). Additionally, the user profiles of social networks must be investigated in depth, together with the reasons for using them. Moreover, researchers can examine and analyze the users' experiences in relation to social networks so as to assess their educational value properly for further details of knowledge about the issue.

Researchers are tending to focus more on the use of social networking websites as the world of social networks is becoming larger and larger day by day (Nyland and Near, 2007). Besides, the characteristics of interactions via social networks and the detailed profile of users like messaging and sharing issues should also be investigated deeply (Wise, et al., 2006). Furthermore, in order to create a full literature on social networking and its effect on communication, researchers should also focus on doing research by mixing both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). With all this in mind, this study has the potential to make a valuable contribution to the existing body of research in this area, which is still in its infancy.

The process of students' interaction with each other and with other students from different cultures will let the teachers keep up with the social networking websites and their effective use in their professional lives. It is a truism that teachers and instructors communicate with each other via social networking websites, although the frequency of interaction among colleagues seems to be low, the teachers and instructors will enhance their educational knowledge by interaction with students through Facebook by simply creating groups in which students can gather easily online and comment about the issues, feeling free to write whatever they want. As instructors and learners have different roles in society, it may seem difficult and usual for some students to communicate with their instructors face to face or even via social networking websites. By encouraging students to interact with them whenever and however they want on Facebook, instructors will also benefit from classroom authority as well. Once the power of social networking is

discovered to the fullest extent, it may also provide a new horizon and effective tool for educators and teachers to make their instruction more effective and meaningful.

An equally important issue in relation to communication is to create genuine interaction, a perennial problem faced in EFL monolingual settings. Classroom interaction is suggested "to be typical examples of the IRF (teacher initiation-learner response-teacher follow-up) cycle rather than genuine or natural interaction (Kayaoğlu, 2013:7). It seems, if not impossible, quite difficult to allow genuine communication and conversation to take place in the sociolinguistic sense in an EFL setting where students do not see themselves as fellow conversationalists of identical status. It is commonly observed that classroom interaction is, to a large extent, monopolized by teachers because of the unequal status and role between instructors and teachers. In a traditional classroom even turn-taking is not self-regulated and students do not have the chance to negotiate the topic naturally and freely as conversation is strictly run by teachers. Stressing the sociolinguistic constraints on genuine interaction, Kayaoğlu (2013: 8) states "It is the teacher who coordinates the patterns of communication, deciding when and to what extent students are to be restricted and allowed to initiate or respond to the moves". One of the effective ways to overcome this problem is to refer to social networking websites like Facebook as nearly most of the students use it. To begin with, this can put students at relatively equal status and assign them a critical role in maintaining conversation and genuine interaction, from the lack of which EFL settings have long suffered. The use of social networking websites also can liberate students from the monopoly of teachers to some degree, allowing students to decide what to say, how to say it and when to say it, in a relatively genuine interactive atmosphere. Normally it is hard to find and communicate with different people from different countries and cultures face to face. But by means of social networking websites, especially Facebook, students have a chance to go beyond the restricted walls of the classroom, freeing themselves from the heavy burden of syllabus. Perhaps more importantly, this radical change is likely to set up an exemplary transition from a conventional system, designed in a vacuum by the monopoly of the teacher, to a system in which students enjoy more liberty to realize themselves to the greatest possible extent. Students may quite rightly find classroom instruction irrelevant to their world or at least see little interaction between the world of the strictly-centralized syllabus and their own world. Obviously, this is not to diminish the value of formal teaching. Rather this is to underpin the unique opportunities for teachers to fill the gap between formal and informal

schooling in education. This adaptable, emergent, participatory process will enhance students' self-esteem, self-reliance and self-learning. Instead of emphasizing stable knowledge to be transferred to students being depicted passive recipients in conventional theories of teaching and learning, there is a marked shift from teaching to learning with the increased recognition of constructivism. Then, it is fair to suggest that the use of Facebook as a social networking website allows students to construct their own insight, knowledge, intra and intercultural awareness through genuine interactions by opening new horizons.

This study also intends to analyze the characteristics of Facebook use for communication purposes through the use of English as a Lingua Franca. Knowing a foreign language and communicating with foreign friends by using a foreign language is an advantage for those who seek to explore the differences between cultures. By using the Internet, social networks and especially Facebook, students become aware of online communication opportunities. This will offer teachers a good chance to increase learners' communicative competence in the target language and culture. However, although students use Facebook frequently, they may still hesitate to use it for some specific purposes like intercultural communication, as they may find it hard to talk and comment deeply about the native and target culture while using a foreign language as a medium. For this reason, any aspect or variable that may affect the students' performances and attitudes towards Facebook as an intercultural communications tool is worth studying.

Regarding the traditional settings for foreign language classrooms, this study is likely to broaden the horizons of practitioners and instructors on the necessity of turning Facebook into an asset for educational purposes. Apart from the traditional setting, Facebook is one of the most appropriate places for young pupils for educational purposes as they spend their time on social networking websites more often when compared with the past. Being aware of the sociocultural and sociolingual elements, instructors are in great need of enhancing their students' awareness of the issue where, again, Facebook is the best place to apply and sustain this.

Teachers, instructors and learners are the fundamental elements of all education. The interaction among them is also important in the sense that they are willing to interact with each other, which, in fact is the basis of education. This study is significant for both

learners and instructors as they belong to the same community in terms of education. This study will help both member groups to sustain communication, which is an inevitable part of education. Traditional instructors are usually accustomed to face-to-face communication. As online interaction with students in teaching cultural and intercultural awareness is hard to cope with, this study will also offer opportunities for instructors to deal with social networking websites effectively. Regarding the needs of learners and teachers, instructional designers are expected to benefit from this study with hints for materials development, and about potentially effective tools in using social networking websites in teaching culture and intercultural awareness.

CHAPTER TWO

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The present chapter aims at providing the related literature, including both theoretical commentaries and field studies. To that end, first the concept of educational technology will be described in detail. Second, computer mediated communication as one of the relevant pedagogical frameworks of the present study will be described with reference to web-based instruction. Lastly, Facebook and the literature related to cultural and intercultural awareness will be presented.

2.1. Educational Technology

The term *educational technology* has been used in a wide range of contexts. Sharma (2002), for instance, states that the term *educational technology* stands for development and advances in methods and the application of new devices and tools like design and the operation of knowledge for educational purposes at schools. As she explains:

> The birth story of educational technology is not too old. We see that even in [the] nineteenth century, educational technology existed in the form of educational toys and other learning tactics. But its frequent use came to light in 1926. In Ohio state university, it was used in the form of a teaching machine by Sidney Presscy. Then around 1930-40, Lumsdain and Glaser tried to make education as mechanical by presenting some special types of scrambled books, cards and boards. (p. 148)

Toys, books and other kinds of innovative and technological materials may be referred to as educational tools. In addition, over the last few decades, computers and Internet technology have become increasingly important educational resources. Today, both educators and teachers find themselves facing the constant challenge of understanding the potential use of the technological devices of the twentieth century in education. Technology has such a great impact on every aspect of life that teachers cannot afford to ignore what educational technology offers for the quality of their instruction. The rapid

developments in the field of communication technologies and the spread of the Internet worldwide have made technology an indispensable, not an optional, component of education. A computer on its own may assist the learning or teaching process. Due to the proliferation of communication technologies, learning and teaching become independent of time and place, even, to some extent, of the teacher.

Educational technology is in great revolutionary progress with new channels to cater for different needs. Teachers are empowered with very effective technological equipment and useful aids which enhance their creative teaching skills. Parallel with the developments in information technology, new methods and aids in educational technology have had a great impact on all spheres of formal and informal schooling. The design of a course cannot be limited solely to lectures, presentations, projects and exams. This necessitates building a mutual path between contemporary and traditional approaches to learning and teaching. Additional opportunities can be provided through technology for students who can maintain a flexible schedule appealing to their learning mode.

The increasing demand for technology in educational fields results from the fact that it is not only crucial to recognize the conformances of technology used in the educational field, but it is also necessary to internalize the philosophy of educational technology. By internalizing the philosophy of educational technology, practitioners would be more reflective and comprehensive in their professional activities and practices. Besides knowing the effect being made, reflective practice is to be aware of the effect desired (Elias and Merriam, 2005). Hadwin and Winne (2001) point out that by making use of motivational, cognitive and metacognitive skills and the alternation of strategic tasks, students tune themselves even during the class, or out of the class, which may be termed self-regulated learning. Self-regulated learning may also be defined as the combination of skill and will, which refers to the development of different learning strategies of human beings (Garcia and Pintrich, 1993). Cognitive sustainability is largely based on understanding and apprehending the aims of learning. Designing instructional environments that support self-regulation demands that contemporary learning theories inspire teaching innovation and technological enhancement for the classroom (Hadwin and Winne, 2001).

It was years ago that Ivan Illich (1970) criticized the current pedagogical system and went as far as to argue against the institution of schooling on the grounds that social stratification is somehow promoted through modern schooling. While institutionalization is a great help on the way to streamlining educational policy, it could possibly lead to the abuse of power; therefore, part of the responsibility falls on technology which might empower people through its potential capacity to create institutions which are not shepherded by the people who are in a high position in government or industry. This hesitation is made visible in Illich (1970):

> I believe that most of the research now going on about the future tends to advocate further increases in the institutionalization of values and that we must define conditions which would permit precisely the contrary to happen. We need research on the possible use of technology to create institutions which serve personal, creative, and autonomous interaction and the emergence of values which cannot be substantially controlled by technocrats. We need counterfoil research to current futurology (p.4).

The current crisis in conventional schooling is also highlighted in Gee and Hayes (2011). The authors refer to the changing role of literacy beginning from essayist literacy, content literacy and test literacy to "passionate affinity-based learning". Through passionate affinity-based learning, people can learn when they "organize themselves in the real world and/or via the Internet (or a virtual world) to learn something connected to a shared endeavor, interest, or passion (p. 69). Even though the claim here is not that schooling should be eradicated, but it seems apparent that schools and schooling need to be supported by systems which will help create equal opportunities to participate in the classroom discussions.

In relation to educational technology, perhaps it is true to say that computers have become inevitable parts of our daily lives. Margolies (1991) claims that computers with online connection capabilities have vital potential in facilitating education. A social learning atmosphere among students, assisted by computers, enhances interaction and communication at a national and an international level, which gradually results in active socialization. Despite the differences between traditional computer-mediated communication (CMC) and face-to-face communication, significant issues concerning using educational technology in promoting learning via CMC, and the relationship between these two terms, are still a rich research area for practitioners and researchers.

2.2. Computer Mediated Communication (CMC)

Computer mediated communication can be described as the communication process in which electronic communication tools facilitate the interactions. There are two types of CMC: asynchronous and synchronous. The asynchronous type of CMC includes a limitless time where users and participants can interact whenever they want. However, in the synchronous type of CMC, participants are supposed to interact simultaneously (Olaniran, 2006). CMC enables people with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds to interact with each other (Greene, 2008; Paulus and Scherff, 2008). Thus, by means of CMC, people can interact and communicate in spite of the distances between them. CMC could also provide mutual links between instructors, students and their classmates. For that reason, students have the chance to continue their learning process outside of the classroom and develop their knowledge (Bikowski, 2008).

Bikowski (2008) divides CMC into three distinct sub-divisions: computer based conferencing (including e-mail, chatting and video conferencing), computer based instruction (in the form of different courseware) and informatics (library management systems, online databases, university information systems). As it can provide timeless and borderless educational opportunities, CMC systems have gained more recognition and use in education. As CMC systems are used by the whole educational field, they can naturally serve for language learning activities. In learning a foreign language, CMC tools like wikis, discussion boards and email are frequently preferred by learners to aid the process. The synchronous type of CMC does not seem to be preferred by the learners as they feel constrained by "time," since they need to interact and communicate at the same time (Ozdener and Satar, 2008).

Kelsey and Amant (2008) state that new advances in technologies offer new horizons for communication where instructors, researchers, and practitioners have the chance to develop new teaching and learning strategies. Taking this into consideration, the inspirational motivation of social networking websites within computer-mediated communication can be an element conducive to new and creative instructional activities for both students and teachers. CMC tools could also provide answers for the problem-based learning courses. Lo (2009) suggests a strategy for using CMC for problem-based learning

courses: (i) use of synchronous discussions on the problem solving process, (ii) asynchronous mode of communication for letting participants digest the issues and the problems presented, and (iii) collaborative creation of projects by editing as a group. Greene (2008) points out that CMC systems provide many interaction and reflection opportunities for teacher education programs. Besides, it can be regarded as a link for CMC, as it can enable academicians to share information about CMC as an academic field.

2.2.1. Interaction through Computer-Mediated Communication

Though learning through interaction is believed to be of great merit in assisting comprehension, an investigation into classroom interaction practices has revealed that teacher-student interaction is largely dominated by teachers (e.g., Hamid and Honan, 2012). This means that learners are confined to limited opportunities of classroom interaction in the traditional classroom. What is more, the artificial nature of classroom language forms a barrier to achieving natural discourse, as indicated by Kayaoğlu (2013) "the traditional teacher-run EFL classroom interaction is … to restrict the equal and free participation and even turn-taking rights in conversation. In a typical ELT classroom turn-taking is not self-regulated and students are not naturally allowed to negotiate the topic and have equal responsibility for managing and maintaining the conversation monopolized by the teacher." (p.8) Therefore, the need to make use of genuine conversations is growing stronger. Nunan (1987) suggests that;

> genuine communication is characterized by the uneven distribution of information, the negotiation of meaning through clarification requests and confirmation checks, topic nomination and negotiation by more than one speaker, and the right of interlocutors to decide whether to contribute to an interaction or not (p. 137).

It follows that seeking ways to ensure learner participation is of salient value. Computer-Mediated Communication, especially in L1 contexts where student interaction is limited, offers viable opportunities to foster student-centered negotiation through offering more room for student-student interaction.

A serious problem encountered in traditional educational settings is the lack of a proper connection between the classroom and outside world (Kukulska-Hulme, 2009). Going beyond the classroom walls to learn L2 while living in an L1 environment could be a solution for bridging the gap between the demands of the classroom and the outside

world. CMC environments, to this end, could be free from time-and-space limitations. Especially in contexts where teacher bounded classroom instruction still reigns, CMC could remedy the lack of out of class opportunities.

Early research on interaction (see Long, 1980; 1983a; 1996) has revealed that negotiation facilitates language acquisition. The Interaction Theory posits that language learning takes place through interaction because input is provided, output is promoted and feedback which might pave the way for modified output is triggered. As Long (1996) put it in her modified version of the Interaction Hypothesis, "Negotiation for meaning, and especially negotiation work that triggers interactional adjustments by the NS [native speaker] or more competent interlocutor, facilitates acquisition because it connects input, internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention, and output in productive ways (p. 451-452). Accordingly, it is interaction through which a learner's language capacity is nurtured by a "negotiation for meaning" purpose. Computer-Mediated Communication opportunities such as social network sites have provided the option of negotiating for meaning by allowing users to co-construct meaning as opposed to the traditional classroom interaction in which "the language and patterns of interaction, which the students generate, are to be inexorably related to the pedagogical purposes even though the teacher voluntarily relinquishes all his/her power to direct the classroom" (Kayaoğlu 2013: 8)

Second language acquisition theories usually credit the role of 'comprehensible input', which is a hypothesis developed by Krashen (1980). In the light of this hypothesis, the input to be provided should be around the learner's capacity (i+1), that is, it should be challenging but not overwhelming. Swain's findings, however, did not lend support to Krashen's (1985) comprehensible input hypothesis, comprehensible input was not thought to be sufficient to account for all learning. Therefore, output was also considered to be seminal in language production. It should be pointed out that input generated through interaction with the interlocutors was amenable to modifications in the flow of interactions. Moreover, Swain's output hypothesis (1985) suggests that learning occurs when the learner uses his/her second language knowledge that In accordance with this hypothesis, output in a way facilitates learning. Long (1983b: 211) claimed that input could become more comprehensible: "(1) by use of the linguistic and extralinguistic context, (2) through orienting conversation to the "here and now", (3) modifying the interactional structure of

conversation through such devices as self- and other-repetition, confirmation and comprehension checks and clarification requests". Thus, when learners are provided with a rich context in which both linguistic and extralinguistic elements coexist, when current events in the immediate environment form the basis of the interaction, and when interaction is shaped through strategies such as confirmation and comprehension checks, input could be more accessible and retrievable. Modification of output is still a concern and three functions of the output, namely noticing function, hypothesis-testing function and metalinguistic function. The noticing function stands for the learner's realization of the gap between what s/he knows and what s/he does not know. Hypothesis-function aids the learner to formulate his/her statement in accordance with the feedback received from the interlocutor. Metalinguistic function enables learners to control their output and internalize linguistic knowledge.

Compared to face-to-face communication, Computer-Mediated Communication, (CMC), is different in several ways. To exemplify, studies into the interactions of second language learners who made use of Computer-Mediated Communication have demonstrated that there is more language production (Kern, 1995), a conducive environment for noticing (Yuksel and Inan, 2014), less-anxious learners (Chun, 1994) and far more contribution (Warschauer, 1996) compared to learners in face-to-face interaction. Through Computer-Mediated Communication, learners coming from the same L1 background used the target language more than they did in classroom situations (Cheon, 2003). Özdener and Satar (2008) conducted a study to see whether CMC technologies could be of any help in improving speaking fluency and they found that despite the participants' common L1 ground, 91% of the chats were in the target language.

The limited opportunities for facial and physical reactions, for instance, make the psychological processes peculiar to CMC worthy of investigation. Two major consequences which might be taken either positively or negatively according to Dietz-Uhler and Bishop-Clark (2002) are individuation and anonymity. Judging the positive aspects of individuation and anonymity, CMC is usually impersonal, free, and uninhibited. At this level it could be argued that behaviour may not be attributable to a particular subject, and people may not be identified by name. The positive aspect here is that in making judgments, it is the ideas and behavior that count rather than the identity, that is,

judgments are not clouded by personal inspiration. However, looking at the negative side, it is possible to argue that computer-mediated communication could be uninhibited and depersonalized. When creating an interaction, people make use of social context cues. However, those cues may not be available in computer-assisted communication. Therefore, people might not adapt their discourse or behavior in accordance with the social context cues. What is more, communication through computer-mediated means may be depersonalized. In accordance with the social presence theory (Short et al. 1976), when the channels or modes are few, the attention paid to the individuals in interaction is correspondingly little. However, recent findings by and large lead us to consider the interpersonal and hyperpersonal aspects of communication rather than sticking to impersonal communication (See Walther, 1996). The latter, in Walther's terms, was more about getting the job done by using e-mails in a business environment. However, interpersonal communication took the lead as it allowed people to share their personal information. Moreover, hypercommunication occurs when users experience commonality and are self-aware, physically separated, and communicating via a limited-cues channel that still allows them to selectively present and edit, and to construct and reciprocate representations of their partners and relations without the interference of environmental reality (p. 33).

According to Walther (1996), four elements define hyperpersonal communication: the creation of an idealized receiver image, idealized self-image, the ability to self-edit, and the feedback loop which helps create reciprocal interaction. Although these idealized images could also be deceptive, their instrumental role in helping to promote reciprocity and reaching a mutual understanding is of great value in constructing the messages.

2.3. Web-Based Instruction

Web-based instruction, one of the most recent innovations in educational technology, provides an effective means for conveying instruction to a remote setting. As Smith and Ragan (1993) state:

> Instruction is the delivery of information and activities that facilitate learners' attainment of intended, specific learning goals, and the medium is the physical means by which the instructional message is communicated. Designing and delivering instruction on the Web requires thoughtful analysis and investigation of how to use the Web with instructional design principles. (p. 164)

As indicated, web-based instruction carries much importance in terms of fulfilling students' needs. Among the web-based utilities used in instruction, the most popular may be instant messaging applications, also referred to as synchronous messaging or online chat. Instant messaging is a form of synchronous communication, as opposed to asynchronous electronic communication such as email and online discussion forums. Garcia and Jacobs (1999) define this as 'quasi-synchronous' CMC (computer-mediated communication) when discussing differences between the turn-taking systems of the first language, online text chat between three persons and oral conversation. This may result from the delay between writing and posting of responses by participants, who also read rather than hear each other's statements. In online text chatting, variability in typing speed therefore also impacts on the length of delays between the three-tiered process of production, posting and reading by participants, while in an asynchronous setting this is just the opposite. An asynchronous setting is rather different from a synchronous setting, as the users have time to read and think deeply about the issue and respond without a time restriction. This may help users to feel more comfortable and free to express what they think about the particular issue as they have time to search and comment by reading others' responses in that kind of setting.

Regarding the importance of web-based instruction, Mazzolini and Maddison (2007) investigated the importance of online instruction and concluded that students using online discussion forums are highly affected by the method of instruction and the instructor in terms of sharing and interactivity. Thus, it can be said that the web-based instruction has to do with the instructors' preferences first, in the sense that characteristics of users and students of online discussion forums are determined by the instructors choices in designing the online discussion atmosphere.

2.3.1. Online Interaction and Social Networking Websites

Online discussion forums are one of the most popular tools used in web-based instruction. The first online discussion forums came out in the early years of 1990, with online groups and messaging tools that date back to the 1980s (Schneider and Tooley, 1986; Burri, et al., 2006). Online discussion forums (ODF) are Internet-mediated tools which allow people to share ideas, thoughts and other kinds of written knowledge. In

online discussion forums, users can send or comment on messages sent by other users. They have been used largely by instructors at universities to apply interactive learning outside the classroom (Dube, et al., 2006). Online discussion forums are thought to have an important benefit in the educational field, as they can help to bring different ideas together for effective and interactive learning and teaching (Harman and Koohang, 2005). Zhang et al (2006) support the key role of interactive web-based education in increasing education quality, in the sense that it enables participants to develop knowledge via exchanging their ideas and thus feel a sense of professional achievement. Mutual learning environments seem to be influenced by ODFs, and students find them easy to use (Swan, 2002).

According to Richardson and Ice (2010), asynchronous online discussions structure a constructivist learning approach that may improve interaction and the critical thinking skills of users. Moore (1989) classified these interaction types into three groups: (1) learner-instructor interaction, in which there is a strong interaction between student and instructor; (2) learner-learner interaction, in which different ideas of different participants are accumulated in an electronic pool; and (3) learner-content interaction, in which the material has an important role in gathering information. According to Swan (2002), student-instructor and student-student interactions have a positive effect on student achievement. Moreover, Swan (2002) points to the efficacy of online-discussion boards in facilitating interactions between instructors and students. In accordance with the natural settings perceptions' of students, Song and McNary (2011) concluded that there is a slight difference between the concrete classroom and online-discussion classroom in terms of students' attitudes, most of whom prefer to interact in web-based settings.

2.3.2. Designing Online Interactions

One of the serious challenges that instructors using online interactions meet is the problem of designing the setting that can allow smooth communication. It has been argued that discussion interactions which have a direct impact on students' courses may encourage students in collaboration in the discussions (Dennen, 2005; Masters and Oberprieler, 2004). One of the most interesting and successful topics is the comments on exams. Commenting on exams is significant to students, as it helps them to improve their grades by commenting and sharing their ideas and experiences. Online discussions also enable

students to investigate and criticize answers (Guzdial and Turns, 2000, Hew and Cheung, 2010). Topics for discussion must be open-ended, as there will be possible answers or criticisms about the issue. According to Poscente and Fahy (2003), activities where participants can comment freely result in student participation when compared with other types of activities; in contrast, discussion activities with only one limited answer depress student activation and participation, as when a participant or student comments on the issue by giving an exact answer, students feel that it is useless to comment on it again (Dennen, 2005). Therefore, while designing the content of the online discussion, the instructor needs to create issues which are open to any comment, rather than requiring a definitive answer. This may lead students to feel better in responding, as well as enabling the instructor to see how personal views on a particular issue have been considered.

The positive effect of online interactions on students' learning has been emphasized; however, further experimental studies are needed to show in what ways it affects students' achievement (DeWever et al., 2006). In order to cope with the dilemmas of online interactions, experts in the field suggest that the models and meanings of students' posts, the content of the posts and the coherence of the total posts should be sought and analyzed carefully so as to assist online learning. Moreover, the effect of model and design of instructional tools on students' online interaction is a field which seems to have been untouched and needs further study. Apart from those mentioned before, discussions in which the topics can be commented upon in an open-ended way are trendy and this is certainly the most-preferred way to help students to focus on readings in an online classroom atmosphere. Open-ended discussions research shows that topical and open-ended issues may enrich collaborative learning, in that students have the chance to comment and share their ideas on the topic presented in the online discussion setting (Sammons, 2007).

It is a common belief among the researchers and practitioners that using different features of online discussion forums may facilitate the interaction process, as students share not only ideas but also other materials during the class. Most of the web-based discussion forums give users the opportunity to share documents, links and such kinds of issues as are useful in the learning process, interactively. What teachers find appropriate may seem logical, but the needs of the students must be taken into consideration too.

2.3.3. Perceptions towards Online Interactions

There are numerous studies on the attitudes and perceptions of students with regard to online discussion environments. For example, Redmon and Burger (2004) demonstrated that students think that an online environment is less threatening, less likely to be subjected to single participant domination and less restricted in terms of physical meeting where students can join in even in their bedrooms via computers. Vonderwell et al (2007) also identified online discussion forums as useful tools in helping student's meta-cognitive awareness and achievement of self-promotion strategies.

Giving the details on the issue of distance education, Moore and Kearsley (2005) state that stressing the simplicity in time and place management of the online discussion tools, the web-based forums and classrooms have encouraged people to join, and that they learn through these forums with ease, particularly in the case of those who have limited time to follow such kinds of courses continuously. It is widely accepted that time-management in academic courses is vital for those who study and work at the same time. With regard to the issue of time-management, students generally say that, "I learned an amazing amount in this course: I spent more time working on this course than I ever did in a face-to-face class" or "This course was too time consuming; I wish the instructor would keep in mind that many of us are busy professionals who work full-time" (Brown and Green, 2009: 51).

As many academics have become social networking websites users, the chances and opportunities for student-teacher interaction to occur on social networking websites increase, because social networking websites provide chances for teachers and students to interact easily and quickly in new ways. Social networking websites also allow students to have access to the teachers' personal information provided through profiles, status updates, and photos. This in return may create a suitable atmosphere for both sides to establish a good rapport (Kayaoğlu and Saltaş, 2013). Johnson and Aragon (2003) argued that asynchronous environments can help students evaluate the process with other students and participants, investigate subjects, and respond more intensely (Song and McNary, 2011); furthermore, Lapadat (2002) states that participants in online settings should write and share their individual responses to be aware of the positive effect of online communication

(Song and McNary, 2011). Sutton (2001) similarly indicates that students in online settings may acquire via explicit interface, in which observation and mutual participation carry a great deal of importance. To sum up, any characteristic of online discussion forums seems to have an effect on students which may indirectly have an impact on students' perceptions at the same time.

2.3.4. Gender Attitudes in Social Networks

Gender has always been an area of interest in many disciplines. More specifically discrepancies, if any, between male and female participants in their attitudes, perceptions or practice, in social networks and online interaction systems, have been investigated and analyzed in detail. There are also a number of studies aiming at identifying students' perceptions and attitudes towards the integration of online interaction tools into the language classroom. For instance, a study by Thomson and Murachver (2001) on electronic mail interaction concluded that both male female users were similarly found to ask questions; make compliments, share their sorrows and apologies, and attitudes; and to humiliate their virtual friends (Newman, et al., 2008). In a study conducted with 36 female and 50 male participants, Mulac et al (2000) found that men preferred to use negations and seeking while female participants tended to use more command in terms of domination and authority. The results were not surprising at all, men used more words while women used longer sentences, the items reversed when compared cross-sectionally, which means that men tended to use shorter sentences and women tended to use fewer words. According to Newman et al (2008), the only explanation for these contradictory reports is that there is a natural relationship between word choice and gender which indicates and supports the idea that there are gender differences in terms of language use.

Behind searching the virtual words used by people, the actual use of verbs has also been investigated. Regarding gender differences in using language: adverbs, conjunctions like *but, and* etc. and modal verbs like *can, may, could,* especially in using question forms, are preferred by females more than males in terms of using place names, slang and articles (Biber, et al., 1998; Mehl and Pennebaker, 2003; Newman, et al., 2008). In a study by Aydın (2014) on students' attitudes towards F-portfolio males were more comfortable while females suffered from the fear of negative evaluation more than males.

In a relatively more comprehensive quasi-experimental study, Kayaoğlu (2012) investigated gender difference, using an online forum application in process-oriented writing instruction in an EFL (English as a foreign language) setting. A total of 227 university English Prep students, 121 of whom were male and 106 female, participated in this study. For this purpose, an interactive website Mywritingportfolio.net was constructed for students to write and send their term writing assignments, with an option for other students to read and comment on them. People other than peers and teachers were also allowed to have access to the website as guest readers to read and comment on the students' writing. Following a semester-long experiment on the use of the forum-based blog for the EFL writing class, a questionnaire was administered to explore the attitudes of the male and female students towards the implementation of the writing process through the internet-based application.

Contrary to some studies favoring males in the use of information technology (Adam and Bruce 1993), the overall analysis of the research revealed that there was no statistically significant difference between the male and female students. Both male and female students appeared very similar in their approach to developing a positive attitude towards using the online application, indicating that male and female students were equally receptive to the experience of becoming an active user of internet-based applications

2.4. Facebook

Facebook is social networking website which has become the most popular website among others within the last 7 years. Created by Mark Zuckerberg, who used to be a student at Harvard University, Facebook today has over 1 billion active users and the number is increasing day by day. Any person from any region of the world can join Facebook. There are hundreds of countries using Facebook today. Turkey stands third in the numbers of active users, after the UK in second place and the USA in first (Newsroom.fb.com, 2015).

When it was first created and began to be used by millions, there were some different ideas and theories about Facebook and its primary role. For instance, the biggest deal about Facebook is that there is an organic connection between Facebook and the CIA.

Facebook may also collect information about you from other sources, such as newspapers, blogs, instant messaging services, and other users of the Facebook service through the operation of the service (eg. photo tags) in order to provide you with more useful information and a more personalized experience. By using Facebook, you are consenting to have your personal data transferred to and processed in the United States. (The New Zealand Herald, 2015).

There are numerous conspiracy theories about Facebook, but as a global trademark, the Facebook administration and Mark Zuckerberg naturally deny these claims. Bearing in mind that Facebook serves billions of people worldwide, people seem to be addicted to Facebook and do not even appear to   take these claims seriously, as the rising numbers of active users proves.

Figure 1: Facebook main page for signing up a new account
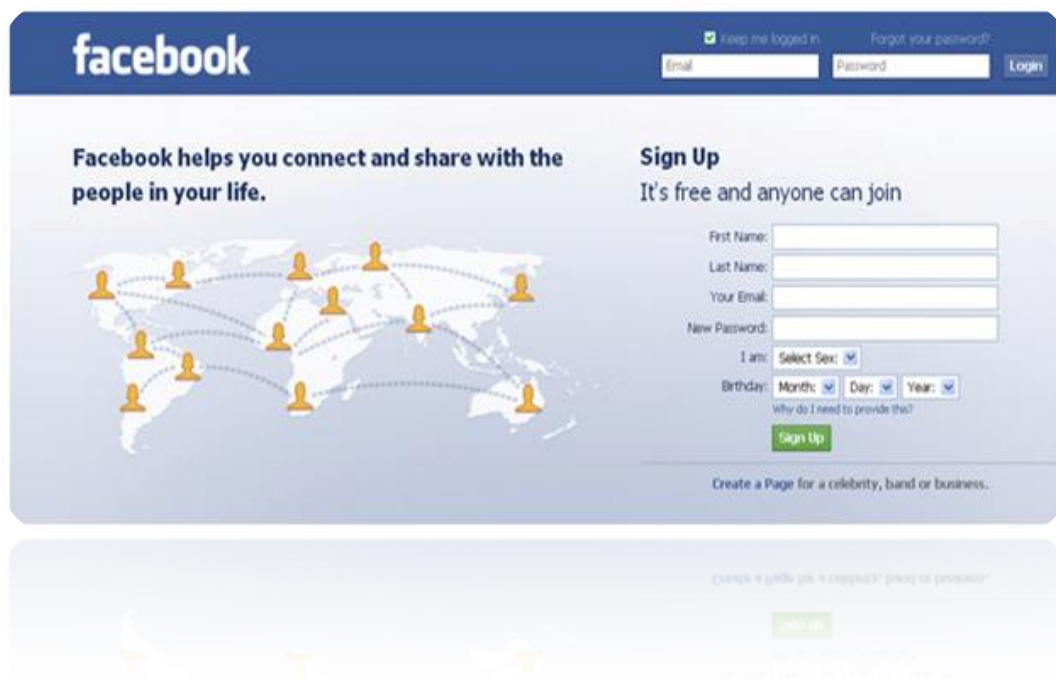
As seen in Figure (1), signing up for an account at http://www.facebook.com is simple, by giving personal information and filling out a simple form. Facebook users are generally real individuals; that means in order to sign up for a personal Facebook account a person's real name, should be used. Nonetheless, some people or organizations may use nicknames or abbreviations as their real names. After finishing the sign-up process, users are allowed to go to a page where they can seek and find friends. It should be kept in mind that Facebook's system for recommending friends is based on the email which is provided

in sign-up process and the information about the user who may know other users in terms of hometown, job, school and other information. After these processes, the user can send Friend Request to people with whom they have mutual friends or information. After that, the users will be asked for some extra information to create a profile. When this information is given correctly, Facebook will send a confirmation e-mail to complete the sign-up process. By confirming, the user enters a unique virtual world where lots of chances to share lots of things and find friends become possible for everyone.

2.4.1. Criticisms of Facebook

It is not a matter for contention that social media, including Facebook, have become a social phenomenon, enabling continuous contact between and among faraway friends and distant families. As the most crowded virtual world, Facebook creates a platform on which people may have instant communication with each other and with those that they do not know, have not met and most probably will never meet in real life.

However, social networks, in particular Facebook have received very sharp criticism on a wide range of issues. The type of communications and interactions on the Facebook platform include overloaded useless information and trivialities that people would not bother to mention in an actual face-to-face interaction. It is a real irony to observe that people are engrossed in matters that they would not dare to mention in real life. These reciprocally welcomed constant intrusions into our private life through Facebook create ironically the real oxymoron of our age. These multilateral intrusions can only be cognized by the fact that people are being deliberately oblivious to the realities of life and are choosing to live in a fantasy world in which they are dead avatars showcasing highly idealized lives with pretentious posts, quotes, pictures and mundane matters. Then, it is to desperately log on to be liked by people who have a juvenile need for constant feedback and the Facebook must-likeability, without which they feel disconnected from the faux unsocial social life of their own.

Global press coverage in relation to Facebook-related stories has shown how people suffer from some kind of identity crisis (Harris, 2011; Bromley 2011, American Psychological Association 2011), in the sense that they are desperate to become mini

celebrities because they define themselves by other people knowing, watching and admiring them. This is a new world in which what counts most is what other people think about them. People are making their own online reality TV show, like a commodity they are frantically striving to sell. So there is a new generation obsessed with their self-image, mixed with or replaced by other digital images. This is cynical exploitation, on a global scale, abusing humanity's inner weaknesses, as people strive to exist in the eyes of others or endear themselves to the online world not as what they are but as how they want to be seen.

According to a report issued by American Psychological Association (2011), excessive exposure to social networking sites, in particular Facebook, brings about psychological disorders such as narcissistic tendencies, antisocial behaviour, anxiety, and depression. An interesting study conducted by Krasnova et al. (2013) reported that one out of three people feel worse and become unsatisfied with their lives after visiting Facebook, causing feelings of resentment, jealousy and unhappiness. Interestingly enough, it is the vacation photos and supposed happiness of others that cause the most resentment and envy. In support of this study, University of Michigan research (BBC News 2013) found that the more people used Facebook, the worse they felt afterwards and the more their life satisfaction levels declined because of the unrepresentative highlights of their peers. Furney (2014) views Facebook primarily as a fake and a fetish as people sit behind a screen, choosing to exist mostly in the daydream realm of a fantasy world:

> It's no wonder people are feeling disenchanted, disillusioned, disconnected by it all: far from being social, this kind of "new media" has pulled the plug on the very personal interactions that humans as social animals need to thrive and survive. … How can anyone be social -- really engaging with fellow human beings, and all of the joy and satisfaction that entails -- while concealed behind a glass screen powered by whirring electronics, oceans of fiber optics and orbiting satellites? All the while putting their very best face forward when everyone knows people are fallible and that it's those intrinsic aspects that make them interesting… Years from now we will look back at this apparent "phenomenon" and laugh at the juvenile idiocy of it, our pretense at showcasing the best of us when we were never even being true to ourselves at all, but duped by the false oasis of a promised land that's not even a land but a created dystopia of wires and glass and whizzing electrons designed only to profit those who create them -- and worse: with users as product.

Papers are full of social media driven horror stories involving Facebook, which is claimed to have a detrimental effect on marriages. According to family law specialists, many private lives have been thrown into turmoil by irrational behavior on the social networking website Facebook contributing to separation and divorce (Foxnews, 2015). Facebook is

cited in one out of every five divorce cases. The British Divorce Center claims that about 20 percent of all divorce documents refer to Facebook (PcWorld, 2015). The fundamental question is whether people are becoming more socially maladjusted than they already were and whether Facebook is creating social network narcissists. Is Facebook just a medium? With her hyperbolic manifestation of love for Facebook, Dora, though a fictional character, symbolizes a stereotype of the Facebook generation:

> I luuurve Facebook. I love it so much I would marry it. Darling
> Facebook, please marry me so's we can always be together
> and you can entertain me non stop and I will never be bored. (Dora, 17 years old) (French 2010: 371).

Facebook users feel that they communicate with people all around the world, which indirectly helps develop interpersonal awareness. Mutual understanding based on cross cultural awareness is a prerequisite in preventing any communication breakdown on their part as they try to keep the communication flow running smoothly (Goodwin, 1999).

For a thorough communication flow to occur between the interlocutors in any speech act, the speaker is supposed to fill in the information-gap about the issue they are discussing or simply talking about. On Facebook, without using any non-verbal cues, they write to communicate what they intend to express by means of information-transfer, using a virtual system of communication—the language of communication—into the actual system of writing deprived of the social climate needed for a better communicative performance. If one of the speakers has the right piece of information to put in the missing part of the meaningful whole—*jigsaw*, then there is this genuine communicate purpose behind the act of conversing with the other on their virtual page, which cuts short the spatial distance that corresponds to the proper social distance needed for successful communication when the conversing pair might be thousands of miles away. "We speak with our speech organs," says Abercrombie (Hudson, 1986: 134), "but we converse with our bodies." Body posture, eye-movements, facial expressions and even the tone of voice matter more than what our actual words say in any conversation (Dunnett, et al. 1996). Though her claims appear to be based on anecdotal evidence, Harris (2011) blames Facebook for not allowing young people to develop non-verbal skills such as the ability to establish eye contact during conversation. The interlocutors, or in other words, *Facebook buddies*, are in a state to cooperate in order to provide what they need most in their

interaction to arrive at the right information with due mutual effort. This sort of task-dependency requires cooperative skills, because "humans are not born instinctively knowing how to cooperate with others" (Christison, 1990:6). To determine whether they have understood whatever they communicate to the extent that they are supposed to, they check to correct each other for their content, while they are trying to transfer it as best they can. All these communicative principles as Littlewood (1983) proposes for successful communication, take effect in the act of conversing, making the act 'communicative' in its own right; however, it is not enough to capture deeper understanding of human consciousness, no matter how sophisticated the language of communication may sound and how proficient and skillful the interlocutors may appear in the medium of conversation.

Using the language of communication for mutual understanding of human consciousness does not guarantee at all that the speakers mutually develop interpersonal awareness, even if their effort for communication is supposed to have developed it in the process of time. Miller (1978:12) elaborates on the significance of deeper understanding of human consciousness, asserting "Language though highly sophisticated system of communication cannot capture the more elusive aspect of human consciousness, because "socially shared conventions can have little value, and communication about private psychological experience can only carried out by analogy, by metaphor and by poetry."

Having casual talk on the internet is far from the act of developing self-awareness as it is based on daily matters rather than deep emotional experience and the intellectual inward voyaging experience of the interlocutors to discover more about their self existence. Intra personal awareness as an inward voyaging experience would help increase the outward looking experience for creating higher interpersonal awareness, as they would know who they are and whom they stand with in their own life changing experience (Kumral, 2011). The intra personal self awareness building experience, according to Black (2010), is an inner narrative, "the sense an individual life seen from the inside has meaningful shape, a story" (p.509). This inner narrative, the story built within the self helps develop a thorough understanding of life shared with all the others as the individual is in close proximity with them. They are all in a state to develop interpersonal awareness based on how the individual holds up a mirror to his/her inner psyche. Success needed in any act of developing an interpersonal relationship depends upon how the individual has

already developed his/her own intra personal self awareness in order to empathize better with the significant other, considering the differences in cultural values and the identity of the other for developing the intercultural relationship, because, as Nizer puts it "when there is no difference, there is indifference" (as cited in DeVito, 2002:311). The problem is whether the interpersonal relationship can ever be developed by promoting interpersonal awareness, and to what extent this interpersonal awareness contributes to personal communicative competence, expected to lead to interpersonal communicative competence.

From the language learning experience perspective, this benefit of interpersonal communication as the inner motive of the Facebook user is what they are supposed to have intended to develop during the process of communication. It is a chain process, because the inner motive to communicate has its own inner drive in place to develop communicative competence which requires linguistic competence, the linguistic knowledge of all the forms. This competence is developed if it is successfully performed in any act of communication, which helps develop communicative performance if the language is properly used for communication because, as Dell Hymes (as cited in Paulston, 1992) argues," communicative competence must include not only knowledge of linguistic forms but also knowledge of when, how and to whom it is appropriate to use these forms" (p.49). As a result, intra personal awareness helps develop proper interpersonal awareness, leading to proper interpersonal communication skill which requires and builds linguistic competence in turn. This proper linguistic competence requires and develops linguistic performance as the users become competent language users and better communicators in the long run (Kumral, 2009). They use the language they learn and acquire for communicative purposes, which is the overall objective of language teaching programs of ELT departments.

Even though it is claimed in many studies that (e.g., Blattner and Lomicka, 2012; Lomicka and Lord, 2011) language learning could be promoted through social networks, it seems apparent that the existing evidence should be supported by further research. The need for such research is made evident in Blattner and Lomicka (2012), who argued that there are still many gaps to fill in:

How is FB [Facebook] being used in the language classroom? How do students respond to
the integration of this social networking site in courses? What are the attitudes of higher

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education foreign language learners towards the social networking website FB [Facebook]? And what is its role in new learning spaces and with today's learners? These questions, among others, need to be addressed in order to facilitate the educators' task of developing pedagogically meaningful activities using SNSs [social networking sites] in higher education classrooms and to contribute to the growing body of research on SNSs [social networking sites]. (p. 11)

The gaps the authors mentioned above have also been present in some of the criticisms leveled at social network sites. Privacy and data security, and a lack of proper Web 2.0 literacy are among the concerns which make many educators shy away from using social networks like Facebook. Some surveys administered in Greece indicated that despite the teachers' positive beliefs and attitudes towards on-line learning and educational institutions, the use of Internet communication technologies was quite limited. Moreover, in most cases Facebook is considered as a supplementary platform, not the primary learning environment. Although a considerable number of participants (66%) in Tiryakioğlu and Erzurum's study (2011) demonstrated a favorable stance towards Facebook, when the instructional side of Facebook was taken into account, the instructors were hesitant about its use for classroom discussions.

Ekoç (2014) conducted a study with 22 students to see the role of social media outside the language classroom. Despite a positive attitude towards Facebook use, some students were not eager to share posts:

> Promoting online spaces may not always reap the outcomes that teachers initially set because we can predict neither student's individual, culturally inscribed attitudes concerning technology nor decisions that they will consequently make in our classes. In this respect, as for the initial observations, although the degree of involvement showed a great variety from one student to another, some of the students exhibited an enjoyment of learning and extension in posts and were readily open to challenges and the prospect of being able to learn from each other and discuss different viewpoints about topics of common interests whereas some of the students were reluctant to share posts on the group page or comment on each other posts or show a signal of following the group page. (p.22)

Holotescu and Grosseck (2012) carried out a mini-study in which they wanted to find out to what extent university academics adopted social media platforms. The use of social media in higher education, according to the participants, could be negatively affected by some potential limitations. These limitations include trivialization of content, security of data and people, unwanted online information which leads to cognitive overload such as spams, substandard quality of the content offered, difficulty of identity management which might result in misuse or abuse of anonymity, ethical concerns such as

confidentiality, lack of agreed institutional practices, waste of time, emotional limitations, artificiality of communication through social media, and perceptions regarding the non-academic nature of social media activities.

Even though the integration of social networks into educational domains receives positive feedback in general, some might be doubtful about the usefulness of such networks. This usually leads learners to have a categorical opinion about their usefulness, that is, social networks compared to face-to-face instruction are considered to be instrumental in some areas, but not others. Dogoriti, et al. (2014) carried out a study in which they explored students' perceptions of online, learning management system (LMS), with and without the use of Facebook (FB) as an adjunctive learning platform. Of all the students, 76% perceived that Facebook helped them to build a sense of community and a considerable ratio (69%) indicated that Facebook contributed to their learning pace. However, the learners were still in favor of the use of Facebook as a supplementary activity rather than a primary one.

There is, however, counter evidence advocating the use of Internet and social media networks. A growing body of research appears to link online exposure to increases in academic achievement, verbal literacy and self-esteem (Haddon and Livingstone 2009, Bromley, 2011). The positive aspects of social networks, particularly those of Facebook have been stated in many studies. A study by Yu, et al. (2010) revealed that on-line social networks helped learners learn better and adapt to the university culture easily. Participants in the study reported that their networking engagement on Facebook promoted their learning outcomes as well as helping them become part of a school community. The authors point to aspects of the socialization process such as social acceptance and acculturation, which are closely linked to social learning outcomes and social network sites. Research has also highlighted the positive role of social networks in triggering authentic communication (Lloyd, 2012; Lomicka and Lord, 2011), in helping cultures come closer (Birky and Collins, 2011), and in socialization and improving language learning (Lomicka and Lord, 2011).

In an increasingly interactive digital world, there are undeniable consequences of indulging in social networking websites, some of which have been discussed above. This is

not exclusive to Facebook. Today children are born into a digital world where the internet has always been a part of their reality, which we cannot afford to overlook. No technological product has an inherent capacity to be constructive or destructive. In spite of the negative consequences of Facebook listed above, it is undeniable that Facebook can be an invaluable and effective tool, when used pedagogically, assisting teachers in a much more efficient way to achieve curriculum goals regardless of nationality, gender and geography. The current study was an attempt of this nature.

2.4.2. Perceptions and Attitudes towards Online Tools and Facebook Use in Language Learning Environments

Social networks such as Facebook have received much attention in terms of users' perceptions. Even if most of the participants in different studies point to favorable perceptions or attitudes towards using Facebook, some findings take us to the fact that the differences in perceptions might be situational and non-enduring. However, some individual differences help us interpret the results, if not draw conclusions. Gender, for instance, has been an issue which needs to be carefully treated in student-teacher interaction. Especially with the rise of the Internet, gender and the Internet Technologies has gained a new pace. Even though overall Internet use did not exhibit a considerable difference by gender, the nature of Internet use was found to indicate differences. Namely, regarding communication purposes, females use the Internet more than males do, while playing games and searching for information were activities carried out mostly by men (Jackson, et al., 2008).

Hewitt and Forte (2006) conducted a study in which the great majority of the male participants (73%) desired a faculty presence on Facebook. However, the percentage fell to 35% when the female students who wanted the faculty presence were taken into account. Gender was also found to be an influential aspect in users' purposes of use in Mazman and Usluel (2011). The researchers gathered data through online surveys from 870 users and the findings revealed that males and females exhibited considerable differences in terms of purposes of use, namely maintaining existing relationships, making new relationships, using for academic purposes and following a specific agenda. To be more specific, Facebook was used more by females in three categories, namely for maintaining existing relationships, academic purposes and following an agenda. However, when the making

new relationships category was analyzed, it was seen that the males indicated a higher rate than the females. The authors attribute this to the females' tendency to disguise their identity so as to ensure privacy. In another study, drawing a cross-national comparison of the learners' technology acceptance levels, Korean students were reported to demonstrate an anxious attitude towards using social networks, even though they were positive about them (Yoo and Huang, 2011). However, their American counterparts demonstrated a less anxious attitude and they were reported to be more optimistic about online video sharing and using instant messenger, that is Korean students were more anxious when they were using Web 2.0 applications.

When the cultural differences in Internet use were investigated in a cross-cultural context, it emerged that situational and national contexts are predictive of individuals' computer use patterns. For instance, Allwood and Wang (1990) studied how students in China and Sweden perceived computers. The results indicated that the Chinese were more positive than the Swedes. British and Chinese students were compared with respect to people's use of or attitudes towards the Internet and computers (Li and Kirkup, 2007). These students displayed some differences which were attributable to differences in technology adoption time. For study purposes, computers were used by British students more than Chinese, whereas Chinese students felt more confident in terms of computer skills. Schumacher and Morahan-Martin (2001) wanted to examine the Internet use, computer skills and attitudes of incoming college students at two different periods, namely 1989/90 and 1997. Their results demonstrated that students' computer experience increased in time and that they had greater experience of computers in 1997. Moreover, it was apparent that even though there were considerable gender differences in terms of users' access to and use of computers, the gender differences decreased in 1997. In 1989/90 period, computer and Internet use was a male dominant act. However, the male dominance continued in computer ownership, programming and game playing. Kuwaiti students in Omar's study (1992) had less positive attitudes when compared to their American counterparts. However, several studies conducted recently have also pointed to shrinking gender and cultural differences in terms of schooling and personal use of computers. Abedalaziz, et al. (2013) investigated whether Malaysian and Jordanian teachers' attitudes were related to gender, culture and the interaction between gender and culture. The researchers found significant differences in the mentioned variables.

As technology has truly become an integrated part of lessons, researchers have expended considerable effort over several decades to study its impact on students. To this end, the elements of CALL have been widely studied by researchers in language learning. In their study, Sagara and Zapata (2008) tried to identify the perceptions of Spanish learners towards using an online workbook. The participants were 245 L2 beginner learners of Spanish from a public North American university. The participants completed a questionnaire about language background and a proficiency test before the experiment. In addition to these, they had two language tests after four and eight months of the experiment. The study showed that most of the students did not need technical support while doing online workbook, which was fairly easy to complete. Besides, most of the participants mentioned that online homework helped them understand the topics better than when they learned them in the classroom. In other words, online homework enabled them to understand the classroom content better. On the other hand, less than half of the participants stated that online homework helped them improve their pronunciation and reading skills. Contrary to this, almost two thirds of the participants agreed that, as a result of doing online homework, their grammatical and lexical knowledge had improved.

In a quantitative study, Kuo (2008) applied a questionnaire to determine EFL student teachers' perceptions about using Internet-assisted language learning activities in Taiwan. In the light of the students' responses, it can be said that most participants agreed with the idea that the Internet provides rich environments for learning. Moreover, most students felt that the Internet is a useful tool for learning. A considerable number of the participants (81.8%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the Internet helped them improve their English skills. Quite as expected, the positive connotations of Internet use in the language classroom made student teachers optimistic about benefitting from it in their future teaching. This shows that, student teachers will likely use the Internet when they become teachers, as they think that these web sites support learning. In a quasi-experimental study regarding the effect of blog centered writing instruction on EFL students' writing performance Arslan and Şahin-Kızıl (2010) reported that those using an online blog application in their writing courses outperformed those who received only in-class writing instruction, concluding that the use of blog software has the potential to promote more effective writing instruction.

In order to find out students' satisfaction levels and preferences in learning style in terms of web-based learning, Aliweh (2011) conducted a study on 51 third-year college students in Egypt. The findings from the questionnaire on their satisfaction levels showed that the students were definitely satisfied with web-based learning, although some students pointed to the lack of immediate feedback and direct interaction. Kinesthetic, tactile and visual learning styles were the most preferred learning styles of the learners. Moreover, there was a significant correlation between the kinesthetic learning style and students' satisfaction; that is, kinesthetic learners in general seemed more satisfied with learning from web-based activities.

In the study of Doorn, et al. (2010), the researchers compared traditional homework with online homework, and the relationship between student characteristics, study behaviors, and the perceived benefits of online homework systems was investigated. The results showed that the students found online homework more useful than the traditional paper-pencil fashion especially for its flexibility and opportunities for immediate feedback.

Tokay Argan (2009) researched students' attitudes towards WebCT application, which is a web-based technology that allows face-to-face and online education. A questionnaire was applied to 151 students in two faculties in a state university in Turkey. Four dimensions appeared according to the findings of the study. These factors are interaction, learning experience, time and compensation, exam and exercise.

Aydin (2014) studied the use of Facebook as a portfolio-keeping tool in teaching writing in an EFL setting. The sample group consisted of 101 EFL learners. Data collection tools were a portfolio attitude scale, portfolio contribution questionnaire and portfolio problem questionnaire. The participants demonstrated a positive attitude towards the use of Facebook as a portfolio tool even though some problems such as the boring, tiring and time-consuming nature of portfolios, the difficulty in feedback provision and difficulty in coping with the subsequent drafts were noted by some participants. It was also found that F-portfolios were thought to contribute to the development of several skills at the same time. In accordance with the findings, reading, writing, grammar and vocabulary were the skills that were nurtured.

Baran and Ata (2013) studied university students' usage of Web 2.0 technologies, in terms of frequencies, skill levels and educational use and explored the relationship between the variables in question and gender, foreign language level, computer ownership and the duration of Internet connection. A total of 2776 university students participated in the survey study. The findings showed that social networking sites were used more than blogs, podcasts and video sharing websites both for general and educational purposes. For general purposes, males were found to use Web 2.0 technologies more frequently and more efficiently than females, while there was not a significant difference in terms of the educational use of Web 2.0 technologies. As the participants' language proficiency level increased, their tendency to use Web 2.0 technologies increased as well. This therefore, the researchers called for the design of language classrooms where Web 2.0 technologies may be efficiently used.

Kahraman et al. (2013) studied university students' attitudes, beliefs, values, behavior and opinions in relation to Internet use. The researchers gathered data from 3 universities in Turkey. A total of 294 pre-service teachers participated in the study, in which a survey method was used. In order to collect data, "the scale of educational Internet use self-efficacy beliefs" developed by Şahin (2009) was used. The study showed that the participants' self-efficacy beliefs were quite high. It was also found that self-efficacy levels, increased with increasing computer experience, suggesting that students should be given the opportunity to access computers and the Internet in their learning environments.

2.5. Facebook as an Educational Tool

As many academics use Facebook, the chance for student-teacher interaction on Facebook is likely to be high. For instance, Hewitt and Forte (2006) state that teachers' main aim in using Facebook is to communicate with their students. Moreover, if lecturers want to make use of Facebook as a social learning tool, teachers and students will have to communicate and interact continuously. The students' perceptions of this communication and interaction atmosphere may be sometimes negative; there are both positive and negative views of students about interacting with their teachers on Facebook (Hewitt and Forte, 2006).

There are numerous perceptions about the integration of technology into teaching, which has clear implications for the use of Facebook.

Any technology that is able to captivate so many students for so much time not only carries implications for how those students view the world but also offers an opportunity for educators to understand the elements of social networking that students find so compelling and to incorporate those elements into teaching and learning (Educause Learning Initiative, 2006, p. 2).

Although the view above is mainly based on the general issue of technology-based learning, it also implies that "social networking sites can have a positive effect on motivation and attainment across the further education sector" (Coughlan, 2009). Moreover, Munoz and Towner (2009) argue in favor of integrating Facebook into education on the grounds that it not only enables students to help each other but also promotes communication between teacher and students as well as among peers. Based upon the existing literature about the field, it seems that there are many applications similar in terms of assisting typical learning management, but Facebook is preferred by lecturers with the aim of connecting and interacting with students in the learning process. Among these communication and interaction processes, lecturers announce course requirements, events, post events about the course and upload links, videos, photos and documents regarding the course content. Besides, the research conducted on the issue shows that the teacher can also create discussion groups for students to share ideas and comment on the issues about the relevant topic which is determined by the teacher. These processes enhance students' engagement in a communal activity. This means that students will feel both free and responsible for the issues which will help them to communicate with peers or lecturers in a comfortable way. (Munoz and Towner, 2009; Hewit and Forte, 2006; Teclehaimanot and Hickman, 2011).

Teclehaimanot and Hickman (2011) state that students' attitudes towards Facebook are positive, indicating that the use of Facebook by faculty members is welcomed by students who will enjoy much more freedom there than in the physical world. But it also means that adding a teacher as a friend, or poking or commenting on a photo is quite natural for the students as they think that the virtual friendships are much easier to develop than real ones. However, the study of Teclehaimanot and Hickman (2011) showed that

some students found it inappropriate for teachers to share everything or poke them, while others found it quite natural. It is also interesting to note that gender and the graduate-undergraduate differences play important roles in deciding the manner, but the common issue in the study was that the majority of students found it appropriate to have an interaction with the teacher (Teclehaimanot and Hickman, 2011).

Dalsgaard (2006) states that "learning cannot be managed (but) can, however, be facilitated" stressing that encouraging students to participate and interact on social networks will eventually motivate them throughout the learning process. Students may feel free in the sense that they will be able to comment edit or send web links related to the issue on a Facebook wall or other tools used by Facebook.

As social networking websites are new and developing, the studies on their use for educational purposes are very rare. Some studies show that a large number of students spend their time on social networking websites as their leisure time activities. (Jones, et al., 2010). This tendency, in a sense, may indicate that social networks can be a suitable place to attract students for educational purposes. If it is done effectively, it is generally claimed that the educational process will be more productive for both students and teachers.

2.5.1. Potential Educational Tools on Facebook

There are several features of Facebook offered for users to facilitate communication and interaction activities. Even posting a status on Facebook can be regarded as a communicative activity, through which users can interact with each other by posting and sharing videos, photos, comments as well as chatting online. Wang et al (2012) concluded that there are numerous educational uses of Facebook through its potential tools. They coherently state that, the educational use of Facebook best fits in higher education as university students are curious about learning new things academically through social networking websites as they already spend their time on it. Moreover, Facebook has offered some new features like downloading documents, videos and other kinds of application shared on Facebook, which facilitate and enrich the educational function of Facebook (Munoz and Towner, 2009). Taking the literature into account, this section will

present a summary of the potentially educational tools, already offered by Facebook, which may be used by instructors outside class activities.

2.5.1.1. The Wall

Facebook offers users a wall on which they can share what they want. Users may announce what they are doing, or they may share a post or a quote on it. Moreover, users of Facebook can keep in touch with their friends with the "wall-to-wall" application whereby they have the chance to interconnect with their friends and share anything mutually. Course or course-related meeting announcements may be shared on the wall which may catch students' attention and help teacher-student interaction to develop better.

Figure 2: The main page of Facebook users known as "Wall"
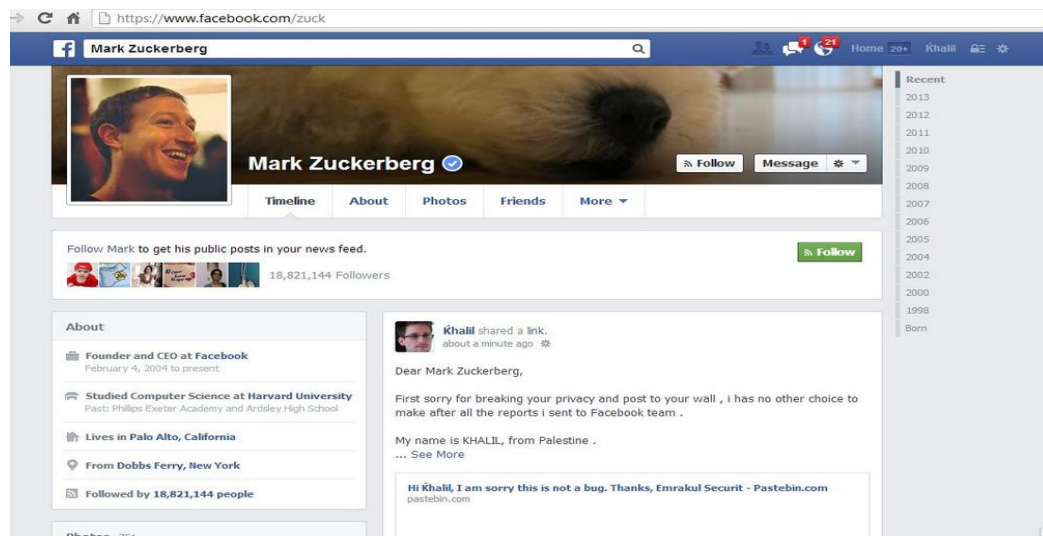
As figure (2) shows, on a wall the users may use whichever picture they want at the very beginning and create their identity. Under this picture there are functions such as "timeline", "about", "photos", "friends", and so on. Registered users can learn details about this member just by clicking on one of them. For instance, as shown in the figure above, Mark Zuckerberg is the founder and CEO at Facebook, studied Computer Science at Harvard University. This means that users can seek and find information about anyone or any brand in a limitless virtual world, where nearly all the users are real rather than fake.

2.5.1.2. The Groups

Companies, organizations or any kind of community may create a group on Facebook. The group page is a little different from the individual one. When you create a group, you are able to see the group members, the view counts or comments. In a Facebook group you may share anything you want, according to the needs and requests of the members or yourself alone. Creating a course group, for instance, will assist the teacher in organizing the class members and the content of the course may be sharpened or edited by the members of the groups where the students can express their personal views and thoughts freely. As the students will feel free in commenting, the education process may benefit, in the sense that there will be more interaction when compared with the physical classroom (Teclehaimanot and Hickman, 2011). Here is a screenshot of a Facebook Group page as shown below in Figure (3).

Figure 3: An example of a Facebook Group page
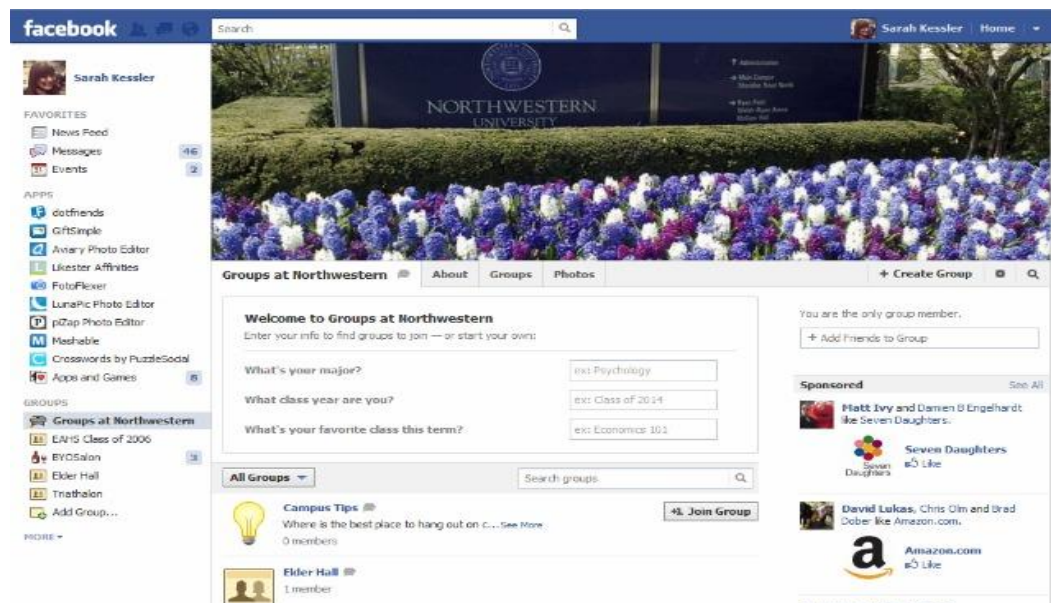
2.5.1.3. Comments and Instant Messaging

Facebook allows you to comment on your friends or others' posts. Clicking the "comment" button and writing what you want enables you to be seen by others. In group pages this application is also available. Students may share personal views by writing and the teacher may respond. This interaction may continue according to the topic. Peer feedback or comments may also influence the students' manners positively in that they

may feel at ease about writing down anything they want. Being alone with the computer may bring freedom, what the teacher should keep in mind is the responsibility given to the student for the persistence of the course.

Figure 4: Screenshot of a comment on Facebook

2.5.1.4. Videos and Pictures

Beside its other features like messaging and commenting, you can upload a video on Facebook too. But there is a limit on duration or size. You can also upload a photo according to the limitations that it allows. A video or a photo can be commented upon. In a Facebook classroom, a teacher may upload a video or a photo concerning a particular issue or the content of the course. The attractiveness of a video or a digitized photo may attract the students where they can also comment on them. Bringing such innovations to the virtual classroom and letting students share what they want about the topic is worth searching. What is important is that, as Facebook is a limitless world, the teacher should announce the course limitations in advance for the process to go better.

Figure 5: A video on Facebook
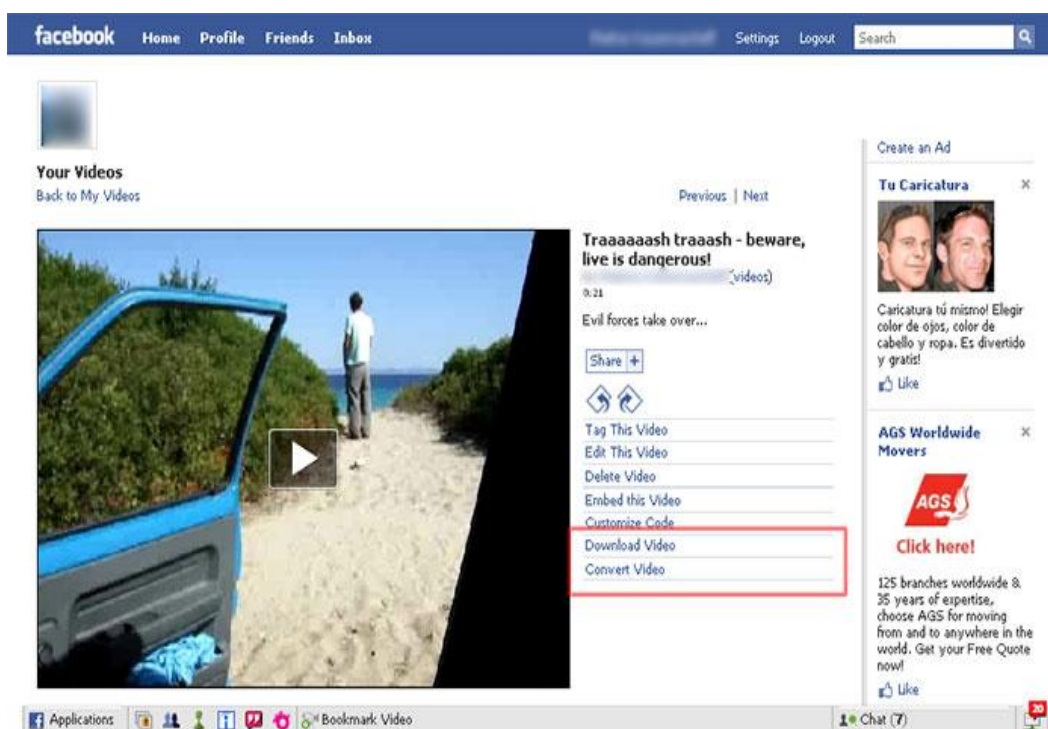
2.6. Language and Culture

To understand the complex and intermeshed connection between language and culture, it is helpful to take perhaps a new perspective on foreign language and culture learning, namely looking at its dialogic nature, and recognizing that language, communication and culture are all constructed through interaction (Bakhtin, 1986; Vygotsky, 1962). In learning one's mother tongue and the cultural values of one's own country, development and socialization take place in stages: through the family, school and workplace (Bourdieu, 1990; Kohlberg et al., 1983). Meanings and values are learnt concurrently with language (Bruner, 1974), with continual interaction and revision occurring. In the foreign-language classroom, the process is, of necessity, truncated with many important elements omitted, so that the language process is unlike that of mother-tongue learning although clearly many elements are shared. The Turkish education system, especially foreign language teaching, has caveats concerning cultural issues. The system in our country does not enable foreign language teachers to give the culture through language in a sufficient way. They are lacking in some phases and their attitudes towards a foreign culture may change individually. Some may perceive a foreign culture as a threat and

others may see it as enriching. The prejudices and anxieties of foreign language teachers play an important role in the process of language teaching.

2.7. Intercultural Communication

It was years ago that national identity was a buzzword in Europe. This was partly because of the emerging nation-states. Especially in the age of Romanticism, the representation of individuals as unique identities was common, and the rise of nation-states could be rooted to the notion of individualism. However, joint markets, the rise of immigration in large numbers, the continued growth in tourism, the increasing need for cross-cultural communication pushed people to go beyond standard national language. This push triggered the need for transnational and intercultural literacy, because communicating with people of different grounds was no longer an exception (Buttzej, 1991).

Human beings are born into some formative elements such as gender, ethnicity, religion, which shape their identities. According to Ochs and Schieffelin (1984), children are exposed to social situations and this exposure affects the children's utterances (as cited in Buttjez, 1991). When children's experience with the people around them is taken into account, it will be seen that it is more than grammar and behaviour appropriate to social situations. Schools and schooled literacy may emphasize grammar and correctness; however, when situational appropriateness is disregarded, what is left is nothing more than the monolithic form of the language emphasized in nation-states.

Recently there has been a move towards the inclusion of interculturally informed pedagogy in language education policy. To this end, the need to develop tolerance and understanding between people from different backgrounds has been more pronounced. The Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages in Europe, a second language framework that promotes the integration of culture in North America (Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century), the test framework of New Standards for English Course in China are some examples from the globe level representation of a necessity of interculturally informed citizens. In parallel with this move, the cultural aspect of language has been a popular subject in language

acquisition although the connection remains unclear (Risager, 2007). As there is a strong relationship between language and culture, it is hard to teach a language without being aware of what culture is and what it is composed of. Hymes (1972) puts great importance on sociocultural knowledge: culture plays an important role in communication and intercultural competence in terms of language learning. Intercultural competence supported by the term cultural awareness has broadened the knowledge of practitioners who teach languages through intercultural competence (as cited in Byram 1997). Moreover, as English has become an international language, in fact a lingua franca all over the world, the connection between language and culture in this sense is unclear as there is a slight difference between the English language spoken all over the world and the culture of English itself, and this is problematic in some cases. Users and learners of English are in a dilemma as to what the original culture of English belongs to, as there are billions of people speaking it (Crystal, 2003). To support this idea, Alptekin (2002) states that people use English in intercultural settings to communicate successfully with other ELF users. So, the full knowledge of English, with its contextual and rule-based usage, plays a minimal role in intercultural and ELF interactions. Besides its linguistic effect, English is used for communicative purposes where it serves with its basic rules, emphasizing communication between cultures rather than rules to be used correctly.

Another issue within the intercultural communication is undoubtedly globalization, which has an enormous effect on language teachers in choosing materials to use in classrooms. Block (2004) states that the English language has a great deal of importance in terms of globalization, which can be regarded as neither positive nor negative. However, the widespread usage of the English language in terms of globalization raises a question about its ownership. Users and practitioners of the English language question the original identity of the English language, as it no longer seems to belong to any single culture. Kachru (1990) explains the development of English language in an "expanding circle," as it is neither the first language nor the second language of a country which may seem problematic to native speakers' idea of English use. However, Crystal (2008) claims that the English language is continuously being used in this "expanding circle" and which means that eventually foreign language classrooms will be covered by this circle too. Therefore, English is used more by people from different cultures and backgrounds as a medium of communication when compared with the native speakers of English worldwide.

Kramsch (2009) states that regarding the age of globalization, foreign language teachers have to see the important implications for their field. The primary importance of monolingual speakers, national cultures and languages, instrumental objectives of foreign language teaching, have all been challenged in a world which is becoming progressively multilingual and multicultural. Moreover, this is becoming an inevitable fact in countries where English is used as a Lingua Franca. As native speakers are not regarded as a part of the ELF world, the basics of the communications system (using English as a Lingua Franca) are not in the hands of native speakers but in the hands of members who use it as a lingua franca. So, it can easily be stated that those who use English for communication purposes have to do with more issues than grammar, syntax, pronunciation and other elements of the foreign languages. They need the capacity to use the semantic and further interactive and communicative assets, by the arrangement of connotation, parts, and connections in the assorted socio-cultural atmosphere of intercultural competence via the English language. In order to digest and internalize communications in these multicultural and multilingual settings, there is a great need for the knowledge and skills of intercultural communicators. Among these, the role of the place where the language is used becomes important so as to create and sustain coherence and harmony. Co-operation and negotiation issues are also important between different cultures, as they are main reason for communication and understanding problems. These issues help users of foreign languages to keep up themselves into different communication systems which go beyond adjusting themselves in communication through the cultural differences. The development of intercultural skills is regarded as vital in enabling effective interaction and helping to avoid possible communication breakdowns in cross-cultural communication held in multilingual forums. This skill requires more than a mastery of grammar, lexicon, and phonology. To sum up, as Bayyurt (2006) indicates, individual differences create the base of intercultural communication, and the intercultural communication philosophy seeks to unite different beliefs, traditions and cultures by using a common language as a medium.

Situational appropriacy requires language learners to benefit from the target culture as well as its language. According to Schumann's theory of acculturation (1978), if learners can adapt themselves to the target culture, it might be easier for them to process the target language. To put it differently, a learner's success in language learning is affected by his/her degree of acculturation. Then, enabling learners to get involved in tasks

which will help them familiarize and immerse themselves in the target culture and language will make them better prepared for different situations. This makes the need to foster the opportunities for intercommunication and interculturation more evident. The call for intercultural communication is underlined in Buttjez (1991) as follows:

> The conviction is growing that narrow linguistic notions of language that disregard the social and cultural context of language use and learning can do justice to neither the language learning process nor its objective of cross-cultural communication. The reasons for frustration in language learning and failure in cross-cultural communication are increasingly seen to be cultural rather than linguistic in nature. If successful 'discourse across cultures' is to be the testing case of language teaching, much more comprehensive ideas about language, culture and language education are required. (p. 7)

It follows from here that the social and cultural context of language use plays a key role in developing cross-cultural communication. Reducing it to linguistic forms might not help learners capture the nature and complexity of language. To this end, learners should become interculturally competent. The close link between language and culture is well-established. Byram (1991) refers to the tightly interwoven relationship and warns learners of reducing language learning to mere codification, suggesting that:

> … it follows that to teach culture without language is fundamentally flawed and to separate language and culture teaching is to imply that a foreign language can be treated in the early learning stages as if it were self-contained and independent of other sociocultural phenomena. The consequence is that learners, rightly unable to accept this isolation, assume that the foreign language is an epiphenomenon of their own language, and that it refers to and embodies their existing understandings and interpretations of their own and the foreign cultures. Where this arises, as it does so frequently in the early years of secondary education, the pupils cannot be said to be learning a foreign language in the proper sense; they are learning a codified version of their own. (p.18)

However, since target culture in intercultural communication refers to the cultural aspects attributable to intercultural communication, reducing culture to native-speaker forms could be, as Alptekin (2002) stressed, unrealistic. It would just create a monolithic aspect of culture where there is little room for cultural exchanges and would not "reflect the lingua franca status of English (p. 57). More room for plurality should be given when the possibility of non-native and non-native interactions are taken into account in intercultural communication. This makes the need for intercultural communicative competence in which both global and local speakers of English feel at home in both international and national cultures more evident (Kramsch and Sullivan, 1996).

Moreover, teaching cultural awareness is another issue to be highlighted because if not done appropriately, a codified version of their language is not avoidable. Therefore, the study into cultural awareness should be comprehensive:

> Cultural awareness teaching should, however, involve both viewpoints, making learners both ethnographer and informant, allowing them to gain a perspective through comparison which is neither entirely one nor the other. In the process of comparison from two viewpoints there lies the possibility of attaining an Archimedean leverage on both cultures, and thereby acquiring new schemata and an intercultural competence. (Byram, 1991: 25)

The following figure was taken from (Buttjez, 1991: 10). In accordance with the figure, intercultural development can be acquired once information and mediation functions are successfully attained, and the figure shows that achieving transnational communication requires both interlingual and intercultural development (See; Figure 6). As for intercultural development, orientation within the target culture, access to target language/culture communication and international communication contribute to the information function, whereas relativity of home culture, critical comparison of the first and second culture and negotiation of meaning would trigger meditation.

Figure 6. Foreign language and intercultural learning
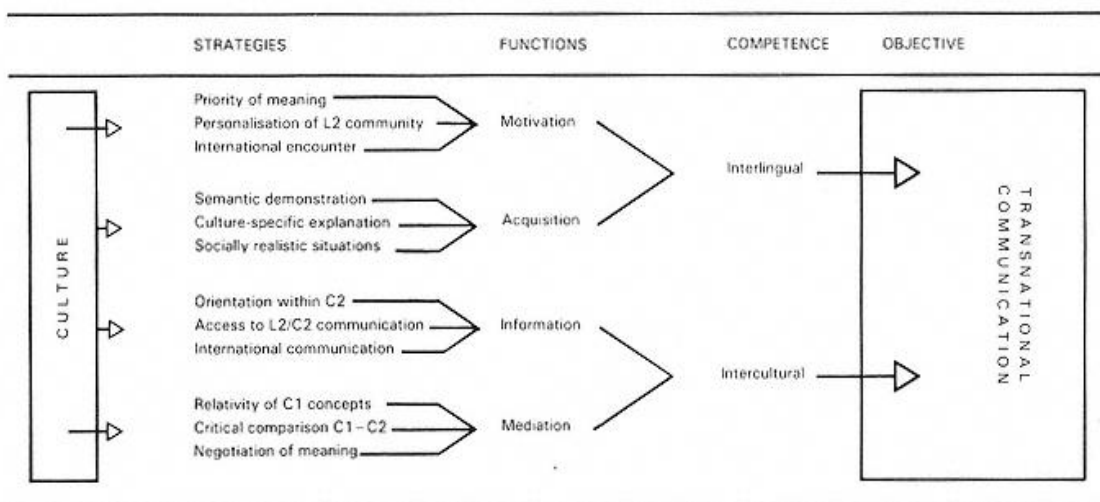
Byram's model of intercultural competence (1997) involves four main dimensions: knowledge, attitude, skill and critical cultural awareness (See Figure 7). Accordingly, the knowledge aspect stands for the learners' own culture, their interlocutors' territory and the processes which emerge through interaction. "Curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend

disbelief about other cultures and beliefs about one's own" (p. 50) are described as attitude, and 'skill' refers to the ability to establish relevance to one's own culture. Critical cultural awareness is defined as "an ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries" (p. 53). If the intercultural dimension is disregarded, it is highly likely that individuals are considered as the representatives of a country, nation or culture. However, narrowing down a person to a single identity does not sound reasonable because a single identity cannot be very representative of the complexity of our multiple identities.

Figure 7. Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)
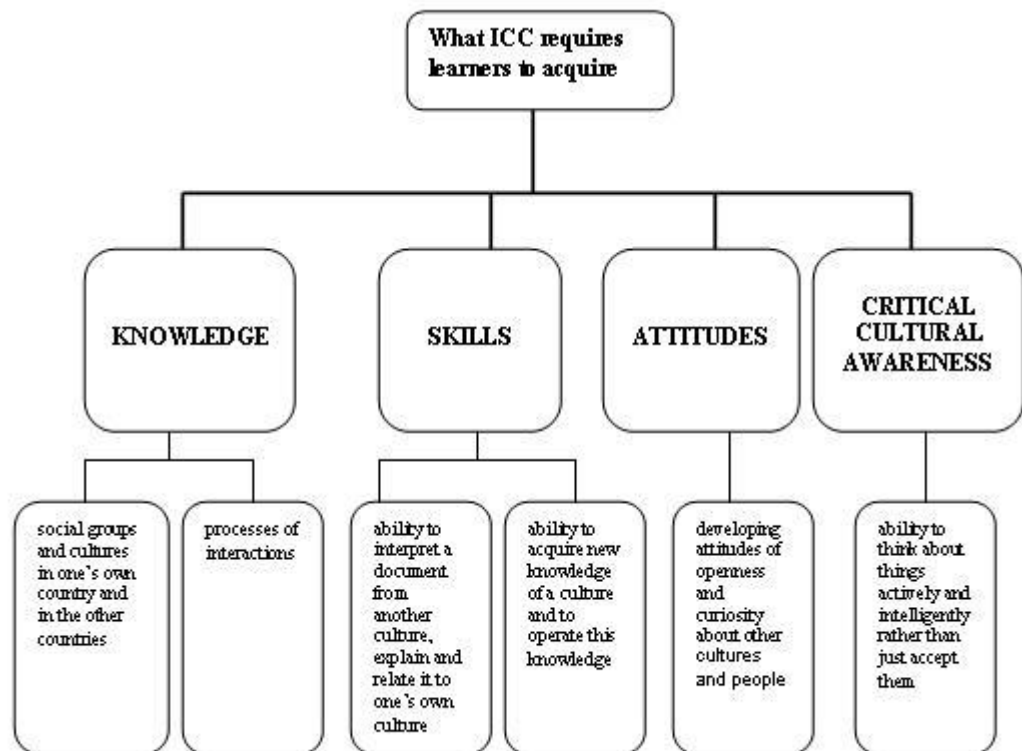
Especially with the advent of Web 2.0 technologies, the nature of information exchange has gained a more participatory nature. People are no longer the mere consumers of information; instead they play an active role in the co-construction of information. The promotion of active participation after the shift from Web 1.0 to 2.0 technologies was also a shift from the read-only society to a more cooperative orientation. Social networks such as Twitter and Facebook, designed for people to socially interact, have been in the service of intercultural communication as well. Moreover, learners can develop autonomy and

monitor their own learning in this way. This is in line with social learning theory, which suggests that learners can keep track of their learning through self-initiation (Bandura, 1977).

2.7.1. Cultural Awareness

Cultural awareness has been one of the basic methodologies for conceptualizing the sorts of learning, abilities, and disposition required to embrace rich intercultural correspondence, which expressly perceives the social measurement of informative ability (CA) (Tomalin and Stempleski 1995; Byram, 1997). CA can best be defined as the knowledge and the consciousness of the place of culture in communication in terms of language. It is important not only to be aware of the native culture but also the target language being learnt or communicated through. The term CA and its opponents have had a great deal of effect on language teaching in different ways. However, experts are in agreement about implementing the teaching of culture in language classrooms, which means that culture and language are inseparable in terms of teaching, and that the relationship between culture and language should be discovered by the learners themselves first. CA philosophy also puts great emphasis on awareness of the learners' own cultural characteristics like behavior, traditions, and religious beliefs. Besides, all these needs for cultural and lingual awareness lead learners to meaningful intercultural communication (Byram, 1997).

Byram (1997) describes CA in detail within the structure of intercultural communication competence. According to him, CA is to comprehend the cultural norms which at the basis generate an ability to criticize, assess and explore the perspective and products of the one's own culture. Additionally, in inspecting the culture of the learner and the target culture, Byram (1997) emphasizes the necessity to acknowledge the sophisticated nature of culture in which there are both pros and cons.

In conclusion, CA opposes the idea that native speakers are the ideal models and on the contrary it suggests that the best alternative model is the international and intercultural speaker of the language. This alternative grants the significance of individuality and association in intercultural communication, which means that no one

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provides a rule for an ideal model of which the other has to obey the rules. However, what most practitioners and researchers agree on is that the ability, the attitude and the knowledge of CA is built upon by the learner which, later, develops itself into an understanding of different cultures and the ability to communicate with them. One of the obstacles that the term CA always deals with is that it is perceived mainly at the national level without taking any other culture into consideration. For instance, if US and UK residents are regarded as the culture carriers of the language they have, the learners of English then may be expected to have data and information about cultural issues at least at the basic level.

For that reason, while a significant number of the characteristics connected with CA may be applicable, they have to be created in connection to intercultural communication and an understanding of the best way sociocultural settings are built. Learning culture may now have a significant role to play in creating awareness of cultural similarities and differences (Baker, 2011). So, creating a bridge between culture and communication via communication tools can best be achieved through social networking websites, which are already present and provide a borderless world for users all over the world. Coherently, it is evident that globalization has implications in several fields, one of which is language education in the 21st century. While traditional ELT assumes a monolithic culture and language view, the current situation requires a language view that requires intercultural competence, cultural awareness and familiarity with several cultures. The adoption of this reexamined view of culture in expanding circle countries including Turkey is quite easy as learners do not have much chance to use English outside classroom borders. Thus, at that stage, Facebook with all its facilities is believed to help language exposure enriched with intercultural element.

If considered from a teacher's perspective, the one who is equipped with intercultural awareness might stand out as s/he gives more room to intercultural human relations. At this stage, some might equate intercultural awareness with native speakers. However, as Byram, Gribkova and Starkey (2002) argued, the search for the intercultural speaker cannot be reduced to a native-non-native debate:

> Therefore an intercultural speaker needs some knowledge, about what it means to be
> Chinese or a teacher or indeed a Chinese teacher, for example. However, an intercultural

speaker also needs an awareness that there is more to be known and understood from the other person's perspective, that there are skills, attitudes and values involved too (see following section), which are crucial to understanding intercultural human relationships. As a consequence, the 'best' teacher is neither the native nor the non-native speaker, but the person who can help learners see relationships between their own and other cultures, can help them acquire interest in and curiosity about 'otherness', and an awareness of themselves and their own cultures seen from other people's perspectives. (p.10)

The problem in most of the language classrooms is that the teaching professionals seem not to be clear about how to introduce cultural elements, resulting in lower cultural awareness. The communicative competence model underlined the role of context in language teaching; however, in language classrooms it did not result in genuine help. Therefore, the focus in language classrooms shifted to cultural competence (Asif, 2012). Developing cultural competence will enable different people and different languages to become more accessible and be better prepared to deal with diversity. To this end, providing learners with a notion of interculturality, which is defined as "awareness and a respect of difference, as well as the socioaffective capacity to see oneself through the eyes of others" (Kramsch, 2005: 553) is necessary.

Teaching culture in the classroom does not encapsulate a specific culture. Instead, there exists a wide array of cultures that learners can benefit from. Kılıçkaya (2004b) pointed to a pluracultural aspect of target culture, arguing that teachers should bring the target culture into the classroom even if the culture in question is different from English or British. In a multicultural society where different varieties are welcomed, there should be respect for varieties rather than strict adherence to a certain one. However, respecting varieties should not necessarily lead to adopting the culture one has been exposed to. Kılıçkaya (2004a) makes this evident stating that:

Besides, learning about a culture does not mean accepting that culture. If the role of the culture in the materials is just to create learner interest towards contents and thus towards language, that is highly desirable. But overuse of cultural material in the language classrooms will constitute problems not for students but also for the teachers and decrease the motivation.

2.7.2. Intercultural Communication and Lingua Franca

Bennett (1998) defines the term intercultural communication (IC) as a part of mono-cultural communication where individual have similar practices and traditions in terms of culture. The main characteristic of mono-cultural communication is the difference which is perceived by individuals as a kind of miscommunication which at the end discourages societies in terms of communication (Bayyurt, 2006). However, "difference" is regarded as the vital part of intercultural communication. Different traditions, practices, languages and even religions are regarded as "differences" of culture where they are mixed up interchangeably in multicultural societies. Bennet (1998) summarizes this issue by claiming: "Cultures embody such variety in patterns of perception and behavior; approaches to communication in cross-cultural situations guard against inappropriate assumptions of similarity and encourage the consideration of difference" (p. 3, as cited in Keranen and Bayyurt, 2006). So, intercultural communication covers all these differences from different cultures where people of a specific culture mutually affect each other.

Intercultural communication (ICA) has been an academic debate for years among experts in the field of communication. To begin with, Baker (2011) states, "ICA is best conceived as an extension of the earlier conceptions of CA that is more relevant to needs of intercultural communication in expanding circle and global lingua franca contexts, in which cultural influences are likely to be varied, dynamic, and emergent" (p.66). The definition of ICA in its basic term, is the individual acquisition of the owned culture including traditions, practices and other forms of culture, using these practices in a supple way taking other norms of different cultures into account.

"The use of English as the global lingua franca highlights the need for an understanding of cultural contexts and communicative practices to successfully communicate across diverse cultures" (Baker, 2011, p.69) But this may create a problem in correlating the English language to a specific tradition, country or even culture. Taking the English language as a lingua franca, people using it for communicative purposes internationally feel that they go beyond a predetermined form of culture and language. This means, using English as a global language with its lingual elements, does not necessarily

mean that the language used for communicative purposes carries the characteristics of British culture itself. For that reason, English as an intercultural communication tool does not need to involve cultural elements, instead, the basic and the most important aim in using it is communication.

"Lingua Franca" which analyzes the formal characteristics of the English language used by nonnative speakers for communication purposes worldwide, is a popular research area which has gained much importance with the gradual development of globalization (Elder and Davies 2006, Berns, 2009). There are different studies aimed at analyzing and identifying the grammar, pronunciation sentence structure and word choices in using English as a lingua franca, combining sociolinguistics philosophy with practice. Besides, while some scholars (House 1999; Jenkins 2000 ; Berns, 2009), label these different uses of English as "English as Lingua Franca" (ELF) some other term it Lingua Franca English (LFE) (Canagarajah 2007; Meierkord 2006; Berns, 2009). Jenkins (2000) states that the terms English as an International Language (EIL) and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) are different from each other, as he claims EIL covers native users while ELF covers all non-native users of English. In its simplest definition, ELF can be regarded as a medium language used among non-native speakers of English.

English has a unique position. There are over one billion users of English around the world (Crystal, 2003), the probable reason why English has spread enormously all over the world as a medium of communication, is that the number of non-native speakers of English is much higher than that of native speakers of English. That means that English is used by more non-native speakers than native speakers as a communication medium.

Kaur (2011) states that with the advancements in information systems and global markets different languages and cultures are interacted and interconnected with each other more, when compared with the past. It is widely believed that English is apparently the only language enhancing communication and interaction. English is a medium for communicative needs for people but the level of linguistic competence of individuals varies. This variety of competence among non-native users of English indicates that different phases have occurred in terms of linguistic elements among users (Watterson,

2008). Users of ELF may also have various attitudes and perceptions about the language they are currently using (Cogo, 2009).

No matter how ELF is used as a medium or changed by individuals according to their own needs, it facilitates the communication process among people. This mutual interaction helps speakers to achieve their goals. Berns (2009) stresses that mutual understanding carries more importance than linguistic accurateness or functions, as the main aim is to interact and communicate rather than using the target language perfectly. It must also be kept in mind that the term EFL is interconnected with the language and society and the philosophy of EFL seems to have changed recently, which is why scholars must reconsider the term thoroughly.

Another reason why the native speaker model has not found to be realistic enough is a pragmatic educational one. It is an unachievable target in that the conditions of learning and acquisition are somehow neglected. Even bilinguals who are thought to have an equal mastery of both languages may not demonstrate equal proficiency in competences. A native speaker model could also push one to get into another linguistic environment in order to count as a native speaker. However, the demands of such a sociocultural identity might be difficult to meet, so it is more reasonable to invest in communicative needs and communication strategies rather than seeking perfection through strict adherence to native speaker norms.

Exposition to culture is inevitable for language learners because they benefit from the set of beliefs and behaviors of a dominant society (Byram, 1997). Understanding these beliefs and behaviors helps learners to engage in communication and interaction on an inter-national scale. Convergence to the native speaker norms may be instrumentally advantageous; however, achieving this convergence through linguistic competence only may be quite difficult for language learners. Instead, benefitting from the interactions of interlocutors, as Byram (1997) argues, being native or nonnative, might be instrumental in going beyond seeing language learners as imitators:

> The advantage of an FLT approach emphasizing analysis of the interaction is that it allows learners to see their role not as imitators of native speakers but as social actors engaging with other social actors in a particular kind of communication and interaction which is

different from that between native speakers. In this inter-national interaction, both interlocutors have a significant but different role, and the foreign speaker who knows something both of the foreign culture and of their own, is in a position of power at least equal to that of the native speaker. (p. 21)

The quest for transcending borders and creating interconnectedness and find a voice that will eradicate all communication barriers has resulted in emerging language repertoires (Hülmbauer, et al., 2008). Among these emerging language repertoires, it is easy to search for the traces of ELF, which is one the most widespread form of European multilingualism. According to Hülmbauer et al (2008), "any speaker using English for the purpose of intercultural communication (i.e. with a speaker of a different L1), in principle, speaks ELF – unless they (inappropriately) insist on speaking 'endolingually'" (p. 27). Therefore, treating intercultural communication and ELF as separate entities would not be sensible because functionally ELF is considered to be within intercultural communication.

The role of the native speaker has been extensively discussed in English language teaching circles and various explanations have been made to define the native speaker. Among them, Davies' definition (2004) needs to be noted due to its comprehensive nature:

a.) Native speaker by birth (that is by early childhood exposure), b.)Native speaker by virtue of being a native user, c.) Native speaker (or native speaker-like) by being an exceptional learner, d.) Native speaker through education in the target language medium, e.) Native speaker through long residence in the adopted country. (p. 438)

As seen above, there is no single definition of the native speaker and education in the target language medium or residence in the adopted country could also suffice for one to be considered a native speaker. However, labeling one as native or non-native could give a feeling of categorization into which people are pushed. Liu's (1999) study could be an example of this situation. The labels 'native' and 'non-native' were investigated from the perspective of seven TESOL professionals whose L1 was not English. However, it was found that the native non-native dichotomy could not duly capture the complexity of their identity. Therefore, labeling and identity, as Liu cautioned, are to be treated differently. The same discussion devoted to native speakerism could also be applied to the need for native speakers to meet communicative needs. However, the native speaker, considering his 'overreliance' on his/her English as L1 might even be disadvantaged if s/he lacks the practice of intercultural competences (Hülmbauer, et al., 2008).

Language teaching practices, in accordance with the concept of intercultural competence, should not be bounded by a specific target culture. Wandel (2002) stresses the significance of targeting cultures which are not mainstream by saying:

> Language teaching cannot be based only on target and native culture by exclaiming that if the field of ELT is to take the reality of English as a "world language" seriously, it must enhance its geographical scope and include non-mainstream cultures. Educating students to make use of English as a lingua franca also means developing their intercultural sensitivity. Students should be allowed to get to know a number of different cultural outlooks and perspectives (pp. 264-265).

The increasing prevalence of internet communication technologies has encouraged researchers to seek the relationship between cultures and technologies. It should be kept in mind that technology development does not take place in a vacuum. Social and cultural phenomena should also be considered when evaluating the underlying reasons for the technological improvements. Therefore, it would be naive to keep technological improvements detached from social phenomena. When social phenomena are considered, it might also be reasonable to take culture into account. Before going into cultural differences, some statistical information might be illustrative. Today, 80% of the language in web sites is in English and English is first language for the majority of Internet users (Li and Kirkup, 2007). Therefore, this popularity of the English language in Internet exchanges has resulted in practical outcomes such as intercultural exchanges.

2.7.2.1. Intercultural Competence

The need for intercultural competence has become more apparent since the introduction of the communicative movement in language teaching orthodoxy. Canale and Swain (1983) argued that language was no longer confined to the linguistic norms and proposed four competences. Accordingly, linguistic competence, pragmatic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence were necessary for a language learner to participate in the target culture adequately. Alptekin (2002) describes this as "enculturation". According to the author, learners should go beyond the mere representation of accurate forms and seek to use "these [accurate] forms in given social situations in the target language setting to convey appropriate, coherent, and strategically-effective meanings for the native speaker" (p. 58).

Intercultural competence is defined as 'the ability to communicate and interact across cultural boundaries' (Byram, 1997: 7). According to the Framework of Reference, language learning requires a person to develop 'interculturality', through which the 'linguistic and cultural competences in respect of each language are modified by knowledge of the other and contribute to intercultural awareness, skills and know-how' (Council of Europe, 2001: 43). This does not necessarily require a person to change his/her cultural orientation, but go beyond linguistic competence and view language from a broader perspective.

The need to be well-armed with different competences is well-established in literature. Having a balanced command of competences at an appropriate level will help learners develop their intercultural competence easily. Despite the facilitative role of communicative orthodoxy, adopting a utopian and unrealistic form of communicative competence, as Alptekin (2002) maintained, is somehow unachievable. Today, non-native interactions are more likely given the ratio of international encounters. Therefore, there is a greater need for language learners to be equipped with "appropriate" use of language as well as accurate forms of language.

Despite a growing need to develop a balanced command of competences, an evaluation of journal articles in terms of the competences showed that some competences are highlighted more than others. Sauro's (2011) analyzed the role of synchronous computer-mediated communication (SCMC) in 97 studies. The author synthesized 16 major journals over a twenty period using the conceptual framework of communicative competence (Canale and Swain, 1980) and the findings indicated that studies on SCMC aimed at nurturing different competences, namely grammatical (48), sociolinguistic (22), discourse (11) and strategic competence (31) of second language learners.

When a person interacts with another in a foreign language, it is highly likely that s/he will be exposed to a new culture and a new identity as well as a new discourse. This potential exposition to a new culture and a new identity requires a person to be more compatible with multiple identities. Developing plurilinguistic competence is the goal rather than taking idealized native speakers as the ultimate model (Council of Europe, 2001). Language learning orthodoxy has long been subject to native speaker supremacy.

However, developing intercultural competence makes all cultures equally advantaged with respect to a better recognition of values.

Byram and Feng (2005) argue that studies in teaching culture usually centre around two types of contexts, namely the external and internal context. External context refers to the locations and settings of interactions while internal context stands for "the culture interactants bring to the encounters" (p. 912). Internal contexts might be perceived differently in intercultural communication, which could result in misunderstandings. Therefore, it is necessary for language learners to develop an appropriate degree of fluency in culture learning.

According to Byram et al (2002), teachers need to arouse students' interest in "otherness" and help learners be more receptive to other cultures. They make it more visible when they call teachers to help learners benefit from the diversity of interactions:

> …developing the intercultural dimension in language teaching involves recognizing that the aims are: to give learners intercultural competence as well as linguistic competence; to prepare them for interaction with people of other cultures; to enable them to understand and accept people from other cultures as individuals with other distinctive perspectives, values and behaviors; and to help them to see that such interaction is an enriching experience. (p. 10)

In order to help learners benefit from the richness of different perspectives, language educators should create an environment conducive to learning, where curiosity is triggered and learners claim the ownership of their own learning (Byram et al, 2002). Stimulating curiosity promotes and facilitates learner involvement, helping them get rid of teacher boundedness. Otherwise, learning will be "pushed" from the teacher to the learner, and the locus of responsibility in learning will not go beyond teacher-centeredness.

Lang (2011) carried out a project to see how the informal learning experiences of students on study abroad programs were fostered, and whether social networks were considered to be sustainable pedagogical tools. Various stakeholders, including students being mentored, students doing the mentoring, academic and support staff, and institutions themselves benefitted from the use of social networks. Through informal exchanges, information that benefitted students, staff members and departments was exchanged,

students' anxieties about social isolation were lowered, and a peer tutoring system was implemented.

CHAPTER THREE

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the description of the methodology used in the research. The research questions, design of the study, instrumentation of the study, including the piloting work, data collection instruments and procedures, and the sampling methods are presented.

This study used a combination of qualitative and quantitative traditions. There has been a debate about qualitative and quantitative research methods in terms of the approach to knowledge and research practice. The distinction between the two poles has been rooted in their epistemological positions when accounting for what constitutes scientific inquiry and legitimate knowledge. The quantitative tradition is associated with a hypothetical-deductive approach or positivism, whereas the qualitative tradition is an interpretative approach. Within the quantitative account, the emphasis is on universal laws of cause and effect, in an effort to define reality, with objective facts, assuming realist ontology through verification or falsification measurements. Therefore, quantification is critical to the positivist approach because it allows the findings to be tested, observed, replicated and generalized to a greater population. As a result of a long history of critique of the reductionist approach of the natural sciences to human consciousness, the qualitative tradition focuses on description rather than explanation of reality through the eyes of the people in context and complexity. However, according to Bryman (1995), the choice relies on technical and pragmatic reasons rather than epistemological grounds. It is a matter of appropriateness in answering research questions, combining qualitative method with quantitative. . This study is, by nature, quasi-experimental as the main aim was to explore cause and effect relations with regards to the use of Facebook in relation to intercultural awareness. Bryman (2006) states that combining qualitative and quantitative methods is the best way to assure the comparisons and analysis of the data collected, which results in a better understanding of the findings. This study was conducted using a mixed method

approach, where the data collection and data analysis processes include qualitative and quantitative methods. After formulating the research question, the researcher decided to conduct the research by taking advantage of both qualitative and quantitative methods, as close-ended questions may not naturally describe the intuitive elements of participants where these data can be collected in a naturally communicative manner by focus group interview, which is a part of the qualitative approach.

Bryman (2006) again states that many researchers claim that the mixed method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods, can be used at any phase of the research, both in defining research questions and in the data analysis process as well. So, taking this literature into consideration, the researcher used both close-ended data collection instruments as well as quantitative tools such as the questionnaire labeled as "Intercultural Effectiveness Test". By utilizing the focus group interview approach the researcher aimed to collect data in the natural environments of the participants. The natural environment of interaction is better than other data collection methods as it includes a non-hypothetical or non-invented setting of communication where there is not any kind of role playing but only the natural behaviors of individuals (Hardy and Bryman, 2009). As the researcher aimed to gather data apart from written forms of data collection tools, like questionnaires, a focus group interview was conducted with the participants of the experimental group where they could express their ideas more freely through feeling safe and comfortable. Moreover, Hardy and Bryman (2009) state that audio-recordings in research provide better and more accurate results in communicative events when compared with other data collection methods like notes, tests or other kinds of written tools. So, taking this into consideration, the researcher recorded the voices of participants and transcribed them into a word processor which enhanced the accuracy and validity of the results gathered by focus group interview.

Regarding research on social networking websites, most of the academics agree upon using both qualitative and quantitative methods (Edwards, 2010). While Thelwall (2008) supports the use of qualitative research methods on social networking websites to obtain rich data, quantitative research methods are similarly advised in the field of social networking as these methods provide statistical data to enhance validity and to enlighten the density and complexity of the results (Edwards, 2010).

3.2. Research Questions

The study addresses the use of social networking websites with regard to intercultural awareness. More specifically, the study investigates the role of Facebook in the introduction of cultural and intercultural issues to EFL students by using English as a Lingua Franca. The study seeks to answer the following questions:

Major Research Question 1: What are the possible effects of Facebook on EFL students' intercultural awareness?

Major Research Question 2: How do the students consider the use of Facebook for intercultural interaction?

Major Research Question 3: What are the experiences of EFL students about using Facebook for educational and intercultural purposes?

Minor Research Question 1: Is there a relationship between gender and intercultural awareness for those using social networking websites regularly and actively?

Minor Research Question 2: What are the factors impacting upon EFL students' use of social networking sites?

3.3. Design of the Study

In order to assess the use of Facebook as an integral component of the syllabus for addressing cultural and intercultural issues in the existing curriculum, a total of 128 sophomore students, 56 of whom were members of the control group and 72 of whom formed the experimental group, were chosen to apply the procedure. Students participating in the study were taking the compulsory course called an "Introduction to British Culture" in their fall semester during 2013-2014 academic year. The course "Introduction to British Culture" was run by the researcher himself. Both groups followed the same course content and syllabuses, but while the control group experienced traditional classroom instruction, the experimental group used a Facebook group page to share issues and discuss the topics that had already been presented in the classroom. Students of the experimental group joined the group page on Facebook with a view to sharing, commenting on and exchanging

ideas on intercultural and agenda issues. Research Design is presented in diagram in Figure (8) as follows:

Figure 8: Research Process Diagram

Research Design and Procedure

(What are the possible effects of Facebook on EFL students' intercultural awareness?)

Nature of Inquiry →	Cross-Sectional
	Quasi-Experimental
Type of Inquiry →	Intact Group-Single- Control G1 (Intact) -T-X G2(Intact) -O-X
Research Process →	Qualitive - Quantitative
Sampling →	Convenience Sampling → Control, Experimental
Data Collection Instruments →	Questionaire Focus-Group-Interwiew Pre-Test, Post-Test
Procedure →	Piloting
Data Analysis →	Treatment Qualitive / Quantitative Interview / Non-parametric Test Descriptive Statistics

3.4. Research Procedure and Instrumentation for the Study

The study consists of both quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments. While quantitative data came from the "Intercultural Effectiveness and Awareness Tests" which were modified and adapted to serve the purpose of the research, qualitative data were obtained by focus group interview. The timeline and data gathering process are summarized as follows:

Table 1: Research Procedure

	Date	Procedure
1	17 September 2013	Sample Selection
2	19 September 2013	The piloting of the 'Intercultural Effectiveness and Awareness Test'
3	21 September 2013	Analysis of pilot study
4	24 September 2013	Applying the pre-test on 'Intercultural Effectiveness and Awareness"
5	24 September 2013	Creating a Facebook Group Page
6	24 September 2013	Inviting and adding participants to the Facebook Group Page
7	1 October 2013	Beginning of activities and interactions on Facebook with a first post.
8	15 January 2014	Applying post-test on 'Intercultural Effectiveness and Awareness'
9	16-21 January 2014	Interview with the experimental group
10	1 February 2014	Transcribing the audio recordings of the interview
11	15 February 2014- 1 May 2014	Analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data

At the very beginning of the study, the researcher asked the experimental group in a classroom atmosphere about volunteering to join and comment on the Facebook Group Page, without giving information about the research to avoid the Hawthorne Effect,

ensuring an ethical stance (Coombs and Smith, 2003). The Facebook group page was utilized to share and comment on intercultural and agenda issues for the experimental group only; the control group was not given extra aid and the instructor followed a traditional method of lecturing only in classroom. The Facebook Group page covered issues which were warmed up during the real classroom atmosphere. Then, each week the instructor, as the administrator of the group page, posted issues for students to comment on and interact with each other, using only English as the communication medium. However, the issues chosen for the group page were examined and discussed among the colleagues of the researcher beforehand. The topics and their schedule are presented in detail in Appendix (D), with screenshots from the group page.

In the next stage of the study, the researcher gathered data via focus group interviews at the end of the term, with specific questions on using Facebook for educational and intercultural purposes as the content and posts in the Facebook group. Rabiee (2004) states that "Focus groups could provide information about a range of ideas and feelings that individuals have about certain issues, as well as illuminating the differences in perspective between groups of individuals." (p.656). In view of these characteristics of the interview, the researcher preferred focus group interviews, both to enable students to feel comfortable expressing ideas and for the researcher to handle the time-management effectively (Dey, 1993). The focus group interview also included questions regarding the students' experiences of the virtual classroom setting in which there were foreign students from different countries at their ages to help in communicating and discussing the intercultural issues.

As the study topic is relatively new and there is still a scarcity of empirical data, the researcher followed the data collection instruments most commonly used in quasi-experimental studies: pre-test-post-test design. The researcher decided to apply the pre-tests and the focus group interview during the research process. The data collection procedure included the following procedures and instruments;

- Intercultural effectiveness and awareness pre-test questionnaire (Portalla and Chen, 2010) (English),

- Focus group interview with the students on using Facebook in an educational and intercultural setting (Turkish)

-        Intercultural effectiveness and awareness post-test questionnaire (Portalla and Chen, 2010) (English)

The participants were given a pre-test on intercultural effectiveness and awareness prior to interacting on Facebook. The pre-test, developed by Portalla and Chen (2010), included questions about awareness and behavior regarding interaction with a different culture. The items in the questionnaire were categorized into 6 factors including; *Behavioral Flexibility, Interaction Relaxation, Interactant Respect, Message Skills, Identity Maintenance, Interaction Management*. The survey also included basic demographic information including the gender, age, and hometown of the participants. The control group participants were also asked to fill out the same pre-test. The control group was not given any extra educational or activity-based aid. The researcher gave lectures based on traditional methods including teacher-oriented methods with extra classroom activities like PowerPoint slides or asking questions. After these processes, at the end of the term, the students were given the post-test. The post-test, again, was the same as the pre-test by Portalla and Chen (2010).

3.5. Pilot Studies

3.5.1. Pilot Study of 'Intercultural Effectiveness Test'

The main aim of piloting is to apply the process to a small number that represents the whole population of the experiment (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006). Twenty-two representative students (n=22) from the Department of English Language and Literature were selected to answer the questionnaire and they were told to feel free to express their ideas about the questionnaire in order to explore any weak points. After the piloting process, the items of the questionnaires were analyzed and edited thoroughly in terms of wording, grammar, and punctuation. In the pilot study on 'Intercultural awareness and effectiveness', initially, demographic information about the participants was collected and reported as frequencies and percentages. In the scales, mean scores and Standard deviations were calculated for the items.

The researcher used a questionnaire on intercultural effectiveness and awareness by Portalla and Chen (2010). The intercultural effectiveness and awareness test was preferred

by the researcher as all the questions fit the content and aim of the study research. The researcher modified the questionnaire in terms of wording, grammar and punctuation. The questionnaire items and the interview questions used in the study were checked by 3 English language experts who had at least fifteen years of teaching experience. Language experts checked the grammar, punctuation and meaning. Eight sentences out of 42 in the pre-test questionnaire were found unclear and modified in terms of wording to enable students to understand them better. Instead of using complex and rare words, simple words were used. Johnson and Christensen (2004) claim that piloting is important to ensure that instrumentation functions as it needs to do. For that reason, the researcher conducted a pilot study on the questionnaire to ensure the reliability and validity of the instrument used in the research study. The final version of the instruments used in the study after piloting and editing in terms of wording, punctuation and grammar were distributed to the students as presented in the Appendix together with the focus group interviews.

3.6. The Group Page on Facebook

To begin the research project, the researcher created a group page on Facebook and named it "Intercultural Issues-World Cultures," with a web address at www.facebook.com/pages/Intercultural-Issues-World- Cultures/532058143543704. At the beginning of the course, students were asked whether they had a valid Facebook account or not. Almost 99% of the students responded positively. Then, the students of the experimental group were asked to join the group using their Facebook accounts. At first, a few students seemed reluctant to use Facebook for educational and intercultural purposes within the framework of the existing syllabus. As they saw their friends communicating and interacting with each other effectively during the first week of warm up activities online, they were convinced of the value of creating a Facebook profile and joined the group. The researcher followed the traditional lecturing methods in the classroom and after that he announced to students that the course would be continued asynchronously on the group page. After that, the researcher shared weekly themes regarding the syllabus and course content of the week. The weekly themes were assigned by the instructor and the themes also included issues about the world agenda, or the topics already discussed in the classroom. The main aim of sharing issues on the world agenda is to discuss more intercultural issues in addition to cultural themes specific to British Culture as the course

syllabus and contents of the course already covered themes mostly on Britain and related issues. The students were encouraged to voice their views, interacting with real people via Facebook. As they had their other courses by traditional methods without the aid of the Internet and mentored by the instructor, the researcher thought that it would attract students' interest to post issues about different intercultural themes, as they already spent their time on Facebook. In this way, the researcher aimed to orient students into the Facebook group page. Interactions on Facebook occur in a natural way without interruption by the instructor when compared with the traditional classroom setting, and in this way students feel comfortable commenting and sharing ideas on Facebook.

Utmost attention was paid to the process of selecting the topics and issues to be discussed on the Facebook group page, by sharing similar topics to those discussed in the classroom beforehand. For instance, while the classroom topic was "superstitions in the UK" the topic posted on Facebook group page was "Superstitions from all over the world". The posts shared by the researcher included both a question and a reference picture related to the questions. The questions were specifically chosen for students to comment on freely without any hesitation or any cliché sentences, that is the questions were formed in order to get the individual divergent responses of each student. For instance, instead of asking students about the importance of Christmas in the world, instead "the specific topic" about the prohibition of Christmas in Germany was posted as the researcher thought that the issue would trigger a discussion among students and that they would comment on this individually, without expressing cliché ideas or sentences. Figure (7) shows an example of the weekly themes with a screenshot taken from the Facebook group page.

Figure 9: A screenshot from the Facebook Group page "Intercultural Issues-World Cultures"
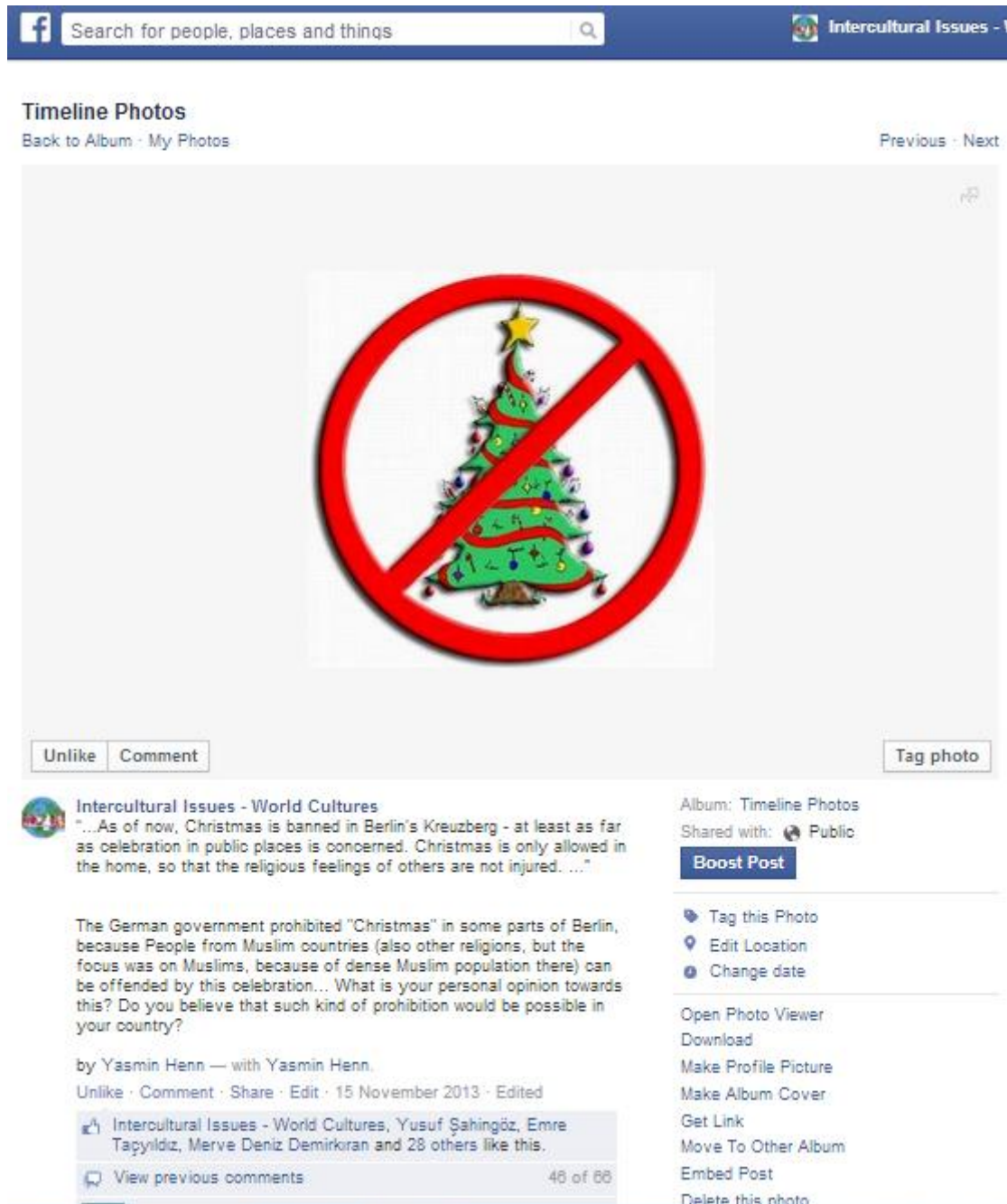
Group members were permitted and encouraged to write on the group Wall, to create Discussions, to upload Videos and/or Photos. The course syllabus was uploaded as a document where learners could click and view its original version as a soft copy. As Siemens and Tittenberger (2009) emphasize the importance of online materials when there is not a traditional classroom setting, the researcher benefitted from the rich content and

features of Facebook which enable users to upload photos, videos and any type of documents online with comments just below the shared post. To give clear idea, a screenshot from the Facebook group page showing the comments of the students is given below:

Figure 10: A screenshot of a comment made by a student on Facebook Group page

The contents and the weekly themes were checked by the colleagues of the researcher who are experts in material development methods. Moreover, the researcher also prepared himself about the content of the "Introduction to British Culture" course in advance for students to feel more confident and self-assured. Since Siemens and Tittenberger (2009) regard Facebook as a communication-based platform via discussions online, the researcher also gave importance to the comments and sharing of the students, encouraging them to write whatever they wanted without being restricted by an instructor's presence. To make students feel more free and confident, the researcher shared the issues under the name of the group page, which meant that the students did not even see the name of the instructor as they might have felt shy or stressed about the comments they wrote, or they might have become artificial in terms of grammar and punctuation by copying and posting the comments on internet so as to prove themselves in terms of knowledge to the instructor.

3.6.1. The Group Members and Participants

A total of 72 day-time and 56 night-time students participated in the study. There were 80 female and 48 male students, with an age range of 19 to 42. The day-time students were intentionally chosen as experimental group, as they had more time for connecting to Facebook in the evenings, while night-time students had to attend classes from 17:00-23:00. As the researcher needed the experimental group to interact on Facebook as much as possible, taking day-time students as the experimental group proved advantageous as they interacted with each other more than estimated.

The facebook group page included **72** registered Facebook participants who were students in the Department of English Language and Literature at Karadeniz Technical University. In addition to the Turkish participants, there were also group members from Germany, Serbia, the USA and Canada. The latter were university students who had volunteered to participate in the study, after having been specially invited to do so by the researcher. These guest members of the group were Erasmus students in Germany, whom the researcher had met during a visit to Germany for research purposes. Although there were participants from different countries, those who were just guests on the Facebook group page were not included in the numbers of participants in the study, as they did not

actually provide any data to the researcher because they were not members of the experimental group.

The locations of the participants are shown with a screenshot of the Facebook page in Appendix (D).Each participant had a computer and/or smart phone with unlimited access to the Internet. At the beginning of the research, all participants were verbally informed about the Facebook group page project, the researcher preferred not to use a written consent form, as the students might have felt stressed and then behaved unnaturally during the research.

3.7. Ethical Issues Affecting the Qualitative Part of the Study

Prior to the interview meetings, it was explained to each interviewee that they would not be exposed to any risk as a result of participating in this study, and that if any interviewee did not wish to participate in the interview voluntarily, s/he might withdraw. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998), there are two major ethical issues in relation to research with human subjects; "informed consent and protection of subjects from harm" (p.43). In order to handle these two significant issues;

(a) The researcher read the following sentences to each interviewee for their information:

> Your personal information and answers will be kept totally confidential and your answers will only be used for this study. In the records, codes will be used rather than the names. The results of the interviews will be given totally. If requested, interview records will be shared with you and your feedback asked for. You will be informed when the study is completed. This interview will take nearly one hour and whenever you want, you can stop this interview.

(b) The researcher asked all the interviewees for their permission to record the interview and use the data for the study, as follows:

After all this information, will you let me use your interview records in my dissertation study?

Do you mind if I record the interview?

As Rubin and Rubin (1995) emphasized, for researchers, ethical obligations such as avoiding deception and asking for permission to record are indispensable. In the initial explanations of the interview schedule, these obligations were fulfilled within the study

(e.g. check the interview schedule for recording permission). Authorization of data access is another ethical concern for qualitative research (Patton, 1990). Moreover, since the researcher is also an instrument for qualitative studies, his credibility is important for ethical purposes (Patton, 1990). Therefore, each interviewee was informed that their records would be deleted after the study had finished and that only the researcher would have access to the original data. No objection was made by the students to the information given or to the interview questions.

3.8. Data Analysis

The study includes both qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data which were gathered at the interview stage of the study were initially transcribed to a word processor, segmented, and color coded ready for enumeration. During the enumeration step, the researcher analyzed the data set line by line in order to determine how frequently the coded categories appeared in the data. Afterwards, the data were grouped under the sub and main categories in a word processor and reported. As Dey (1993) states that categorizing qualitative data helps a researcher to include or exclude the observations made by the researcher himself, the interviewees' reports were categorized using thematic codes in relation to the use of Facebook and its utilization for educational and intercultural purposes. Thus, all transcribed data were color coded according to sub-categories. The data set was analyzed with both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Pre and post surveys were analyzed by non-parametric tests using a paired-samples strategy. Quantitative data was analyzed with SPSS v16.

3.9. Limitations of the Study

The selection of the topic to be used on Facebook was a challenge for the researcher. The researcher selected the "British Culture" course as the most suitable topic for the research as it covered cultural and intercultural issues from both the UK and countries all over the world. Moreover, since the researcher was the instructor, he had to choose a topic which he knew quite well and which was in his area of interest. The researcher prepared himself in respect of the content of the course by reviewing sources and taking notes on specific topics that might attract students' attention for months, so as to

be effective and capable for the course. Hence, the results derived from the implementation of the course might have been affected by the course and the topics chosen by the researcher.

For the course implementation, another constraint was the number of learners selected for the study. Since it was the first attempt by the researcher to offer such a course, the researcher preferred to limit the learners to only one class including 72 students as an experimental group, at the recommendation of his advisor. Despite the fact that the participants were intentionally and conveniently selected for the research, the utmost attention was paid to ensuring representativeness in the samples. Yet, intervening factors might have played some role in the course of research implementation. Another limitation of the study was the time scheduled for the course. Even though content experts working at the department of English Language and Literature, as well as colleagues of the researcher, stated that the time allocated (sixteen-weeks) was appropriate for the topics in the syllabus and on the Facebook group page, a longer period of time would have resulted more rich data. The time constraint might have affected learners' comments, evaluation and experiences to some extent. This can be perhaps justified by the fact that extending activities over more than one term might have had a negative effect on the students' concentration and participation.

The following limitations are relevant to the entire study: (a) the validity of this study is limited to the reliability of the instruments used in the study, and (b) its validity is limited to the honesty of the subjects' responses to the instruments used in this study. Additionally, for this study, the following assumptions were made:

(a) The participants responded accurately to all measures used in this study,

(b) The data were accurately recorded and analyzed,

 (c) The reliability and validity of the all measures used in this study are accurate enough to allow accurate assumptions.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. RESULTS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data gathered from three sources: pre-tests and post-tests focus group interviews and the students' self-reports on the Facebook group page. The analysis of "Intercultural Awareness," pre-test and post-test (as presented in Appendix Chapter), is presented. The qualitative data gathered from focus group interviews and students' self reports are also analyzed. The analysis process, including both qualitative and quantitative data, followed the steps shown below:

Table 2: **Procedures of the Qualitative and Quantitative Data Analysis:**

1	Analysis of pre-test scores of the control group
2	Analysis of pre-test scores of the experimental group
3	Comparisons of the pre-tests of both groups
4	Analysis of post-test scores of the control group
5	Analysis of post-test scores of the experimental group
6	Comparisons of post-tests of both groups
7	Analysis of Focus Group Interviews

4.2. Analysis and Discussion of the Interviews

The researcher, at the end of the term, after using the Facebook Group Page with the experimental group, conducted focus-group interviews using open ended questions with the students (10-12) to achieve an in-depth exploration of the individual experiences, feelings and thoughts of the interviewees. The interviews took approximately 45 minutes and all data were recorded and then transcribed in a word processor.

The utmost attention was paid to creating a friendly atmosphere, in which students would express their ideas and experiences comfortably. To this end, the interview was carried out in Turkish, obtaining their individual consent orally for recording. The interviews were then translated into English. The interviews covered the following questions:

1. What do you think of Facebook in general?

2. For what purposes do you use Facebook most?

3. Do you interact and communicate with foreign people from different countries on Facebook?

4. What do you think of Facebook being used for intercultural communication purposes?

5. What do you do/share on Facebook most?

6. Do you think that Facebook is a source for learning?

7. What kinds of information do you get via Facebook?

8. What did you feel about using the Facebook Group Page for instructional activities?

9. What did you feel about using the Facebook Group for intercultural communication and intercultural awareness?

10. Do you think that using Facebook for intercultural communication activities as a continuation of the British Culture course in the classroom was effective?

11. How do you feel about the integration of Facebook into existing/traditional teaching?

12. Do you think that the Facebook group page activities enhanced your knowledge of the foreign language?

4.2.1. Participants' Perceptions Regarding the Use of Facebook in General

Firstly, the students were asked to share their experiences on Facebook in general. The students were found to have been using Facebook for approximately 4 years. Participants overwhelmingly stated that they used Facebook primarily for communication purposes, with a view to keeping in touch with their friends by sharing videos, pictures and events. Some of them also stated that Facebook is a good tool for learning something new

from any field, such as news, academic information or the individual posts of famous people. As they use Facebook daily in their leisure time, they expressed the view that it is a good way of spending free time to learn new things or communicating with friends. To characterize the commonly stated ideas, the following self-reports were given below:

> *I generally use Facebook for communication purposes like interacting with my friends and family.* (S1)

> *I often read interesting facts or information in the news feed.* (News Feed is Facebook's main page where all the activities of friends and the pages that the user likes are shown) (S7)

> *I follow the pages of my hobby to get information and news like sport, music or literature.* (S21)

> *I always share posts and issues on my hobby; I am interested in body building so I share videos which contain instructions and information about it.* (S8)

Most of the students (N=35) appear to have developed a habit of using Facebook for communication and information exchanges. So, it appears that Facebook is an effective tool for sharing information and issues with their friends and relatives. Facebook, in addition to being a communications tool for students, also provides information and knowledge about different people and issues. Students also reported using Facebook to interact with family members by sharing videos and photos and commenting on them.

Another point worth noting here is that students majoring in English want to stay in communication with foreigners, using English for genuine communication, on the grounds that that they want to develop their current professional knowledge through chatting or speaking via videos. Students also stated that Facebook enhanced their ability to interact with people around the world. By using Facebook as a medium of interaction, students reported developing their skills in making foreign friends and also their use of English for genuine communication. This might warrant a very fundamental change in the way the syllabus is run, as EFL settings in most places have suffered from the lack of real reasons to use the target language, in addition to bringing other intercultural gains and awareness.

By chatting, sharing photos or videos and commenting on the posts that their foreign friends shared, the students felt that it was easy to break down the walls in terms of

mutual interaction through Facebook. This was very evident in the students' self-reports, as given below:

> *I have friends from different countries on Facebook. As it is not possible to contact and interact face to face, I always use Facebook to send messages, chat or share things which we have in common like photos together taken in the past or videos.* (S43)

> *I prefer to chat with my foreign friends because in this way I develop my knowledge of English and also learn new words.* (S9)

> *Using English as a medium to interact with people on Facebook is easy for me as I already know English, however, commenting on the posts of my foreign friends on Facebook, and seeing other foreign friends responding to comments encourages me to use English more.* (S14)

> *I have friends from different countries like France, Holland, Poland or the Czech Republic, although they use their mother tongue on Facebook, they prefer to communicate with me in English, so this cross-border interaction on Facebook occurs thanks to English.* (S33)

Students' self-reports indicate that the use of English by non-native speakers of English as a lingua franca is gaining more recognition, thus providing evidence for Kachru's "interactional approach" that deals with how language is used interactively to realize interpersonal goals (Kachru, 1990). Alptekin (2002) also supports this idea by stating that activities aimed at lingual interaction and communications must involve both local and international contexts that are common and relevant to individuals' daily lives. So, the self-reports provide evidence for the idea that students prefer to communicate and interact with each other not only because they use the same language as a medium, but also because they have common interests to share and comment on.

4.2.2. The Effect of Facebook on Education

As social networks users are relatively young people and especially university students, with an age range of 18-24, they have the chance to sustain their interaction and communication outside the classroom. Selwyn (2007) claims that social networks will facilitate the activities of students for educational purposes by joining, sharing and even commenting on both social and academic issues during university years. So, social networks are becoming popular among young people in educational contexts, as they provide them with the chance to get new information and understanding throughout effective, subconscious and easy learning processes, while participating in a pleasant

virtual atmosphere, with attention-grabbing and inspiring content and tools (Gillet, et al., 2008).

Students were asked to relate their views in relation to the role of Facebook in education, relying on their experiences. Most of the students stated that Facebook is a useful tool to get information about courses, interact with instructors and learn new things about their fields as follows:

> *I often check out the group page of our department for the announcements about the courses. Sometimes instructors share information about the course content or announce that the lesson is cancelled for some reason.* (S35)

> *It is a good opportunity for us to have a group page where all students from the departments share issues and news about the courses and instructors, and sometimes some students share documents, tactics and clues about the exams they had in the past.* (S53)

> *I often ask questions about the exam on the group page to see the individual knowledge of my friends, in this way I see my own lack of knowledge and ask more to develop and concentrate on the issue more on the group page. (S29)*

> *The group page encourages me to interact and communicate with my friends more than before. So in this way, I feel comfortable asking about, commenting on and sharing the issues regarding specific courses or the topic we are currently taking. (S50)*

As seen above, the students are pleased to have a departmental group page where professional and personal information about the department and the courses are shared. Apart from sharing issues and information regarding courses or topics related to exam content, students stated that they seek to gain information about their fields by reading posts from different pages, or watching videos related to their courses and even that some photos become an educational tool for them. It is remarkable to see students continuing exchanging their ideas about their responses to the exam question on a different platform:

> *Last term, I watched a video shared on the group page before the final exam, and I can say that I got nearly 50 points from the exam thanks to that video.* (S43)

> *It is good that the students who already took a specific course that we are currently taking, share tips, and informative documents about the course with their own hand notes, or the exam questions asked before. It helps us to overcome the stressful atmosphere of the exam.* (S33)

> *When an instructor shares a document or a website link, almost all of us search and memorize it in detail as it generally either assists us in terms of knowledge or asked by the instructor during the exam.* (S39)

> *There are thousands of group pages on Facebook on different issues, fields and hobbies. Some group pages are really effective in the sense that they share really*

informative issues related to my field. For instance, it was the first time I learnt about a specific topic and information about an author, I mean, we, as university students can make use of these group pages by following them and reading the posts shared. If used effectively, I am sure that it will develop our knowledge and as well as intelligence. (S38)

Some information shared on group pages may be fake or inadequate, so I always check on academic and scientific websites to be sure that the information given on Facebook is true and correct. In fact, these group pages and issues shared on them lead us to search for information in detail. (S28)

Besides, since students are using Facebook more than in the past, because they stated that Facebook is a social networking and they spend most of their time on Facebook, it can naturally serve for educational purposes beside its fun features. They also see Facebook as academic information provider. This idea is supported by the students' sentences themselves:

We already spend hours on Facebook for irrational things like funny videos or pictures, but I believe that if we make use of Facebook to seek information about our professions or hobbies it becomes more effective when compared with routine use of it. (S2)

No material has any inherent capacity to be of pedagogic value in education, as indicated by S2. Unless designed for a purpose, it can turn out to be a white elephant.

I always share things about the courses and besides I give extra importance for the contents of sharing to be in the English language as we are at the Department of English Language and Literature we should prefer to use English as much as possible in every field of our daily lives especially on Facebook. (S7)

For instance, I see lots of posts on Facebook about the poets or poems about them. After reading two and more I naturally memorize them and search on the web for detail as I think that it may be useful for my literature courses. (S19)

Students do not see Facebook solely as an information provider for their immediate academic needs but also a platform to make their ideas and beliefs known publicly, as indicated by an informant below:

As most of my friends are English majoring students, I see posts related to English Language or Literature on my main page on Facebook. Sometimes I comment on them by adding extra information I already know or ask questions about it to learn more details. (S31)

Thus, using Facebook becomes a way of individualization and realizing oneself with autonomous behavior, where individuals make their own sense and decisions with their self-inquiry and contributions. This new situation appears to liberate students from the conventional practice of conforming to the teacher's "truths". Rather, they have now a new, wider and live audience, which could be a very strong incentive to develop a personal voice. As indicated by Kayaoğlu (2009: 48) in relation to the revolutionary effects of using online systems, students appear to "have real audience, have a voice, have sustained motivation and variety of feedback options" thanks to Facebook.

Parallel to this, research conducted up until now, supports the idea that social networks, especially Facebook, as being the most crowded one in terms of users, facilitate the online learning environment. Mazman and Usluel (2010) indicate potential uses of Facebook as one of the popular educational tools online because of its characteristics and functions. To be more specific, a Facebook-oriented activity supported by the official syllabus, may lead instructors to a new horizon-based educational system. As Ajjan and Hartshorne (2008) indicate, social networking websites encourage users in terms of communication, reading, writing and as well as critical thinking. Taking all of this into consideration, Facebook is a pedagogical tool in the form of a meeting point for educational purposes. During the interviews, most of the students, a total number of 45, accepted the idea of using Facebook for educational purposes. The reasons were different, but they appeared to hold the view that as Facebook is a social networking web site with millions of users from different countries, including most university students, it can be quite an effective tool for educational purposes.

4.2.3. The Effect of Facebook on Intercultural Communication

Facebook has become a new area of research as it helps to facilitate online activities, via technological aids, and as well as cultural and intercultural issues. (Ellison, et al., 2007; Selwyn, 2007). As Facebook is categorized and defined as a social networking website, the primary aim of this research is to see whether and how students interact with each other in a borderless world and to what extent this networking can serve to increase students' awareness of the educational issues they already face in their compulsory syllabus. The students were asked questions about the effect of Facebook upon interacting

with people from different countries and cultures. The answers were quite diverse. As they were students at Department of English Language and Literature they wanted to make new friends from different countries even if they did not know each other face-to-face. Most of the students stated that they had met foreign people when they were abroad during the Erasmus Exchange Program, and that initially they added the people to Facebook and even the friends of their friends whom they knew just by their names. One student stated that:

> *Being abroad during the Erasmus Exchange Program helped me to make new friends, I met them face-to-face and I still communicate with them on Facebook. Although we do not chat regularly, Facebook help us to keep in touch with each other and learn information about my friends regularly from their Facebook walls.* (S28)

Besides staying in contact with the friends they made abroad through exchange programs, the students also stated that it is easy to learn new things about different cultures via Facebook. As Facebook provides opportunities to create pages about any topic, it is easy to get information about specific issues on that page, where people with common hobbies or interests become members. Moreover, as it brings people with common hobbies and interests together, Facebook can easily be made use of for exchanging ideas by interacting with students and teachers. As there are millions of group pages on Facebook, in the near future, many instructors may create group pages about the course/topic on which they give lectures. In this way, as it is already used by individuals personally, Facebook will gradually become a place where courses are held online, and where information and documents about a specific topic or course may be shared, with interaction among students from different countries. Taking this into consideration, students reported that group pages on Facebook were one of the most useful tools for learning specific details about an issue. Some also stated that, as members of those specific pages, they comment on issues and, as their names are shown in the comments, they also make new friends with different interests or from different cultures just by clicking the "add as a friend" button and then sending a greeting message. The statements of the students about this issue are shown as follow:

> *I created a group page about a specific topic, the group page has more than one thousand members, and I made new friends through it.* (S44)

> *It may be weird for some to add someone as a friend you do not know personally, but I believe that as Facebook is a social networking website, it is quite natural to add*

someone when you have mutual interests. That is how you make new friends on the Internet. This is of course my personal thought. (S27)

> *I heard that some people become close friends on Facebook without knowing each other. I mean they meet on a group page or below a post in comments, they add each other as friends and then they eventually develop a very good friendship. (S39)*

> *I prefer to make friends with whom I have mutual interests and hobbies. Facebook gives us opportunities to meet people with common interests and hobbies all over the world through group pages. (S48)* 7

> *I follow the news about the different countries mostly on Facebook. The main page on Facebook allows me to see the posts, videos and photos shared by my foreign friends from all over the world. In this way, the awareness about global issues becomes more effective for me. (S44)*

> *I am a curious person, I always ask my foreign friends about their cultures including food, fashion and even their traditions. When I was abroad, I attended almost all the parties organized by my friends abroad to see and explore their cultures and of course to develop my skill of speaking. (S14)*

> *I feel comfortable about asking questions to the instructor online. I also comment on the issues or documents shared by the instructor. It is easy to communicate with the instructor online as it is a virtual world, I do not know the exact reason but I feel relaxed and self-determined. (S30)*

What is evident from the self-reports above is that intercultural communication starts initially with the people themselves rather than the issues to be exchanged. Many a student appears to endeavor to intrinsically contact people of different cultures out of a need for self-exploratory experiences; to know and to be known. The enjoyment of self-discovery and self-realization will, in turn, foster independence and self-reliance, all of which are crucial for social being and for success in and outside the school.

When it comes to exploring the awareness of students on cultural differences between people around the world, the students were observed to be in agreement about the positive effect of Facebook on learning about the different traditions and cultures of people. What makes Facebook different from traditional video sharing, or document sharing or even online activities websites is that students do not need to go to a different web-page, which means that, as they spend their time on Facebook, they easily see notifications from the pages of the groups of which they are members, and the activities are just one click further. Moreover, as they do not need to leave Facebook for online activities, they have the chance to continue their personal and non-academic activities synchronously, like chatting, or getting individual notifications from their friends on

Facebook. The following statements of the interview students support the commonly held view:

> *My foreign friends on Facebook sometimes share photos of traditional costumes of their own culture. I get curious about it and I either ask my friend directly or search on the Internet for the details of that traditional costume.* (S37)

> *I personally believe that culture cannot be limited only to eating, drinking or clothing. For example a new or different word used by a foreigner catches my attention, and I eventually learn in what cases it is used.* (S25)

> *...for example they sometimes share strange things and I ask my close friends from Holland and Vietnam about the content and they give me information about it, so naturally I get in detail what they meant.* (S18)

> *I always question the truth of the contents shared on Facebook. For example, a person can share a fake picture about his culture or country with fake information below it. So I prefer to search for it on the Internet, instead of believing it as soon as I see it. In this way, I learnt many new things about different things in different countries.* (S27)

> *Even a piece of information about a superstition broadens my general culture; I mean small things may have bigger effect in terms of knowledge.* (S19)

> *I can search on the web about the cultures of people, but it is easier to reach the information on Facebook because I spend most of my leisure time on it, and Facebook provides opportunities to see the posts of my friends and the pages I am a member of. I mean, whenever I sign in Facebook, I see lots of information about different issues already on my main page. Moreover, as Facebook has features like video sharing, photo sharing, I do not need to open an extra web page to search for something. (S22)*

What is remarkable to note is not only the practicality that Facebook provides in accessing information, but also the fact that students are deeply involved in the process of generating and evaluating the information. The students are also being critical of all sorts of information and want to discover as much as they can about particular intercultural issues in a way that they have not done previously at all. It is more than learning, it is experiencing the whole process, making their own sense of all the interactions with their counterparts. It is fair to say that they were so engrossed in the process that they forgot that it is an extension of the course.

4.2.4. The Perceptions of Students' on Using the Facebook Group Page for Educational Purposes in Terms of Intercultural Awareness

As the students mostly use Facebook for communication purposes, communicating via new information is a new path to explore culturally different counterparts. It is widely accepted that Facebook, rather than other social networking websites, is the most effective

tool for people to interact with each other. So, having millions of users in one website creates opportunities for people to offer information just by sharing without aiming to reach all users. That means that even if only one user on Facebook sees the new information or knowledge shared on Facebook, as well as offering information a positive process of communication is being accomplished. Moreover, sharing a photo, video or information on Facebook, creates the strong possibility of reaching millions of people on Facebook, as users can reach that information as friends of the sharer and it may continuously reach friends of the user's friends.

Students were asked about the use of the group page on Facebook for educational purposes in terms of intercultural awareness, and the results were positive towards the idea that Facebook is a good medium to enhance the knowledge of cultures abroad, as well as enabling interaction with people from different countries. Most of the students (n=50) agreed upon the view that Facebook can be used as an assistive tool for the courses they were currently taking in terms of intercultural awareness. As the course given by the instructor included topics related to British and world culture, the students expressed their ideas with an emphasis on intercultural communication and awareness. The common views on using Facebook for educational purposes in terms of intercultural awareness are presented below, with the statements of students:

> *At first I was not interested in cultural issues that much, but after the activities and posts on Facebook group page, I felt a bit illiterate and found myself searching in detail for the intercultural issues shared on the group page.* (S51)

> *Using a group page as the continuation of the course is really useful. As we are students at the department of English Language and Literature, we should focus more on cultural and intercultural issues around the world.* (S28)

> *The course is named "British Culture", but we found more, apart from British Culture thanks to that group page. It basically broadens our view of intercultural awareness with the documents, photos and discussions with foreigners on the Facebook group page.* (S32)

As shown above, the statements of the students indicate that they perceive Facebook positively as an educational setting in terms of intercultural knowledge and awareness. Beside its educational implications, the students also emphasized the importance of the issues that they learnt about through the Facebook group page. Most of the students (N=42) admitted that the Facebook group page enhanced their knowledge of

agenda issues including traditions, cultures and even famous people around the world. They noted that the issues shared on the group page were both popular and interesting (N=41), but they (N=35) also admitted that they saw and learnt about issues for the first time when they were shared on the Facebook group page. One student explained the process of learning about new things on the group page:

> *I usually try to follow the popular articles and news about the world, but it was the first time I heard about the term "Apartheid". It was quite interesting for me and I commented on the issue with a little knowledge, and also learnt more from the comments of my friends on the group page. However, I also searched on Google for details, and I must confess it was really the first time I learnt something totally new on Facebook.* (S36)

As the statement of the student above indicates, the Facebook group page created new horizons for intercultural issues. Taking the "Apartheid" issue into consideration, students appear not to have been very aware of the global issues discussed and presented all over the world. The "Apartheid" issue became popular with the death of Nelson Mandela, when the whole world started talking and discussing the achievements he made during his lifetime. But students stated that it was the first time they had heard about the word "apartheid," as they were busy with more popular issues like football, the lives of celebrities or similar news shared on Facebook. As one student stated:

> *It was the first time I heard the name "Nelson Mandela", after seeing the post on the group page, I read the comments and I suddenly realized that I am illiterate. Because I personally believe that as English majoring students, we should follow the news about the whole world, and learn the political issues as well as popular ones. But because we are quite busy with popular news like interesting facts, football, or news about celebrities, we miss the more important issues that will enhance our academic and professional knowledge as English majoring students.* (S46)

The self-report of the student indicates that students are ignorant about some global issues. Their primary aim is to communicate and interact with their friends through popular issues, as stated earlier. But, beside the topics instructed and presented by the lecturer, there is another world to be related to the courses taken. Facebook, in this sense can serve to create the bridge between the classroom and real life. Correlating the issues of the classroom with the real world by sharing on Facebook develops the level of awareness of intercultural issues as the self-report indicates.

On social networking websites like Facebook, identity of belonging to a particular city, group or university etc. is vital, as users are socialized and communicate in groups by sharing ideas, information, documents, comments and interaction. So, on Facebook, users have the chance to create groups or join groups around the world in relation to common hobbies, needs and interests. So, being an online member of a particular group creates a communal identity among users, and this gradually leads to an effective way of learning.

Similarly, twenty five students held in common the view that the Facebook group page helped them to interact with peers and people from different countries and discuss the issues posted. It was noted that students could discuss the issue posted by the instructor effectively with foreigners and share their own individual thoughts. Moreover, students stated that they had more chance to interact with each other and foreign members thanks to the group page when compared with the real classroom atmosphere. As students said:

> *It is good that we have the chance to discuss and share ideas with foreigners by commenting on the issues posted on the group page. The comments of the foreign students encourage me to interact with them more frequently through which I develop awareness about different cultures and behaviors.* (S47)

> *It is good that I see the comments of foreign students below the posts, in this way my perception of foreign people changed when I saw the comment about the "mixed-sex accommodation". I used to think that people in Europe were liberal but through the comments I understood that they may also be a bit conservative. I would not have guessed that any European might think in this way. I asked the reason through comments on the group page and we discussed the issue expressing our own beliefs and thoughts.* (S35)

As presented above, students are in a positive mood about interacting with foreign students on the group page, as they believe that it is easy to communicate and share ideas on Facebook. Another remarkable point is that, when asked about the issue of "Intercultural Awareness", students reported having become more aware of international cultural issues. Most of the students agreed with the idea that Facebook opened new paths to interaction with foreigners all over the world though which their prejudices about foreigners started to disappear. Similarly, most of the students stated that their level of intercultural awareness had risen thanks to the Facebook Group Page. To support this idea, some students reported their experiences and thoughts as follows:

> *As we have only Turkish friends in the classroom we do not have a chance to discuss and talk about different cultures. The only differences in the cultures we belong to are local ones. But, with the help of Facebook, and of course the group page, I started to*

think more about different cultures and I felt compelled to search about the cultures of the foreign friends I interacted and communicated with on Facebook, including food culture, fashion culture, even the political culture they have. (S39)

...for example, I commented on the issue of Christmas, and my foreign friend asked me the situation in Turkey, and I told him that we celebrate the New Year, as we are Muslims, we do not celebrate under the name of Christmas as it sounds like Christian tradition. So, mutually we discussed about the issue, he learnt new things about my culture and unconsciously I created an awareness about the Turkish culture. So I believe that it is also a kind of intercultural awareness, from the point of my friend's view. (S40)

This group page changed my view about different cultures. I realized that I used to have a bit prejudice about different cultures, and the reason behind this was my poor knowledge of different cultures all over the world. But now, I feel self-confident about discussing the intercultural issues in real life thanks to the Facebook group page. (S6)

The statements of the students proved the hypothesis that Facebook has a positive effect on developing intercultural awareness. The ideas and expressions of students show that Facebook fills a gap in self-confidence and combats illiteracy on intercultural issues. Beside the activities conducted in the real classroom atmosphere, students find a chance to interact and communicate with their friends abroad. So, using Facebook for intercultural purposes is a leading phenomenon in which students' self-efficacy proves to assist their intercultural awareness level. For instance, many people in Turkey get confused about Christmas and the New Year. While the first one is regarded as a Christian tradition, the New Year is used as synonym for Christmas. The students stated that it was the first time they differentiated the meaning of the two issues through the comments of a post shared on the group page. As they stated:

I used to think that Christmas and New Year were the same thing exactly. But the post on the group page helped me to learn the basic difference. I felt ashamed of my illiteracy but learning it through comments encouraged me to search for details about the issue too. (S15)

As a Muslim, I used to think that we celebrate the New Year according to Christian traditions, for that reason I always opposed the idea of celebrating it. But, after I learnt the differences between two terms I realized that we are just celebrating the coming of the New Year according to the calendar we are currently using. (S21)

After seeing the post, I said; "I'm not celebrating because of religious issues, I'm just celebrating because of just new hopes." As it can easily be understood, I think celebrating New Year has become more global issue which cannot be limited to one religion in terms of meaning. (S4)

The statements show that students also became more aware of their own cultural traditions by comparing other cultures in terms of meaning. Beside differentiating terms misused in native culture, students also stated that they learnt even more basic issues about

different cultures. Taking the superstitions issue posted on the group page into account, students surprisingly stated that they very much enjoyed learning new things about good and bad luck. As superstitions are regarded as some of the very basic and oldest traditions of cultures, people can easily correlate these habits and traditions into the daily lives of people. For instance, while some items or animals are believed to bring good luck in one culture, the issue may be reversed in other cultures. As this is already an entertaining and enjoyable issue for discussion by students, the researcher posted an issue about different superstitions indifferent cultures on the group page. The students stated that they learnt different things about superstitions from both their own cultures, which change according to region, city and even village, as well as from other cultures via the foreign students' comments. As they stated:

> I believe some of them, for instance when I see black cat, I hold my hair suddenly, and as I saw on the comments from foreign students on the group page, this superstition is unique to Turkish culture. (S42)

> I have learned a superstition from my friend for instance, if you see a coin on the floor, you should turn the money upside down, but I can't remember which side brings good luck or bad luck. It was quite enjoyable for me to learn such an interesting superstition. (S19)

> I was very surprised when I learnt that there is the itchy hand and money superstition in European culture. If your right hand should itch you are going to lose money, but if your left hand itches you are going to get some money. This belief is exactly the same in our culture too. (S36)

> I learnt at least 20 new superstitions from different cultures, some were very different when compared with mine, but others were nearly the same. For instance, it was the first time I heard about how throwing a tooth to the roof helps other teeth to grow faster. It was funny because I used put it under my pillow for angels to bring money. (S28)

4.2.5. The Effect of the Facebook Group Page on Students' Writing, Vocabulary and Grammar Skills

Facebook can help the learners' level of writing skill via comments and messages. Research by Kabilan et al (2010) showed that students perceive Facebook as a place where they can develop their writing skills and practice freely online, facilitated and motivated by themselves. Similarly, Facebook group pages and similar social networking websites also helped in academic writing skills through some activities (Mills, 2009). Besides, Klimanova and Dembovskaya (2010) showed that students are in favor of taking

assignments online via a popular social networking website in Russia where they joined in a group page and interacted with each other.

The next discussion topic during the interview was the effect of the Facebook group page on knowledge of English. As they were students majoring in English and they used English as a medium to comment on the issues posted on Facebook, the students (n=50) stated that the activities on the group page developed their command of English, by means of commenting. And twenty students also stated that the presence of foreign students from different countries on the group page encouraged them to use English for its communicative and pragmatic value as well as for accuracy The ideas that support this statement are given as follows:

> *Commenting on issues I do not know was hard for me. I always tried my best in using proper and suitable words for my comment to be effective.* (S9)

> *I always waited until some of other members on the group page commented, because I wanted to see the content and the word choice they preferred in commenting.* (S12)

> *Interacting with foreign students on the group page brought some responsibilities to me. For instance, I tried to express my ideas with correct grammar and before clicking on the send button, I always checked what I wrote in detail. Because, my friends and even foreign members on the group page might have thought my knowledge of English language is poor.* (S5)

> *I learnt so many words through the comments on the group page. And even, instead of using daily and usual words, I searched on web and tried to use new words to be more effective and different.* (S41)

> *I feel compelled to search for new words to understand or make comments about the issue. I think this is a very enjoyable way of learning, because it would be boring if an instructor said "you must memorize these words"* (S49)

This tendency to search for and try to use new words indicates that students feel the responsibility to use different words as they see other foreign students using them. Taking this into consideration, as the statements of the students also show, it appears that students are keen to make their sentences stronger in terms of meaning by using new and different words. Besides being aware of the fact that they have a limited knowledge of words in English, students also state that they feel continuously motivated by seeing new words used by their friends online on the Facebook group page. Here are some statements showing this tendency:

I realized that I use very general words and do not tend to change them as I do not need them indeed. After realizing that, I began to search for synonyms of the words I already use beside the new ones I didn't know before. So, by using different words, I feel that my sentence becomes more powerful than before. (s34)

I believe that, as English majoring students, we should use more and different words. In the Facebook group page, I saw that foreign students, although they are not native English speakers, use more complex and unknown words when compared with us. For that reason, I search for new words and re-write my sentence with better and longer words to make my comment stronger. (S50)

Facebook, as a global trademark, is used by millions of users all over the world. Students prefer to communicate with their foreign friends to develop their use of English. As the statements of the students show, Facebook can also enhance the English level of students indirectly, through commenting on photos, through writing, or reading the posts or documents shared by their friends or even searching for the new words they are not familiar with. Students share the common view that having a foreign friend abroad leads users to search for new words, which results in having a positive effect on language development.

To sum up, this chapter concludes that the statements of students in the focus group interviews show that the Facebook group page has a positive effect on raising intercultural awareness as well as promoting foreign language development and interaction with foreign people virtually. The statements prove that students are in favor of using Facebook as an academic and intercultural aid to assist their awareness of different cultures and traditions.

4.3. Results of Quantitative Data

The purpose of this quasi-experimental research study was to examine the possible effects of Facebook on the intercultural awareness of students majoring in English at an undergraduate level in Turkey. Using a mixed-methods research approach, the study was conducted in two steps: collecting quantitative data, using the Intercultural Effectiveness Scale questionnaire (Portalla and Chen, 2010) and collecting qualitative data via focus group interview with a sub-sample of participants. Quantitatively, descriptive statistics and non-parametric tests were used to examine the factors (e.g. Behavioral Flexibility, Interaction Relaxation, Interactant Respect, Message Skills, Identity Maintenance, and Interaction Management) contributing to the students' intercultural awareness and their relationship with gender issues. Qualitatively, focus group interviews with a sub-sample of

participants were used to further explain the main concern of the study in more detail, providing a picture of the matter to the fullest extent.

The quantitative results are presented first, followed by the qualitative results. In this chapter, section 4.1. presents a summary of the research questions and the data collection and analyses procedures. The results for the study included the following components: Section 4.1. provides the results obtained for the study, including the descriptive statistical results (means and standard deviations) and the inferential statistical results (Wilcoxon signed ranks and Mann-Whithney U Tests) for the intercultural awareness scores for the experimental and control groups and also by gender.

4.3.1. Quantitative Data Analysis Results

As described in Chapter 3, the aim of this study was to examine the positive and negative effects of Facebook on intercultural communication. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics (Mann-Whitney Test and Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test) were used to analyze the quantitative data. The descriptive statistics include the means, percentages and standard deviations of the participants' perceptions and attitudes toward intercultural awareness, the inferential statistics involve non-parametric paired samples, Mann-Whitney Tests, and independent samples, Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, for the intercultural awareness scores obtained from the participants who use social networking sites. The data derived from these analyses were used to answer the following major research question:

a) What are the possible effects of Facebook on EFL students' intercultural awareness?

And the following minor research questions:

a) Is there a relationship between gender and intercultural awareness for those using social networking websites regularly and actively?

b) What are the factors impacting upon EFL students' use of social networking sites?

A summary of the data collection and analysis procedures as well as their alignment with the research questions is presented in Table 4. In Section 4.1.: Table 4. presents descriptive statistical results regarding the numbers of participants in the experimental and control groups, their genders, means and standard deviations. Table 5 includes descriptive statistical results for the responses to each item in the scale in the pre- and post tests by the experimental group participants according to gender. Table 6 includes the same descriptive statistical results for the control group participants. Table 7 shows the results of the Mann-Whitney U–Test which was conducted to determine whether there were any significant differences between the pre- and post test scores for both the experimental and the control group participants. Table 8 shows the results of the Mann-Whitney U–Test which was conducted to determine whether there were any significant differences in the pre-test scores of both the experimental and the control group participants, by gender; while Table 9 presents the results of the Mann-Whitney U–Test conducted on the post-test scores, by gender. Table 10 shows the results of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test which was conducted to determine whether there were any significant relationships between the pre- and post-test scores of the experimental group for each of the 6 factors on the scale impacting upon the EFL students' Facebook use. Finally, Table 11 presents the results of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test which was conducted to determine whether the factors impacting upon the EFL students' intercultural awareness differed based on gender in the experimental group participants.

Table 3: Quantitative Data and its Alignment with Research Questions

Major Research Question: What are the possible effects of Facebook on EFL students' intercultural awareness?

Data	Analysis	Alignment with Research Questions
Intercultural Effectiveness Scale (Portalla and Chen, 2010)	Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviations) and inferential Statistics (paired sample and independent samples non-parametric tests) were conducted to determine the extent to which Facebook use had an impact on the EFL students' intercultural awareness and whether there was a significant difference between gender and intercultural awareness for those using social networking websites regularly and actively.	Is there a relationship between gender and intercultural awareness for those using social networking websites regularly and actively?
	Paired Samples non-parametric test were conducted to determine the factors contributing to the experimental group students' Facebook use and intercultural awareness.	What are the factors impacting upon English majoring students' use of social networking sites?
	Independent samples non-parametric tests were conducted to examine whether the factors contributing to the experimental group participants' Facebook use and intercultural awareness changed by gender.	Is there any significant difference between the factors impacting on social networking site use by gender?

4. 3.1.1. Descriptive Statistical Results

Table 4 provides the descriptive statistics for the participants. Further, Table 5 and Table 6, present detailed descriptive statistics for both the experimental and the control groups, including pre-and post-test results. As mentioned before, 56 EFL students in the experimental group and 47 students in the control group completed the Intercultural Effectiveness Scale questionnaire (Portalla and Chen, 2010), including 42 5-point Likert items.

Of the 56 students of the experimental group, 19 were male and 37 were female in both the pre-test and the post-test. As explained earlier, they were selected by the convenience sampling method from students majoring in English at Karadeniz Technical University in Turkey. Although more students participated in the Facebook group page activities, some of them were not asked to respond to the scale questionnaire after Facebook group activities at the end of the term, as they were just foreign visitors interacting and participating in the group page. Therefore, the responses to the scale questionnaire of all 56 EFL students in the experimental group were selected for analysis, as were the responses of all 47 EFL students in the control group. Table 4 presents the participants' profiles and their scores in the pre- and post tests. In each group, the number of female participants was higher than of males.

Table 4: Participants Profile

Group		Total Number of Participants	Male	Female
Experimental	pre-test	56	19	37
	post-test	56	19	37
Control	pre-test	47	18	29
	post-test	47	18	29

Table 5 provides the descriptive statistical results for the responses to each item in the scale in the pre- and post-tests by the experimental group participants by gender. The results show that the mean scores for the pre-test and the post-test are similar across only 15 items (Item #4, #6, #8, #10, #16, #18, #20, #24, #26, #28, #32, #34, #35, #39, and #41) while, for the other items, the participants received relatively much higher mean scores in the post-test. Therefore the participants in the experimental group could be considered more active in using Facebook. In other words, the use of Facebook as an assistive aid in the course had some impact upon the EFL students' intercultural effectiveness and awareness in terms of behavioral flexibility, interaction relaxation, interactant respect, message skills, identity maintenance, and interaction management.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics: Experimental group pre-and post-tests results

	Pre-test		Post-test		
	Male	Female	Male	Femal	#Item
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Numbers
I find it is easy to talk with people from different cultures.	9,47	5,41	9,52	2,00	1
I always feel constrained when interacting with people from different cultures.	3,68	2,97	3,81	9,71	2
I find it is easy to get along with people from different cultures.	8,42	4,32	8,10	8,86	3
I always feel nervous when interacting with people from different cultures.	5,79	5,68	4,76	6,57	4*
I am able to express my ideas clearly when interacting with people from different cultures.	1,58	3,78	6,67	2,86	5
I feel bored when interacting with people from different cultures.	5,26	0,81	4,29	2,57	6*
I use appropriate tone of voice when interacting with people from different cultures.	7,89	4,59	6,67	2,57	7
I find my mind often wanders when interacting with people from different cultures.	9,47	1,08	1,43	0,86	8*
I am able to answer questions effectively when interacting with people from different cultures.	1,58	5,41	0,00	2,00	9
I have problems expressing my opinions concisely when interacting with people from different cultures.	6,84	1,89	7,14	0,00	10*
I use appropriate eye contact when interacting with people from different cultures.	9,47	0,27	9,52	1,43	11

	Pre-test		Post-test		
I have problems distinguishing between informative and persuasive messages when interacting with people from different cultures.	8,42	1,62	2,86	0,86	12
I am a good listener when interacting with people from different cultures.	5,26	5,41	2,86	2,57	13
I find it is difficult to respond appropriately to the needs of my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.	6,32	1,35	0,48	1,71	14
I always know how to initiate a conversation when interacting with people from different cultures.	0,00	5,14	2,38	3,43	15
I often miss parts of what is going on when interacting with people from different cultures.	7,37	1,35	9,05	1,71	16*
I always pretend to be having a good time, even if I am not, when interacting with people from different cultures.	7,89	8,92	6,67	5,43	17
I often get confused when it is my turn to speak when interacting with people from different cultures.	7,89	2,43	4,76	0,57	18*
I feel relaxed when interacting with people from different cultures.	8,95	0,27	0,95	6,00	19
I am afraid to express myself when interacting with people from different cultures.	5,79	4,05	7,14	2,57	20*
I use appropriate facial expressions when interacting with people from different cultures.	3,68	0,81	2,38	4,29	21
I find it is difficult to concentrate on what my culturally different counterparts are saying during our interaction.	2,63	4,32	8,57	3,43	22
I always show respect for my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.	0,53	3,78	5,24	4,86	23
I often feel disappointed in myself after interacting with people from different cultures.	9,47	6,49	8,10	5,14	24*
I often express empathy to my culturally different counterparts to let them feel that I care about them.	8,95	9,73	5,71	7,14	25
I have problems with grammar when interacting with people from different cultures.	6,32	0,81	4,76	9,71	26*
I have no problem changing my opinions in order to please my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.	7,37	7,03	7,14	3,71	27
I often act like a very different person when interacting with people from different cultures.	1,58	0,00	9,52	8,00	28*
I always adjust my behavior to make my culturally different counterparts feel comfortable during our interaction.	7,37	5,95	5,24	5,43	29
I often have problems changing my behaviors to suit the situation when interacting with people from different cultures.	1,05	9,73	7,14	6,86	30
I always show respect for the opinions of my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.	9,47	5,14	1,90	2,29	31
I often try to control the conversation when interacting with people from different cultures.	6,84	5,41	5,24	9,43	32*

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	Pre-test		Post-test		
I change my approach when I find the look of disapproval in the eyes of my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.	5,26	8,38	4,76	6,57	33
I am often uncertain of my role in conversations with people from different cultures.	7,37	6,49	8,57	5,43	34*
I find it is difficult to maintain satisfying relationships with my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.	8,42	4,32	5,24	5,43	35*
I find I have a lot in common with my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.	8,95	7,84	2,86	4,86	36
I find it is difficult to enter into meaningful conversation when interacting with people from different cultures.	6,32	1,35	4,29	4,00	37
I find the best way to act is to be myself when interacting with people from different cultures.	6,32	5,95	5,71	7,43	38
I am not always the person I appear to be when interacting with people from different cultures.	8,95	8,11	1,90	8,29	39*
I find it is easy to identify with my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.	4,21	1,89	1,90	2,57	40
I find it is difficult to feel my culturally different counterparts are similar to me.	2,63	3,78	2,38	3,14	41*
I always feel a sense of distance with my culturally different counterparts	4,21	3,24	9,52	2,00	42

Table 6 includes the descriptive statistical results for the responses to each item in the scale in the pre- and post-tests by the control group participants by gender. Contrary to the results obtained with the experimental group, these results show that the mean scores for the pre-test and the post-test are slightly different across only 5 items (Item #12, #22, #25, #29, and #41) while, for all of the other items, the participants received relatively similar mean scores in the post-test. Therefore, the behavior of the participants in the control group in using Facebook could be considered to be similar in the pre- and post-test. In other words, the participants did not develop their intercultural effectiveness and awareness in terms of behavioral flexibility, interaction relaxation, interactant respect, message skills, identity maintenance, and interaction management.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics: Control group pre-and post-tests results

	Pre-test		Post-test		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	#Item Numbers
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	
I find it is easy to talk with people from different cultures.	18,24	26,55	22,43	26,00	1
I always feel constrained when interacting with people from different cultures.	40,00	26,90	29,19	30,00	2
I find it is easy to get along with people from different cultures.	26,47	26,90	22,97	29,00	3
I always feel nervous when interacting with people from different cultures.	38,24	36,90	36,49	36,00	4
I am able to express my ideas clearly when interacting with people from different cultures.	18,82	28,62	24,05	26,00	5
I feel bored when interacting with people from different cultures.	37,06	36,21	40,81	42,00	6
I use appropriate tone of voice when interacting with people from different cultures.	22,94	23,79	22,43	25,00	7
I find my mind often wanders when interacting with people from different cultures.	26,47	27,59	27,30	28,00	8
I am able to answer questions effectively when interacting with people from different cultures.	17,65	28,62	24,32	28,00	9
I have problems expressing my opinions concisely when interacting with people from different cultures.	37,06	27,59	30,27	31,00	10
I use appropriate eye contact when interacting with people from different cultures.	17,65	19,31	20,00	18,00	11
I have problems distinguishing between informative and persuasive messages when interacting with people from different cultures.	34,12	26,90	34,86	33,00	12*
I am a good listener when interacting with people from different cultures.	17,06	17,93	17,57	19,00	13
I find it is difficult to respond appropriately to the needs of my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.	31,76	28,97	30,81	31,00	14
I always know how to initiate a conversation when interacting with people from different cultures.	22,35	25,17	25,14	24,00	15
I often miss parts of what is going on when interacting with people from different cultures.	34,12	26,55	27,03	29,00	16
I always pretend to be having a good time, even if I am not, when interacting with people from different cultures.	30,59	24,83	25,95	26,00	17
I often get confused when it is my turn to speak when interacting with people from different cultures.	35,29	26,55	30,54	29,00	18
I feel relaxed when interacting with people from different cultures.	23,53	28,62	21,89	24,00	19

	Pre-test		Post-test		
I am afraid to express myself when interacting with people from different cultures.	41,18	33,10	35,14	36,00	20
I use appropriate facial expressions when interacting with people from different cultures.	22,35	25,52	21,62	23,00	21
I find it is difficult to concentrate on what my culturally different counterparts are saying during our interaction.	32,94	29,66	34,32	31,00	22*
I always show respect for my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.	19,41	19,31	17,57	17,00	23
I often feel disappointed in myself after interacting with people from different cultures.	39,41	35,17	35,95	33,00	24
I often express empathy to my culturally different counterparts to let them feel that I care about them.	17,65	22,07	21,89	23,00	25*
I have problems with grammar when interacting with people from different cultures.	36,47	30,34	29,19	32,00	26
I have no problem changing my opinions in order to please my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.	24,12	26,55	26,76	23,00	27
I often act like a very different person when interacting with people from different cultures.	29,41	31,72	32,43	31,00	28
I always adjust my behavior to make my culturally different counterparts feel comfortable during our interaction.	23,53	23,10	24,59	25,00	29*
I often have problems changing my behaviors to suit the situation when interacting with people from different cultures.	36,47	28,62	32,16	33,00	30
I always show respect for the opinions of my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.	18,24	18,97	17,84	17,00	31
I often try to control the conversation when interacting with people from different cultures.	23,53	24,14	23,24	27,00	32
I change my approach when I find the look of disapproval in the eyes of my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.	29,41	28,97	26,22	28,00	33
I am often uncertain of my role in conversations with people from different cultures.	33,53	30,34	32,16	34,00	34
I find it is difficult to maintain satisfying relationships with my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.	38,82	32,76	31,62	29,00	35
I find I have a lot in common with my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.	25,29	25,52	25,68	26,00	36
I find it is difficult to enter into meaningful conversation when interacting with people from different cultures.	36,47	27,59	31,08	28,00	37
I find the best way to act is to be myself when interacting with people from different cultures.	16,47	18,62	20,00	17,00	38

	Pre-test		Post-test		
I am not always the person I appear to be when interacting with people from different cultures.	35,29	33,10	32,43	33,00	39
I find it is easy to identify with my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.	22,35	23,10	21,89	24,00	40
I find it is difficult to feel my culturally different counterparts are similar to me.	33,53	32,07	34,86	34,00	41*
I always feel a sense of distance with my culturally different counterparts	25,88	27,59	26,22	28,00	42

Table 7 shows the results of the Mann-Whitney U–Test which was conducted to determine whether there were significant mean score differences between the pre- and post-test scores of both the experimental and the control group participants. As Table 7 shows, for the experimental group, there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores (U=31,500, $p < .05$). The post-test mean rank score was significantly higher than the pre-test score. On the other hand, the reverse is true for the control group. Again, these results confirm the results presented in Tables 5 and 6, indicating that using the Facebook group page and activities affected the EFL students' intercultural awareness.

Table 7: Mann-Whitney U–Test Results of pre-and post tests

		Mean Rank	N	Sum of Ranks	U	p
Experimental group	Pre-test	29,06	56	1627,50	31,500	,000*
	Post-test	83,94	56	4700,50		
Control group	Pre-test	48,36	47	2273,00	1064,000	,759
	Post-test	46,64	47	2192,00		

Note: indicates significant difference at the .05 level.

Table 8 shows the results of the independent samples Mann-Whitney U–Test which was conducted to determine whether there were any significant differences in the pre-test results of the experimental group or control group participants, by gender. As Table 8 shows, for the experimental group, there was no significant difference between the males and females (U=302.000, $p < .05$) although the males received a slightly higher mean rank score in the scale, indicating that there was no significant difference between males and females in respect of the EFL students' intercultural awareness. Similarly, for the control

group, there was no significant difference between males and females (U=178.500, $p <$ .05) and males received a slightly higher mean rank score in the scale, indicating that the female and male EFL students had similar intercultural awareness.

Table 8: Mann-Whitney U–Test Results of pre-test by gender

Experimental group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	P*
Male	19	31,11	591,00	302,000	,391
Female	37	27,16	1005,00		
Control group	N				
Male	18	27,50	467,50	178,500	,121
Female	29	21,16	613,50		

Table 9 shows the results of the independent samples Mann-Whitney U–Test which was conducted to determine whether there were any significant differences in the post-test results by gender. Similar to the results provided in Table 7, Table 8. shows that, for the experimental group, there was no significant difference between the males and females (U=344.000, $p <$ .05), although the males received a slightly higher score on the scale, indicating that using the Facebook Group page did not affect the EFL students intercultural awareness by gender. Similarly, for the control group, there was no significant difference between the males and females (U=171.500, p < .05), although females received a slightly higher mean rank score on the scale, indicating that the female and male EFL students had similar intercultural awareness.

Table 9: Mann-Whitney U–Test Results of post-test by gender

Experimental Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	P*
Male	19	29,62	622,00	344,000	,691
Female	37	27,83	974,00		
Control Group	N				
Male	18	23,64	874,50	171,500	,725
Female	29	25,35	253,50		

*Note: indicates significant difference at the .05 level.

As Table 8 and Table 9 show, for the control group, there was no significant difference between the males and females ($p < .05$), indicating that the EFL students who took the traditional method of lecturing did not develop their intercultural awareness differently by gender.

Table 10 shows the results of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test which was conducted to determine whether there were any significant relationships between the pre- and post-test scores of the experimental group for each of the 6 factors on the scale impacting upon the EFL students' Facebook use. The mean rank scores are given for the 6 levels on the scale. The results show that with the sole exception of message skills (z = -5,991[b], $p <$ 0.05), the EFL students significantly differed in their levels of behavioral flexibility, interaction, relaxation, interactant respect, identity maintenance, and interaction management. Again, these results confirm the descriptive statistics presented above, indicating that using activities on the Facebook group page impacted on the students' intercultural awareness.

Table 10: Wilcoxon Signed Rank results for factors impacting upon EFL students' Facebook use in the experimental group

Ranks		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z*	P**
Behavioral Flexibility	Negative Ranks	0[a]	,00	,00		
	Positive Ranks	55[b]	28,00	1540,00	-6,458[b]	,000
	Ties	1[c]				
	Total	56				
Interaction Relaxation	Negative Ranks	0[d]	,00	,00	-6,518b	,000
	Positive Ranks	56[e]	28,50	1596,00		
	Ties	0[f]				
	Total	56				
Interactant respect	Negative Ranks	0[g]	,00	,00		
	Positive Ranks	56[h]	28,50	1596,00		
	Ties	0[i]			-6,518[b]	,000
	Total	56				
Message skills	Negative Ranks	27[j]	24,00	648,00	-,890[c]	,373
	Positive Ranks	20[k]	24,00	480,00		

Ranks						
	Ties	9[l]				
	Total	56				
Identity maintenance -	Negative Ranks	6[m]	7,92	47,50		
	Positive Ranks	48[n]	29,95	1437,50	-5,991[b]	,000
	Ties	2[o]				
	Total	56				
Interaction management	Negative Ranks	4[p]	10,13	40,50		
	Positive Ranks	49[q]	28,38	1390,50	-5,982[b]	,000
	Ties	3[r]				
	Total	56				

* Based on negative ranks.

**Note: indicates significant difference at the .05 level.

A. Behavioral Flexibility < Flexibility

B. Behavioral Flexibility > Flexibility

C. Behavioral Flexibility = Flexibility

D. Interaction Relaxation < Relaxation

E. Interaction Relaxation > Relaxation

F. Interaction Relaxation = Relaxation

G. Interactant Respect < Interactant Respect

H. Interactant Respect > Interactant Respect

I. Interactant Respect = Interactant Respect

J. Message Skills < Message Skills

K. Message Skills > Message Skills

L. Message Skills = Message Skills

M. Identity Maintenance < Identity

N. Identity Maintenance > Identity

O. Identity Maintenance = Identity

P.Interaction Management<Interaction Management

Q.Interaction Management>Interaction Management

R. Interaction Management = Interaction Management

Table 11: Wilcoxon Signed Rank results for experimental group by gender

	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	P*
			Ranks			
Interaction Management	male	19	24,33	511,00		
	female	37	31,00	1085,00	280,000	,136
	Total	56				
Behavioral Flexibility	male	19	31,62	664,00		
	female	37	26,63	932,00	302,000	,265
	Total	56				
Interaction Relaxation	male	19	28,10	590,00		
	female	37	28,74	1006,00	359,000	,885
	Total	56				
Interactant respect	male	19	23,83	500,50		
	female	37	31,30	1095,50	269,500	,090
	Total	56				
Message skills	male	19	34,21	718,50		
	female	37	25,07	877,50	247,500	,042
	Total	56				
Identity maintenance	male	19	29,88	627,50		
	female	37	27,67	968,50	338,500	,621
	Total	56				

*Note: indicates significant difference at the .05 level.

Finally, Table 11 presents the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test which was conducted to examine if the factors impacting upon the EFL students' intercultural awareness differed based on gender in the experimental group participants. No significant differences were obtained for any of the 6 levels (e.g. behavioral flexibility, interaction relaxation, message skills, interactant respect, identity maintenance, and interaction management) based on gender, indicating that both males and females developed a similar level of intercultural awareness.

Table 12: Comparison of Mann Whitney U Test results for Message Skills factor

| Pre-test Post-test | N | Control group | | | | Experimental group | | |
		Mean Rank	u	p		Mean rank	u	p
I have problems expressing my opinions concisely when interacting with people from different cultures.								
pre-test	47	47,91			56	57,68		
post-test	47	47,09			56	55,32		
Total	94		1085	,879	112		1502	,691
I have problems distinguishing between informative and persuasive messages when interacting with people from different cultures.								
pre-test	47	40,81			56	60,07		
post-test	47	54,19			56	52,93		
Total	94		790	,011	112		1368	,225
I find it is difficult to respond appropriately to the needs of my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.								
pre-test	47	46,36			56	58,54		
post-test	47	48,64			56	54,46		
Total	94		1051	,673	112		1453,5	,488
I often miss parts of what is going on when interacting with people from different cultures.								
pre-test	47	49,72			56	54,78		
post-test	47	45,28			56	58,22		
Total	94		1000	,401	112		1471,5	,560
I have problems with grammar when interacting with people from different cultures.								
pre-test	47	49,89			56	58,66		
post-test	47	45,11			56	54,34		
Total	94		992	,380	112		1447	,467

Table 12 shows the comparison of the students' message skills in both groups. The independent samples Mann-Whitney U–Test was conducted to determine whether there were any significant differences in the pre-test and post-test results for both the experimental group and the control group. As Table 12 shows, for both groups, there were no significant differences between the pre-test and post-test results for any of the items ($p < .05$), indicating that the EFL students had similar message skills even though the experimental group used Facebook to enhance intercultural awareness.

			Control group				Experimental group		
	Pre-test Post-test	N	Mean Rank	u	p	n	Mean Rank	u	p
I find it is easy to talk with people from different cultures.	pre-test	47	48,06			56	34,08		
	post-test	47	46,94	1078	,834	56	78,92	312,5	,000*
	Total	94				112			
I always feel constrained when interacting with people from different cultures.	pre-test	47	50,13			56	47,25		
	post-test	47	44,87	981	,338	56	65,75	1050,	,001*
	Total	94				112			
I find it is easy to get along with people from different cultures.	pre-test	47	51,12			56	38,54		
	post-test	47	43,88	934	,179	56	74,46	562	,000*
	Total	94				112			
I find my mind often wanders when interacting with people from different cultures.	pre-test	47	46,71			56	56,20		
	post-test	47	48,29	1067,5	,765	56	56,80	1551	,918
	Total	94				112			
I always know how to initiate a conversation when interacting with people from different cultures.	pre-test	47	46,67			56	32,91		
	post-test	47	48,33	1065,5	,750	56	80,09	247	,000*
	Total	94				112			
I often get confused when it is my turn to speak when interacting with people from different cultures.	pre-test	47	46,26			56	59,52		
	post-test	47	48,74	1046	,643	56	53,48	1399	,309
	Total	94				112			
I feel relaxed when interacting with people from different cultures.	pre-test	47	51,86			56	35,51		
	post-test	47	43,14	899,5	,107	56	77,49	392,5	,000*
	Total	94				112			
I find it is easy to identify with my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.	pre-test	47	48,49			56	30,95		
	post-test	47	46,51	1058	,708	56	82,05	137	,000*
	Total	94				112			

Table 13 shows the comparison of the students' interaction relaxation impacting upon the students' intercultural awareness. The independent samples Mann-Whitney U–Test was conducted to determine whether there were any significant differences in the pre-test and post-test results for both the experimental group and the control group. As Table 13 shows that, whereas for the control group there were no significant differences between the pre-test and post-test results for any of the items ($p < .05$), indicating that the EFL students had a similar level of interaction relaxation, for the experimental group there were significant differences between the pre-test and post-test results, except for two items (*$p < .05$). This result indicates that for the experimental group students, for the most part,

there were significant differences in terms of interaction relaxation, as they had participated in Facebook to raise their intercultural awareness.

Table 14: Comparison of Mann Whitney U Test results for Behavioral Flexibility factor

				Control group			Experimental group		
	Pre-test Post-test	N	Mean Rank	u	p	N	Mean rank	u	p
I feel bored when interacting with people from different cultures.	pre-test	47	42,49			56	54,89		
	post-test	47	52,51	869	,059	56	58,11	1478	,564
	Total	94				112			
I am a good listener when interacting with people from different cultures.	pre-test	47	48,00			56	29,37		
	post-test	47	47,00	1081	,846	56	83,63	48,5	,000*
	Total	94				112			
I always pretend to be having a good time, even if I am not, when interacting with people from different cultures.	pre-test	47	48,23			56	36,31		
	post-test	47	46,77	1070	,782	56	76,69	437,5	,000*
	Total	94				112			
I am afraid to express myself when interacting with people from different cultures.	pre-test	47	48,63			56	56,96		
	post-test	47	46,37	1051,5	,679	56	56,04	1542,5	,877
	Total	94				112			
I often act like a very different person when interacting with people from different cultures.	pre-test	47	45,64			56	59,48		
	post-test	47	49,36	1017	,495	56	53,52	1401	,306
	Total	94				112			
I always adjust my behavior to make my culturally different counterparts feel comfortable during our interaction.	pre-test	47	45,72			56	31,55		
	post-test	47	49,28	1021	,503	56	81,45	171	,000*
	Total	94				112			
I have problems with grammar when interacting with people from different cultures.	pre-test	47	49,89			56	62,04		
	post-test	47	45,11	992	,380	56	50,96	1258	,055
	Total	94				112			
I find the best way to act is to be myself when interacting with people from different cultures.	pre-test	47	45,52			56	31,55		
	post-test	47	49,48	1011,5	,451	56	81,45	171	,000*
	Total	94				112			
I am not always the person I appear to be when interacting with people from different cultures.	pre-test	47	48,66			56	54,46		
	post-test	47	46,34	1050	,669	56	58,54	1454	,487
	Total	94				112			

Table 14 shows the comparison of the students' behavioral flexibility impacting upon the students' intercultural awareness. The independent samples Mann-Whitney U–

Test was conducted to determine whether there were any significant differences in the pre-test and post-test results for both the experimental group and the control group. As Table 14 shows, whereas for the control group there were no significant differences between the pre-test and post-test results for any of the items (p < .05), indicating that the EFL students had a similar level of behavioral flexibility, for the experimental group there were significant differences between the pre-test and post-test results for four items (*p < .05). This result indicates that Facebook had a positive effect on developing behavioural flexibility in the experimental group.

Table 15: Comparison of Mann Whitney U Test results for Interaction Management factor

	Pre-test Post-test	N	Mean Rank	Control group u	p	N	Mean rank	Experimental group u	p
I always feel nervous when interacting with people from different cultures.	pre-test	47	48,31			56	56,17		
	post-test	47	46,69	1066,500	,766	56	56,83	1549,50	,911
	Total	94				112			
I am able to express my ideas clearly when interacting with people from different cultures.	pre-test	47	48,13			56	35,57		
	post-test	47	46,87	1075,000	,815	56	77,43	396,00	,000*
	Total	94				112			
I use appropriate tone of voice when interacting with people from different cultures.	pre-test	47	47,57			56	35,29		
	post-test	47	47,43	1101,000	,977	56	77,71	380,00	,000*
	Total	94				112			
I am able to answer questions effectively when interacting with people from different cultures.	pre-test	47	46,33			56	34,22		
	post-test	47	48,67	1049,500	,660	56	78,78	320,50	,527
	Total	94				112			
I find it is difficult to concentrate on what my culturally different counterparts are saying during our interaction.	pre-test	47	43,76			56	54,63		
	post-test	47	51,24	928,500	,169	56	58,37	1463,50	,771
	Total	94				112			
I find it is difficult to maintain satisfying relationships with my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.	pre-test	47	52.40			56	57,36		
	post-test	47	42.60	874.000	,067	56	55,64	1520,00	,771
	Total	94				112			
I find it is difficult to enter into meaningful conversation when interacting with people from different cultures.	pre-test	47	48.06			56	54,89		
	post-test	47	46.94	1078.000	,835	56	58,11	1478,00	,590
	Total	94				112			

Table 15 shows the comparison of the students' interaction management skills regarding the students' intercultural awareness. The independent samples Mann-Whitney

U–Test was conducted to determine whether there were any significant differences in the pre-test and post-test results for both the experimental group and the control group. As Table 15 shows, whereas for the control group there were no significant differences between the pre-test and post-test results for any of the items ($p < .05$), indicating that the EFL students had a similar level of interaction management skills, for the experimental group there were significant differences between the pre-test and post-test results for two items (*$p < .05$). So, it can be concluded that students using social networking websites, in this case Facebook, tend to develop their interaction management skills with regard to intercultural awareness.

Table 16: Comparison of Mann Whitney U Test results for Identity Management factor

				Control group			Experimental group		
	Pre-test Post-test	N	Mean Rank	u	p	N	Mean rank	u	p
I often feel disappointed in myself after interacting with people from different cultures.	pre-test	47	50,31			56	58,38		
	post-test	47	44,69	972,500	,298	56	54,62	1462,50	,524
	Total	94				112			
I often express empathy to my culturally different counterparts to let them feel that I care about them.	pre-test	47	45,60			56	30,18		
	post-test	47	49,40	1015,000	,472	56	82,82	94,00	,000*
	Total	94				112			
I have no problem changing my opinions in order to please my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.	pre-test	47	47,89			56	33,92		
	post-test	47	47,11	1086,000	,881	56	79,08	303,50	,000*
	Total	94				112			
I am often uncertain of my role in conversations with people from different cultures.	pre-test	47	45,82			56	55,73		
	post-test	47	49,18	1025,500	,516	56	57,27	1525,00	,793
	Total	94				112			
I find I have a lot in common with my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.	pre-test	47	46,69			56	32,63		
	post-test	47	48,31	1066,500	,516	56	80,37	231,50	,000*
	Total	94				112			
I find it is difficult to feel my culturally different counterparts are similar to me.	pre-test	47	44,76			56	57,04		
	post-test	47	50,24	975,500	,299	56	55,96	1537,50	,853
	Total	94				112			
I always feel a sense of distance with my culturally different counterparts	pre-test	47	48,03			56	60,34		
	post-test	47	46,97	1079,500	,841	56	52,66	1353,00	,190
	Total	94				112			

Table 16 shows the comparison of the students' identity management skills regarding the students' intercultural awareness. The independent samples Mann-Whitney

U–Test was conducted to determine whether there were any significant differences in the pre-test and post-test results for both the experimental group and the control group. Again, whereas for the control group there were no significant differences between the pre-test and post-test results for any of the items ($p < .05$), indicating that the EFL students had a similar level of identity management skills, for the experimental group there were significant differences between the pre-test and post-test results for three items (*p < .05). Taking the effect of Facebook into consideration, the results show that those using Facebook actively in the research process benefited from this, as the gap between the control group and the experimental group makes it clear that the students using Facebook group page during the research developed more in terms of identity management.

Table 17: Comparison of Mann Whitney U Test results for Interactant Respect factor

	Control group					Experimental group			
	Pre-test Post-test	N	Mean Rank	u	p	N	Mean rank	u	p
I have problems expressing my opinions concisely when interacting with people from different cultures.	pre-test	47	47,91			56	32,25		
	post-test	47	47,09	1085,00	,879	56	80,75	210,000	,000*
	Total	94				112			
I use appropriate facial expressions when interacting with people from different cultures.	pre-test	47	50,95			56	30,29		
	post-test	47	44,05	942,500	,192	56	82,71	100,000	,000*
	Total	94				112			
I always show respect for my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.	pre-test	47	50,33			56	30,00		
	post-test	47	44,67	971,500	,278	56	83,00	84,000	,000*
	Total	94				112			
I always show respect for the opinions of my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.	pre-test	47	49,41			56	28,89		
	post-test	47	45,59	1014,500	,462	56	84,11	22,000	,000*
	Total	94				112			
I often try to control the conversation when interacting with people from different cultures.	pre-test	47	46,98			56	53,16		
	post-test	47	48,02	1080,000	,843	56	59,84	1381,00	,252
	Total	94				112			
I change my approach when I find the look of disapproval in the eyes of my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.	pre-test	47	52,65			56	32,39		
	post-test	47	42,35	862,500	,039	56	80,61	218,000	,000*
	Total	94				112			

Table 17 shows the comparison of the students' interactant respect skills regarding the students' intercultural awareness. The independent samples Mann-Whitney U–Test was conducted to determine whether there were any significant differences in the pre-test and post-test results for both the experimental group and the control group. Again, for the control group, there were no significant differences between the pre-test and post-test results for any of the items ($p < .05$), indicating that the EFL students had a similar level of interactant respect skills. However, for the experimental group there were significant differences between the pre-test and post-test results for all but one of the items (*$p < .05$). This result indicates that the experimental group students significantly differed in terms of interactant respect, as they used the Facebook Group page to interact with foreign students and their friends as well as to raise their intercultural awareness.

Table 18: A summary of the comparison of six factors between pre-test and post test in experimental and control group

Factors	Control Group	Experimental Group
Message skills	No significant differences	No significant differences
Interaction relaxation	No significant differences	6 out of 8 items
Behavioral flexibility	No significant differences	4 out of 9 items
Interaction management	No significant differences	2 out of 7 items
Identity management	No significant differences	3 out of 7 items
Interactant respect	No significant differences	5 out of 6 items

Table 18 summarizes the findings of Table 8, Table 9, Table 10, Table 11, Table 12 and Table 13 regarding the impact of Facebook orientation to raise the students' intercultural awareness. As Table 18 shows, the Facebook orientation did not impact on the students' message skills. However, the behavior of the students in the experimental group mostly differed between the pre- and post-test in respect of interaction relaxation, behavioral flexibility, interaction management, identity management and interactant respect as they received Facebook orientation, whereas the behavior of the students in the control group did not differ between tests in respect of these factors. This result indicates that if Facebook is used efficiently to raise their intercultural awareness, students will gain a deeper understanding of the target language culture, prejudice will be alleviated, and students may empathize more readily with others.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1. Introduction

This quasi-experimental study aims at investigating the use of Facebook, which is the biggest social networking website, for intercultural communication and awareness purposes among English majoring students. More specifically, the research was an attempt to explore the effects of Facebook on EFL students' intercultural awareness, the potential role of Facebook in intercultural interaction and also to discover the experiences of EFL students in using Facebook for educational and intercultural purposes. This chapter highlights the major findings and implications with recommendation for further research.

5.2. Discussion of the Findings

Recently online social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and Linked-in have achieved outstanding popularity and they have changed the very nature of interaction and communication. There is no denying that such networks facilitated the sending, receiving and sharing information and this has also contributed to the improvements in language learning environments. All these developments in Web 2.0 made it more than a technological advancement and its social repercussions on society, learning environment and learning styles have been of a major concern. Williams and Chinn (2009) indicated that learners of "net generation" process information differently styles and this makes it necessary for educational institutions to revise their instructional practice.

5.2.1. Students' Perceptions About Using Facebook Group Page

The Internet, especially social networking websites like MySpace, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter, has made it possible to interact with people in a limitless

world. It is certain that the widespread sharing of information in social networking websites will have an influence on intercultural interaction and awareness via individual interaction (Boyd and Ellision, 2007; Ellison, et al., 2007).This study analyzes the use of Facebook for intercultural awareness. It is widely accepted that social networking websites not only offer a virtual place where individuals can talk about their ideas and hobbies, via making new friends, but also create a challenge to the traditional way of communication. Taking as its main focus intercultural awareness and interaction, this study reveals the effect of Facebook on intercultural communication and cultural identity, from different aspects including message skills, interaction relaxation, behavioral flexibility, interaction management, identity management, and interactant respect. Two inferences can be made based on the description of this study. First, this study examines the effect of social networking websites on intercultural communication and awareness and second, the effect of Facebook on intercultural interaction.

It is apparent that the pedagogical aspect did not receive as much attention as social aspects received (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). Numerous studies were conducted on social networks, particularly on Facebook. However, the studies usually focused on the social aspects rather than the pedagogical dimensions. Therefore, the focus of this study is on the pedagogical aspects of Facebook. In Selwyn's study (2009), from 68169 postings, only a small proportion was devoted to university-related exchanges. 909 undergraduate students at a UK university were using Facebook for things other than educational purposes:

> …much of students' education-related use of this social networking application was based around either the post-hoc critiquing of learning experiences and events, the exchange of logistical or factual information about teaching and assessment requirements, instances of supplication and moral support with regards to assessment or learning, or the promotion of oneself as academically incompetent and/or disengaged. (p. 157)

Although intercultural communication and awareness have remained a key element in several educational programs, curriculum models have failed to produce a viable option to meet this pressing need in the field. The use of Facebook in this study proved to be quite beneficial in assisting teachers in promoting intercultural communication.

It is obvious that Facebook is just a medium, and therefore needs to be pedagogically designed in order for it to yield in expected results. This can be achieved by

assigning popular and agenda tasks and issues on a particular group page, and inviting people from different cultures and countries with different backgrounds. The study showed that, integration of Facebook into courses attract students more than any classroom based activities, what is more, the students feel more comfortable and less stressed to accomplish academic or social goals assigned by the lecturer. It is no doubt that Facebook also enhanced the linguistic competence of students although they were already majoring in English Language and Literature Department. In sum, Facebook can be said to have positive effect on both communicative and linguistic competence, when used properly.

The study, as explained in detail in previous chapters, was conducted via qualitative and quantitative research traditions. Using focus group interview questions as the source of qualitative data, the study by its nature aimed to explore the experiences of students in relation to intercultural issues via Facebook. The responses to the focus group interview questions provide unique information about the relationship between Facebook and intercultural awareness and communication. The results of this study underline the significance of using Facebook in developing intercultural awareness individually. From the students' responses, it can be stated that students build, develop and sustain international relationships through social media, especially through Facebook. The continuous and asynchronous interactions via Facebook provide a kind of sustainable connection which can be regarded as an important feature of interaction. Such interaction and communication are vital in overcoming regulation confronts and forming a communal identity. Establishing a communal identity in Facebook is an important issue in intercultural communication and awareness. After using the Facebook group page created for the study, the participants reported having genuinely experienced being part of constructing intercultural communication rather than simply being the recipients of information about intercultural communication.

In this study, there were participants from different countries and cultures studying at universities in different parts of the world. From the focus group interviews, it became evident that nearly all of the students had Facebook accounts and that they used Facebook regularly. As the participants in the study were students majoring in English, they also stated that they used Facebook as a medium to interact with people of other cultures and countries. Since students had already developed a habit of using Facebook for their own

daily leisure time and communication, it became easier for them to turn Facebook into an educational asset, adding new friends, becoming members of different Facebook groups, uploading new videos and pictures and evidently adjusting themselves to the Facebook age developed for research purposes Apart from Facebook, students use other social networking websites, which shows that the integration of the Internet via social networking websites is at its peak. This obviously indicates the readiness level of students for any new social networking tools which will emerge in future. So, educators are challenged to understand the nature of new technology for educational purposes. Taking the qualitative results into account, the results were analyzed in respect of three main themes: interaction competence and relaxation, cultural identity, and respect towards different cultures.

5.2.1.1. Interaction Competence and Relaxation

According to the descriptive information presented in the previous chapters, it was found that students majoring in English were predisposed to interact through social networking websites. In the interview recordings, the participants in the study stated that they believed in the power of face-to-face communication, but that they preferred the Internet and social networking websites as tools to interact and communicate with their friends all over the world, as this is much easier to deal with. In other words, students were found to be more comfortable and satisfied when interacting with their foreign and local friends on Facebook. This proves that using virtual communication tools enhances their interaction abilities as well as interaction as relaxation. One reason may be that non- face-to-face communication enables users to hide their gestures and expressions while interacting with each other, which results in a more relaxing mood of communication.

Another important issue from the results was that students were found to have a tendency to interact with each other on Facebook than they do in real life. That means, students felt more confident and desirous about communicating with their local and foreign friends abroad on Facebook group page, as they have more time in terms of interaction when compared with real life atmosphere within time constraints due to class time. It should also be noted that, students managed to sustain this positive interaction without feeling bored or stressed, as mentioned before, because of the cultural responsibility they have towards their friends on Facebook.

Apart from the qualitative data, the quantitative results provide more evidence for the fact that social networking websites, especially Facebook, helped students to overcome interaction challenges. Moreover, it was also found from the results that students do not have any prejudice against communicating with people through the Internet and social networking websites, which supports the correlation between the use of social networking websites and interaction relaxation. One important finding worth mentioning here is that when compared with the control group, the experimental group's level of self-confidence in personal communication was raised after using the Facebook group page, where students interacted with the foreign students from different parts of the world. This indicates that students using Facebook effectively for communication purposes developed a kind of self-efficacy in interacting with people from different countries and cultures. There is no doubt that social networking websites have affected the social lives of people positively in terms of personal interaction, but the results showed that using Facebook for communication purposes led students to feel more confident and relaxed than before.

5.2.1.2. Cultural Identity

Bochner (1982) states that the main function of the social networks is to share ideas and traditions with the engagement of the native culture. From this perspective, social networks helped students to realize themselves in familiarizing themselves with new cultures, traditions and other personal values. This intercultural social network functions as a social and recreational tool. The intercultural function of the social networks helps individual to form a unique identity as the carriers of culture. The cultural norms and issues shared mutually among the friends in a virtual world enhance the awareness of identity while facilitating the management of interaction. In the present study, Facebook served as an open platform for students to express themselves as individuals. This communicative competence was found to have a positive effect on mutual interaction through Facebook. As the statements of the students support, the ultimate result of interacting with foreigners online fulfilled the social, functional and practical elements of interaction as well as enhancing intercultural awareness. Moreover, regarding the cultural identity of individuals, Facebook was found to have an enormous effect on students' awareness of being culture carriers.

Besides being socialization medium, Facebook also helps individuals to overcome the social isolation anxiety and gradually affecting positively in terms of personal treatment. Supporting this idea, Donath and Boyd (2004) state that social networking websites help users to cover the social gaps, which is also defined as social bridge by some scholars. The results of the study also support this view in the sense that students' ideas about the social networking websites, especially the Facebook, unified with the term "social bridge". This social bridge helped students to express themselves more freely and comfy, as most of the participants claimed that they felt responsible for their posts comments and information they presented in the group page.

However, while Facebook potentially change the way people communicate interculturally, stereotyping and culturally different behaviors continue to happen on the site, like in real life. It is of course hard to identify these behaviors of people as they communicate individually on internet, but it is important to accept the reality that this happens. Facebook does not only presents opportunities to explore different levels of identities, but also it allows scholars and researchers to focus more on depth of virtual identities of individuals. However, Ting-Toomey (1999) states that people tend to interact and communicate in cultural groups where they have mutual cultural beliefs, values and activities because they feel in a way attached and responsible for that particular group. That means, people communicating with people from different cultures and group may feel a kind of reluctant or externalized as they feel weird about being a member of the group they interact. So, some users of social networks prefer to interact with people with the same cultural values, by being in their control zone in a sense, where they can express their ideas more freely about the cultural issues they belong to. This tendency may be regarded as social barriers but when it comes to English majoring students. As the results support, those who are directly or indirectly connected or interested in intercultural issues have more capabilities to interact and communicate with people from different cultures. This means, in order to overcome the difficulties and obstacles of social barriers of individuals, people at least must be aware of the home and target culture at a level.

In sum, social networking websites allow people to communicate and interact with people from various cultures, which can be regarded as the best tool of communication by discovering other cultural backgrounds, values and information all over the world.

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Moreover, as mentioned before, interaction with people of the same cultural background is easier in real life, but social networking websites have built a bridge for those who have difficulties and prejudices about different cultures.

5.2.1.3. Respect for Different Cultures

In the present study, virtual communication was found to be a positive and important tool of intercultural communication awareness, lending further evidence to the literature which has already shown that individual interpersonal communication can be actively used by users seeking to explore different cultures (Ward and Kennedy, 1993). The results from the focus group interviews showed that students seek to explore new cultures, traditions and practices of different societies all over the world. In other words, intercultural awareness through interpersonal communication among students helped them to establish an individual identity in which the students felt a kind of respect both for themselves and for the people they with whom they interacted virtually via the Facebook group page. So, this awareness of identity led to a mood of respect, whereby their interaction occurred in a more formal setting as they were more careful even in selecting their words when commenting on a post on the Facebook group page.

The importance of virtual interpersonal communication is also determined by the demographic variables and intercultural competence itself. In fact, awareness of intercultural communication, affected minimally by demographic information like age and gender, has a relationship with the intercultural competence of individuals. The findings from both the qualitative and the quantitative data showed that students are self-aware about the importance of intercultural communication, which in the end leads to positive intercultural awareness. This finding is important, because the correlation between the quality of interaction leading to competence and social networking websites has an indirect effect on individuals' self-awareness. To sum up, those interacting virtually on social networking websites are more likely to be successful in developing awareness towards different cultures via self-awareness. So, the more students are satisfied with the interaction they are individually making, the more aware they become of respect for the target culture.

Another example of Facebook influence on intercultural communication is that many of the focus group participants stated that they learn other cultures by reading others' posts and naturally they compare their own cultural practices with others. Although some students stated that they used to have prejudices about some particular practices of different cultures, with the alignment of Facebook group page, they developed respect towards different cultural issues although it may seem weird when compared with home culture. Being aware of the differences, and taking these differences as parts of global culture mosaics, Facebook enhanced students' philosophy of respect towards different cultural issues and applications as well as respect for their own cultures.

Lastly, the main focus of this study is the intercultural awareness that students developed through using the Facebook group page as a medium. The results showed that virtual interaction via social networking websites, Facebook in this case, correlates with intercultural awareness with regard to the cultural awareness of individuals. So, social networks, especially Facebook, are an important tool in developing intercultural awareness. The implementation of Facebook into courses with a mediator has a positive effect on both students' motivation and on developing awareness of different cultures. It is also important to state that the students of this technological era find it convenient to communicate with their friends and foreigners through social networking websites, which indirectly and gradually affects interpersonal face-to-face communication. It is a matter of practicality and convenience rather than a matter of choice. So from the results, it can be concluded that Facebook, through the help of interaction online, is also an important tool for the psychological adjustment of students' in preparation for face-to-face communication through cultural and intercultural issues.

5.2.1.4. Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

Finally, there some limitations of the study. Firstly, only the students of the experimental group using the Facebook group page were interviewed. The foreign participants in the study, from different countries, who were guests on the group page, were not interviewed either. Conducting research internationally, with the collaboration of different countries and universities globally, would be valuable in creating a broader understanding of the relationship between social networking websites and intercultural

awareness. However, the majority of participants on the group page were Turkish students studying English language and literature, so using a wider range of participants from different departments might also broaden the intercultural perspective of social networking websites. In addition, the current study included participants with an age range of 18-24, so the age range of participants could be expanded to include more people from different professions and cultures. With regard to the age range of the participants, further research might be conducted by comparing differences, if any were to emerge, between the old and young in terms of the effect of social networks on intercultural awareness. Different participants from different countries could be interviewed and compared in terms of the effect of nationality on establishing intercultural awareness via social networking websites. As social networking websites are new and becoming more and more popular day by day, there is great potential for researchers to explore the effects of the Internet on cultural and intercultural awareness in different segments.

5.2.1.5. Conclusion

Taking all the results together, this study, which is in its infancy in terms of scope, examined the effect of Facebook on establishing and developing intercultural awareness among students majoring in English. It also examined how Facebook changed the perceptions of users when used as an intercultural tool within an educational framework unlike several studies with a focus on social aspects. Students used Facebook to realize their diverse needs and gain intercultural competence through the Internet via a group page involving different people all over the world. Furthermore, this study confirms the importance of Facebook in enabling university students to be dynamically engaged in the social interaction processes of the virtual world with regard to the development of intercultural awareness and competence when used correctly. The observations of the researcher show that students tend to continue this social and virtual communication/learning process individually even after the activities ended. Besides their awareness of intercultural communication, students also developed social creativity in terms of making new friends and sharing cultural issues with an aim of reaching people. It is important to observe that students took the role of culture carrier in this interaction process as opposed to identity crisis. Moreover, this study also shows that interacting with

people from different countries other than the host country may also help students to enhance their interpersonal communication abilities.

This enormous change in communication technology is compelling educators to cross national boundaries from the walls of a classroom to the outside world on a global scale with an incredible speed. Due to Internet opportunities students today and tomorrow will be increasingly living in a world in which there is no place and time limit when compared with past. Consequently, experiential and real-world learning is likely to be a must rather than a luxury, providing a good deal of educational opportunities as well as challenges. It is not to idealize social networking websites including Facebook, which may fade away in its course of time but to act wisely in accordance with the everyday reality of our age with a view to making our education more meaningful and effective on the part of students. Teachers cannot remain indifferent to educational and cultural implications of living in a borderless world through social networking tools. It is obvious that no technological tool including social networking websites has inherent ability to implement any educational policy. Unless pedagogically designed, it may be detrimental to the extent that students may drown in information but starve for knowledge in this marvelous global meeting place. Facebook today just symbolizes one of the most common communication technological tools and may disappear in future. And it would not be surprising to see Facebook will be replaced by others. Yet, the task that educators and practitioners are faced to do remains the same. They need to understand the nature of these huge technological advances and integrate them into their environments and they should be constantly in search of new tools to stay in tune with the spirit of the time.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A:

Intercultural Awareness Test by Portalla and Chen (2010)

Gender:

Age:

Hometown:

5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree

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

_____**1. I find it easy to talk with people from different cultures.**

_____ 2. I always feel stressful when interacting with people from different cultures.

_____ **3. I find it easy to get along with people from different cultures.**

_____ 4. I always feel nervous when interacting with people from different cultures.

_____ **5. I am able to express my ideas clearly when interacting with people from different** cultures.

_____ 6. I feel bored when interacting with people from different cultures.

_____ **7. I use appropriate tone of voice when interacting with people from different cultures.**

_____ 8. I find my mind wandering when interacting with people from different cultures.

_____ **9. I am able to answer questions effectively when interacting with people from different** cultures.

_____10. I have problems expressing my opinions clearly when interacting with people from different cultures.

_____**11. I use appropriate eye contact when interacting with people from different cultures.**

_____12. I have problems distinguishing between informative and persuasive messages when interacting with people from different cultures.

_____ **13. I am a good listener when interacting with people from different cultures.**

_____ 14. I find it difficult to respond appropriately to the needs of my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.

_____ **15. I always know how to start a conversation when interacting with people from different** cultures.

_____ 16. I often miss parts of what is going on when interacting with people from different cultures.

_____ **17. I always pretend to be having a good time, even if I am not, when interacting with** people from different cultures.

_____ 18. I often get confused when it is my turn to speak when interacting with people from different cultures.

_____ **19. I feel relaxed when interacting with people from different cultures.**

_____ 20. I am afraid to express myself when interacting with people from different cultures.

_____ **21. I use appropriate facial expressions when interacting with people from different cultures.**

_____ 22. I find it difficult to concentrate on what my culturally different counterparts are saying during our interaction.

_____ **23. I always show respect for my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.**

_____ 24. I often feel disappointed in myself after interacting with people from different cultures.

_____ **25. I often express empathy to my culturally different counterparts to let them feel that I** care about them.

_____ 26. I have problems with grammar when interacting with people from different cultures.

_____ **27. I have no problem in changing my opinion to please my culturally different friends** during our interaction.

_____ 28. I often act like a very different person when interacting with people from different cultures.

_____ **29. I always adjust my behavior to make my culturally different counterparts feel** comfortable during our interaction.

_____ 30. I often have problems changing my behaviors to suit the situation when interacting with people from different cultures.

_____ **31. I always show respect for the opinions of my culturally different counterparts during our** interaction.

_____ 32. I often try to control the conversation when interacting with people from different cultures.

_____ **33. I change my approach when I feel that the person I am interacting is negative about** different counterparts during our interaction.

_____ 34. I am often uncertain of my role in conversations with people from different cultures.

_____ **35. I find it difficult to maintain satisfying relationships with my culturally different** counterparts during our interaction.

_____ 36. I find I have a lot in common with my culturally different friend during our interaction.

_____ **37. I find it difficult to start meaningful conversation when interacting with people from** different cultures.

_____ 38. I try to be myself when interacting with people from different cultures.

_____ **39. I am not always the person I appear to be when interacting with people from different** cultures.

_____ 40. I find it easy to identify with my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.

_____ **41. I find it difficult to feel that my culturally different counterparts are similar to me.**

_____ 42. I always feel a sense of distance with my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.

Appendix B: The main page of the Facebook Group Page "Intercultural Issues-World Cultures"

Appendix C: Demographic Statistics of the Facebook Group page "Intercultural Issues-World Cultures"

Appendix D: Some Screenshots of the Posts and Comments of the Facebook Group Page "Intercultural Issues-World Cultures"

Intercultural Issues - World Cultures
2014 has arrived!!!

What are your hopes and dreams for the new year?

Please feel free to write whatever you want... 🙂
Unlike · Comment · Share · Edit · 6 January 2014

👍 Intercultural Issues - World Cultures, Deniz Hakan Ozgun, Yusuf Şahingöz, Handenur Cerrah and 28 others like this.

💬 View previous comments   43 of 165

> **Meral Birinci** wishes...wishes... are they all faded? are they blurred? I want to hear my classmates future plans? what do you expect from life except for passing class and graduating from this departmen cause we have already known them? of course if you want,,,,you can answer
> 10 January 2014 at 22:52 · Like

> **Nevin Suzan Haznedar** I wish a healthy year both physically and pschologically above all:) Actually I dont know what I want to do in the future I just only desire to make the right choice for myself.But I can mention about my second wish in the near future.I desire to travel my own country's cities.My initial objective;Urgup:)))
> 11 January 2014 at 09:27 · Like

> **Nevin Suzan Haznedar** Meral B Birinci Honestly,I've got a big wish which I pray everyear never giving up but I cant tell before it happens soryy:)))
> 11 January 2014 at 09:31 · Like · 👍 1

> **Meral Birinci** I widh you get it soon
> 11 January 2014 at 17:38 · Like

> **Gönül Topdağ** ı have no expectation from new year. it will be which wiil be.
> 13 January 2014 at 18:18 · Like

> **Çağla Kavcı** Firstly, i want health of course.. Than; happiness, success, money, love, for me and the whole people.. 🙂
> 13 January 2014 at 20:31 · Like

Unlike   Comment

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Intercultural Issues - World Cultures
Marry Christmas.... 🙂

Do you celebrate Christmas (or new Year)? Why?

Do you think that there is a difference between Christmas and New Year?

Do you personally believe that Christmas (or New year) is a Christian tradition or just a
western tradition which is celebrated regardless of its religious theme?

And what do you think about the Santa Claus? 🙂 Do you think that he is a religious
character or just a legendary character which dates back to old times?

Unlike · Comment · Share · Edit · 31 December 2013

👍 Intercultural Issues - World Cultures, Deniz Hakan Ozgun, Yusuf Şahingöz, Hilal
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Büşra Çağlar we celebrate new year and lots of my friend also celebrate it .
31 December 2013 at 00:45 · Edited · Like · 👍 1

Akkaya Soner I'll celebrate new year, not christmas because christmas belongs to christian people. Many Turkish people think celebrating new year is not suitable for our religion. Yes, celebrating christmas is not suitable but we celebrate new year. There is no connection between celebrating new year and christmas. Happy new year guys 🙂
31 December 2013 at 00:42 · Like · 👍 7

Akkaya Soner When Santa comes please tell him to clean our home 😬
31 December 2013 at 00:43 · Like · 👍 1

Handenur Cerrah I think, this is not just a Christian tradition. A new year comes and people celebrate it because a new year means a new adventure for all people.
31 December 2013 at 00:47 · Like · 👍 2

Özgür Özdemir However we celebrate something we do not actually celebrate cristmas because it is christian tradition and it symbolize the birth of jesus .We just celebrate New Year and when we heard cristmas , one thing comes to our mind which is Santa Claus ..It comes from the old habbit which was the action that "giving sugar" to the children . When I was a child I always wanted to see him and wish the biggest toy from him 🙂
31 December 2013 at 00:53 · Edited · Like · 👍 2

Safa Ergün I agree with Soner.. we live upon the Gregorian Calendar, and we celebrate the day when one year ends and another starts according to it, not the Christmas nor the Noel.
31 December 2013 at 00:48 · Like · 👍 2

Gönül Topdağ ıf you celebrate non-muslim notion's holıday, you belong to their nation. you can find answer ıf we can celebrate or not.
31 December 2013 at 00:52 · Like

Handenur Cerrah And when I was little I used to believe in Santa's presence but I've never seen him before. I wish he were real 🙂

Just write 5 words for any countries you want...

Unlike · Comment · Share · Edit · 21 December 2013

👍 Intercultural Issues - World Cultures, Deniz Hakan Ozgun, Yusuf Şahingöz, Hilal Kara and 28 others like this.

💬 View previous comments   6 of 157

Suna Tunç With the arrival of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, from Amasya, the Congress of Sivas is a turning point in the formation of the Turkish Republic. It was at this congress that Atatürk's position as chair of the executive committee of the national resistance was confirmed. For Sivas Deniz Hakan Ozgun 🙂
20 January 2014 at 02:10 · Edited · Like · 👍2

Akkaya Soner Ankara from you Suna and me, and from Sivas Deniz Hakan 🙂
20 January 2014 at 02:10 · Like

Suna Tunç Ankara is historically known with the names Angora. Because the city is famous for its long-haired Angora goat and its Angora cat, Angora rabbits and Angora wool
20 January 2014 at 02:15 · Like

Suna Tunç Maybe, so people say 'Angaraaaa' 🙂
20 January 2014 at 02:16 · Like

Başak Özeren Well, growing in Adana, I would like like to say kebab, kebab, kebab. (I am starving right now.)
20 January 2014 at 10:53 · Like

Gul Ayse Neofotistos Canada; Winter, Parks, Short and hot summer, morning coffee and Laid back people 🙂
23 January 2014 at 20:04 · Like

Write a comment...   📷 ☺
Press Enter to post.

157

15 December 2013 at 03:02 · Like

Suna Tunç Yes Başak Özeren . I know one of Africa's supersititon that 'Don't go to the zoo when you are pregnant' Because your baby will come out looking like an animal, particularly a monkey. I was unable to find the origin of this superstition, while there has yet to be a baby who has transformed into an animal. I am sure this superstition keeps pregnant women away from the zoo. Çağla Kavcı
15 December 2013 at 10:04 · Like · 👍 1

Fuat Keleş In our culture as supersititon,If a crow which is in front of your house says 'gag' it is believed that a guest will comes.
15 December 2013 at 14:30 · Like

Jelena Krunic I found that in Turkish culture you have a lot of superstitions same as we have in Serbian. Most of superstitions in my culture is connected with pre-Christian paganism, a folklore etc. Black cats bring bad luck. Women that want to be married should ne... See More
15 December 2013 at 15:23 · Unlike · 👍 5

Çağla Kavcı hahahahahhh 🙂 Suna Tunç
15 December 2013 at 16:18 · Like

Özgür Özdemir I think it is an old superstition but I heard that when guests comes to your house , you shouldn't put their shoes into the way that they go . It means we dont want guests , we dont want you ! go home 😡 (is that superstition ? I dont know 😄)
16 December 2013 at 23:03 · Edited · Like · 👍 2

Şeydanur Güner I don't believe in supersititons but, for example, people say 'If a person how enters to the new year, all of this year pass so.'
17 December 2013 at 19:33 · Like

Gözde Doğan this is a superstitions that I have heard recently. ıf you have a boil over your eye , you put off invidious eyes. 🙂 actually, all of them are irrational beliefs.
18 December 2013 at 12:11 · Like

TC Metin Yilmaz During Hidirellez fest on May 5 and 6, my grantmother had sticked blossomed hip rose branches into some parts of cornfield when I was child and she believed that she did it because of a bumper year and while Hızır and Ilyas's annual meeting they may see her blossomed hip rose branches field and pray for plentifulness..
18 December 2013 at 14:12 · Edited · Like · 👍 1

Intercultural Issues - World Cultures

South Africa's first black president and anti-apartheid icon Nelson Mandela has died at the age of 95.

Do you know why "Nelson Mandela" is an important and symbolic leader?
What made him so important?
... See More

Unlike · Comment · Share · Edit · 8 December 2013

👍 Intercultural Issues - World Cultures, Yusuf Şahingöz, Suna Tunç, Safa Ergün and 17 others like this.

Gönül Topdağ I dont have idea about apartheid system in south africa. I just can tell that he is a man who refuse racisim, he is a black symbol for independence he is a friend of communist. he regreted price of Atatürk piece prize because of discrimination against Kurds. God rest him.
8 December 2013 at 21:19 · Like

Başak Özeren Well, I know that he was Africa's greatest freedom symbol. He had a great role in laying the foundations for a democratic South Africa. There used to be a cruel system of racial segration in South Africa. Nelson Mandela was very much against it. He received Nobel Peace Prize for getting rid of the apartheid system in which the rights of black people were simply ignored.
8 December 2013 at 21:47 · Like · 👍 2

Münevver Karadirek Çağlar Mandela was a man dedicating himself to Africa.He struggled for freedom of blacks.So he was symbol of freedom.I think he was a great man as he was a humanist and anti racist.
8 December 2013 at 21:47 · Like · 👍 2

Semra Erkan Nelson Mandela is important leader for South Africa because he is one of the world's most revered statesmen, who led the struggle to replace the apartheid regime of South Africa with a multi-racial democracy. Mandela was later jailed for 27 years but emerged to become the country's first black president. He wanted to make his country,he a symbol of reconciliation.
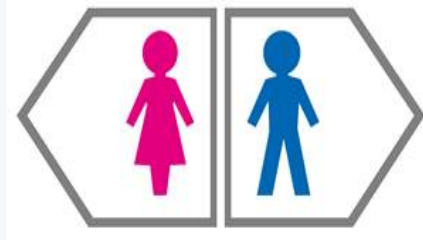8 December 2013 at 22:00 · Like

Çağla Kavcı It's very important lost for whole world. As the my other friend s said, Mandela is the the first black and antiracist leader of South Africa. I thimk that he is one of the most significant characteristic leaders, God rest him. And i think that "apartheid" system is related to racism but i dont know

someone to police station a... See More

Like · Reply · 13 November 2013 at 01:33

> **Fadime İskefiyeli Aydin** My sugar girl 🙂 Çağla Kavcı are you sure that Turkey is a muslim country? I don't think so and when turkey are a muslim country only in her identity card but this is only my opinion...
>
> Like · 13 November 2013 at 21:39

> Write a reply...

Başak Özeren Hey guys, check out this article which was posted on The Telegraph by John Bingham regarding the changes in family life in England. I believe you will find it interesting. Here is the article: The ... See More

Like · Reply · 👍 1 · 13 November 2013 at 21:14

Safa Ergün considering Turkish culture, it is not acceptable that a girl and a boy without marriage living together, but they are all adults.. if their families give that permission for them to live together, this is their own opinion and any bad situation corcern their families, as well.

Like · Reply · 👍 2 · 14 November 2013 at 00:14

Jelena Krunic When students of different genders live in the same home they get an opportunity to interact and share experiences. Also, this way they learn that there are male female friendships, not only relationships. The differences in men's and women's view of the world can help them, at the age when they build a personality, to understand that there are people who are different from them.

Like · Reply · 👍 1 · 14 November 2013 at 23:36

Büşra Çağlar we know that turkey is laic and this prohibition is "too illogical" we are university student , we want to study with our friends. will it be wrong or illegal? can you imagine such an unnecessary and nonsensical law ?! I guess ,some people forget where they live.

Like · Reply · 👍 2 · 20 November 2013 at 19:47

Ahmet Dinç I do not support the idea. I think turkish government should try to solve students' other problems. Students have hard problems in Turkey.

Like · Reply · 👍 4 · 21 November 2013 at 21:21 · Edited

Semra Erkan I do not agree this idea.Everybody want to live their religion,especially in their homeland.And I think,it is not good for muslims,because german people can angry to muslim and they can injure them

CURRICULUM VITAE

Doğan SALTAŞ was born in 1984. He completed his primary, secondary and high school education in Gebze. He began to study in the English Language and Literature Department of Faculty of Letters, Kafkas University in 2002 and graduated in 2006. After graduation from Kafkas University, he started MA degree in 2006 at Kafkas University and in the following year he started working as an English lecturer at Kafkas University in 2007. After receiving MA degree at Kafkas University, he was transferred to the Ardahan University in 2009 to the Department of English Language and Literature as a research assistant and started PhD studies Karadeniz Technical University in Applied Linguistics Program in 2010. His main areas of interest include Social Networks, Intercultural Communication, Foreign Language Teaching and Computer Assisted Language Teaching.