

CO-CONSTRUCTING INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS: A CASE STUDY OF VOLUNTEERS AND LEARNERS IN TRANSNATIONAL LANGUAGE PROJECTS

TRAN THI HAO*, SAMUEL**, CATHARINA***, LY PHUC NGUYEN****, *tthao@iemh.edu.vn*

* Institute of Educational Management Ho Chi Minh City

** , *** Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia

**** Nguyen Phat Investment, Construction and Trading Co., Ltd.

INFORMATION	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Received: 25/07/2025</i> <i>Revised: 17/08/2025</i> <i>Accepted for publication: 18/8/2025</i> <i>Code: TCKH-S03T08-2025-B09</i> <i>ISSN: 2354 - 0788</i></p> <p>Keywords: <i>Intercultural awareness, co-construction, international volunteers, Vietnamese learners.</i></p>	<p><i>This article emphasises the importance of co-constructing intercultural awareness within the context of transnational language projects, where international volunteers and Vietnamese learners engage in mutual learning. Through a case study approach, the article explores participants' goals, methods of participation and the current status of co-construction in English classes delivered by international volunteers. The study employed a mixed-methods approach (quantitative and qualitative), including surveys and interviews with volunteers and learners involved in several community-based English language projects. Findings indicate that: (1) intercultural awareness is enhanced when learners and volunteers share experiences, engage in direct interaction, and collaborate in multicultural settings; (2) core factors that contribute to this process include intrinsic motivation, open-mindedness, adaptability and a spirit of mutual learning; (3) co-construction does not happen automatically but requires a supportive environment, clear orientation and active participation from both sides. The study offers insights into participation dynamics within transnational projects involving Vietnamese learners and international volunteers, highlighting the mutual learning process without focusing on specific contextual challenges. The article concludes with recommendations for promoting the sustainable development of transnational educational programs with a strong intercultural focus.</i></p>

1. Introduction

In the context of educational globalization, transnational educational projects have played an increasingly significant role in promoting intercultural understanding among individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. These initiatives often serve as platforms for meaningful encounters, dialogue and the co-construction of

intercultural awareness between international volunteers and local learners. Vietnam, in particular, has become an increasingly popular destination for volunteers from around the world who participate in educational initiatives across schools, community centers and social organizations.

A notable feature of these projects is that most international volunteers demonstrate a

strong commitment to educational and community development goals. They are often well-prepared prior to participation and show a high level of adaptability to new cultural environments. Rather than acting solely as knowledge providers, these volunteers actively engage in mutual learning with local communities-especially with Vietnamese learners, who are widely regarded as friendly, open-minded, enthusiastic and cooperative. These attributes collectively foster a supportive environment in which intercultural awareness can be developed naturally and effectively by both parties.

While much existing research has emphasized the challenges and barriers to intercultural communication, especially in Vietnam where prior studies often focused on structural or policy perspectives, the favorable conditions-such as participant readiness, clearly defined goals, a spirit of sharing and interpersonal connection-have not been sufficiently explored. This study, therefore, aims to examine the enabling factors in the co-construction of intercultural awareness between international volunteers and Vietnamese learners within transnational language education projects. By doing so, it seeks to uncover mechanisms that enhance intercultural engagement and contribute to the design of more effective and sustainable international educational collaborations in the future.

2. Theoretical framework

This study is grounded in the theoretical foundations of intercultural awareness and intercultural citizenship, drawing primarily on the works of Michael Byram and further informed by expanded, critical and contemporary perspectives from Deardorff (2006), Dervin (2016) and Holmes, Ganassin, & Li (2022) as well as Holmes, Moskal, & Rajab (2022). Together, these perspectives provide a

comprehensive basis for exploring intercultural processes in transnational education.

Byram (1997) defines intercultural competence as the ability to interact effectively and appropriately in intercultural contexts through the integration of knowledge, skills and attitudes. He developed the concept of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), emphasizing the role of language education in cultivating global citizens capable of engaging in meaningful intercultural dialogue.

Deardorff (2006) proposed a widely recognized intercultural competence framework grounded in international consensus. Her model highlights key components such as openness, respect, observation, listening, reflection and adaptability. With its strong emphasis on practical application, Deardorff's framework complements Byram's theoretical framing by offering actionable components for implementation in diverse educational contexts, particularly in higher education.

From a critical standpoint, Dervin (2016) challenged essentialist and static conceptions of culture in intercultural studies. He advocated for an approach that views interculturality as an ongoing process of meaning negotiation, encouraging educators and researchers to critically examine underlying assumptions and to foster genuine dialogue that transcends stereotypes.

Building on these contributions, Holmes, Ganassin, & Li (2022) emphasize the co-construction of intercultural understanding through interpretive approaches in higher education contexts, highlighting the dynamic and negotiated nature of interculturality. Holmes, Moskal, & Rajab (2022) further conceptualize intercultural awareness as a dialogical, co-constructed process, particularly in transnational educational settings involving learners and refugee youths.

In this study, “co-constructed intercultural awareness” is defined as the process by which learners and international volunteers collaboratively engage in reflection, dialogue and interaction, building shared understanding and meaning in transnational educational projects. This definition is informed by Byram (1997), Dearsdorff (2006), Dervin (2016) and Holmes et al. (2022).

Integrating these insights, the study explores:

The motivations and purposes of both learners and volunteers in transnational educational activities; Methods and modes of participation, including forms of interaction and collaboration; The actual practices of co-constructing intercultural awareness in educational contexts; The importance and core factors enhancing intercultural awareness. These theoretical perspectives provide a multidimensional lens through which the study examines how intercultural awareness is co-constructed between learners in Vietnam and international volunteers within transnational educational settings. This framework informs the design of research instruments, guides data analysis and underpins the interpretation of intercultural experiences from both perspectives.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Participants and Sampling

This study focused on two main participant groups:

A total of 20 international volunteers from various countries participated in transnational educational projects in Vietnam. Some were trained language educators, while others, though not professionally trained in language teaching, were motivated to contribute by supporting Vietnamese learners in enhancing their communicative skills for engagement with the international community. These volunteers were involved in initiatives such as the Peace project, Cross-National research projects, English for school leaders, English for school staff and Teachers and the English coffee project.

The Vietnamese learners group consisted of 84 individuals enrolled in the English classes under the aforementioned projects.

A purposive sampling method was employed to select participants who were actively engaged in these projects and willing to provide relevant data. This approach ensured that the sample was both accessible and representative of the target populations involved in transnational educational initiatives.

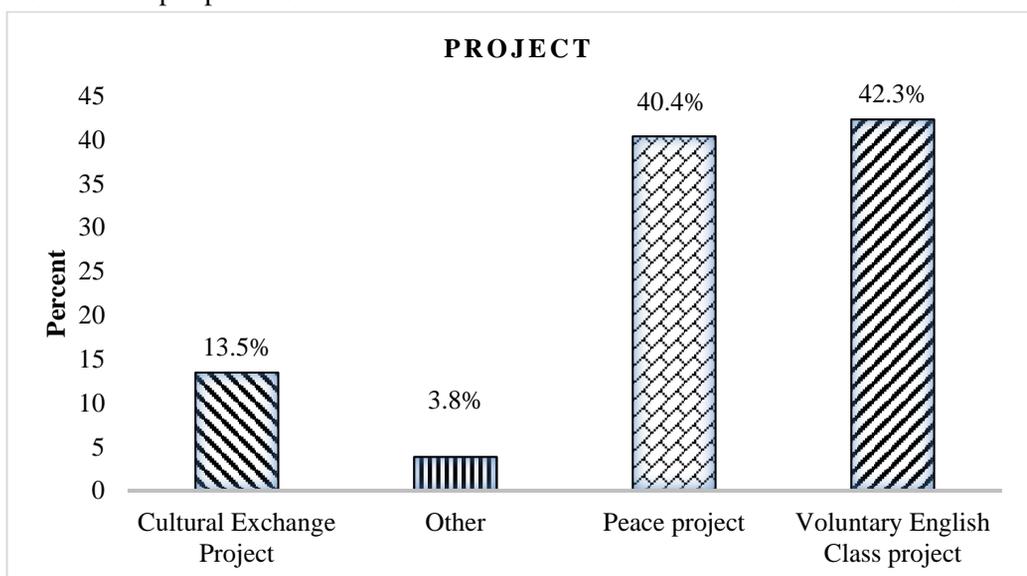


Figure 1. Descriptive statistics of the transnational education projects surveyed

Descriptive analysis of participant demographics revealed a relatively balanced gender distribution, with 53.8% female and 46.2% male participants. Age distribution indicated a predominance of youth, as 42.3% of participants were under 18 and 17.3% were aged 18-25, while the remaining participants were aged 26-35 (10.6%), 36-45 (18.3%) and above 45 (11.5%). In terms of role, 19.2% were international volunteers, 1.9% held other roles and 77.9% were Vietnamese learners. Participants engaged in various projects, with the largest proportions participating in the Voluntary English Class

Project (42.3%) and the Peace Project (40.4%), followed by the Cultural Exchange Project (13.5%) and other initiatives (3.8%)

3.2. Data collection and Analysis procedures

All survey data were collected over a three-month period. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods to identify key patterns and trends. Before proceeding with the analysis, the internal consistency of the questionnaire scales was assessed using Cronbach’s Alpha, with coefficients ranging from 0.718 to 0.908, indicating a high level of reliability and justifying further statistical exploration.

Table 1. Cronbach’s Alpha Scale

Descriptive Statistics	Number of Observed Variables	Cronbach’s Alpha	Reliability Level
Goals and Methods of Participation in Transnational Educational Activities	6	0.718	Acceptable
The Importance of Co-Constructing Intercultural Awareness	5	0.861	Very Good
Co-Constructing Intercultural Awareness in Educational Practice	6	0.831	Very Good
Core Factors Enhancing Intercultural Awareness	5	0.908	Excellent

The adoption of a mixed-methods approach enabled data triangulation, thereby enhancing the validity and depth of the research findings. In addition to the survey, semi-structured interviews with selected volunteers and learners were transcribed verbatim, verified by participants and analyzed inductively using thematic analysis. The resulting themes were triangulated with the survey data to deepen and clarify the understanding of intercultural awareness.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire. All items related to Co-Constructing Intercultural Awareness and Core Factors Enhancing Intercultural Awareness were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree/very low, 5 = strongly agree/very high). The scale intervals were calculated as:

$$\text{Interval} = \frac{\text{Maximum} - \text{Minimum}}{n} = \frac{5 - 1}{5} = 0.8$$

Table 2. Score/Level

Score/Level	Expression	Likert Scale Range
1	Very little/Very low	1.00 - 1.80
2	Little/Low	1.81 - 2.60
3	Moderate	2.61 - 3.40
4	Much/High	3.41 - 4.20
5	Very much/Very high	4.21 - 5.00

This calculation aids in interpreting the average values derived from the survey responses. The following table provides guidelines for interpreting the data.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Motivation and Purposes of participation of volunteers and learners

Table 3. Motivation and Purposes

Descriptive Statistics	N	Mean		Std. Deviation	Variance
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic
I wanted to improve my language skills and exchange cultural perspectives with people from different backgrounds	104	1.88	.095	.969	.938
I wanted to experience learning/working in a multicultural or international environment	104	1.94	.097	.993	.987
I wanted to co-construct intercultural awareness by engaging in mutual learning, sharing values and collaborating with people from different cultural contexts	104	2.44	.135	1.378	1.900

The volunteers and learners demonstrated varied motivations for participating in transnational educational activities. The mean score for improving language skills and exchanging cultural perspectives was 1.88 (SD = 0.969), while experiencing multicultural or international environments had a slightly higher mean of 1.94 (SD = 0.993). Notably, the motivation to co-construct intercultural awareness through mutual learning and collaboration received an even higher mean score, indicating its importance to participants.

such as language improvement and cultural exchange and gradually progress toward deeper intercultural engagement through the co-construction of awareness. This progression aligns well with Byram’s (1997, 2021) and Dearsodff’s (2016) theoretical frameworks, which emphasize that active intercultural dialogue and collaboration are central to developing intercultural competence and resonates with Song’s (2009) observation that integrating intercultural communication into English education faces both linguistic and cultural challenges.

These findings suggest that both volunteers and learners start with foundational motivations

4.2. Methods of participation of volunteers and learners

Table 4. Methods of Participation

Descriptive Statistics	N	Mean		Std. Deviation	Variance
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic
I was assigned, invited or encouraged to participate in a transnational educational activity	104	2.85	.134	1.371	1.879
I co-constructed or independently developed a transnational educational project	104	2.91	.150	1.534	2.352
I actively searched for transnational educational projects and applied for participation	104	3.12	.149	1.524	2.324

Regarding participation methods, volunteers and learners reported varying degrees of engagement. Being assigned or encouraged to participate scored a mean of 2.85 (SD = 1.371). More autonomous actions, such as independently co-constructing or developing transnational educational projects, had a mean of 2.91 (SD = 1.534). Actively searching for and applying to participate in such projects showed the highest mean at 3.12 (SD = 1.524), indicating a trend toward increased proactivity. This progression from assigned participation toward active, self-initiated engagement reflects growing autonomy

and responsibility among both volunteers and learners. It echoes findings by Devereux (2008) and Tiessen & Heron (2012) on the importance of reflexivity and critical awareness in volunteering and intercultural competence development. Lough (2011) also emphasizes that such active participation can be a pathway for volunteers to develop robust intercultural competence. The active pursuit of participation opportunities supports transformative learning theories that stress learner agency (Mezirow, 1997).

4.3. Co-Constructing intercultural awareness in educational practice

Table 5. Co-Constructing Intercultural Awareness

Descriptive Statistics	N	Mean		Std. Deviation	Variance
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic
I have participated in discussions or debates and confidently shared my opinions in class or in intercultural groups	104	3.38	.130	1.323	1.751
I co-created educational products with international peers during transnational education projects	104	3.36	.132	1.343	1.804
I reflected on cultural similarities and differences	104	3.45	.134	1.364	1.862
I supported or connected members in multicultural groups	104	3.41	.125	1.274	1.624
I actively listened to and learned from the perspectives of people from other cultures	104	2.62	.136	1.388	1.926
I applied intercultural knowledge to solve problems or complete group tasks effectively	104	3.58	.131	1.334	1.780

Volunteers and learners actively engaged in various practices to co-construct intercultural awareness. The highest mean score was for applying intercultural knowledge to solve problems or complete group tasks effectively (M = 3.58, SD = 1.334), reflecting the participants' strong orientation toward practical application of intercultural competence. Reflecting on cultural similarities and differences also scored high at 3.45 (SD = 1.364), followed closely by supporting or connecting members in multicultural

groups (M = 3.41, SD = 1.274) and participating in discussions or debates confidently (M = 3.38, SD = 1.323). Co-creating educational products with international peers scored 3.36 (SD = 1.343). In contrast, actively listening to and learning from others' cultural perspectives scored lower at 2.62 (SD = 1.388), indicating that receptive engagement, while valued, may require more encouragement or skill development.

These results suggest that participants are more confident in active, task-oriented and

leadership-related intercultural practices than in receptive listening roles. This aligns with Byram’s (1997, 2021) emphasis on “skills of interpreting and relating” as well as Deardorff’s (2016) framework that positions intercultural competence as a dynamic process involving both action and reflection. The emphasis on interpretive and dialogical practice in Holmes (2022) and Holmes, Ganassin & Li (2022) also reinforces the value of co-construction as an ongoing process of reflection and dialogue, complementing Ferri’s (2018) call

for critical engagement with cultural power dynamics. The relatively lower mean for active listening may indicate an area for pedagogical enhancement, as sustained intercultural dialogue relies on balanced speaking and listening competencies. Encouraging structured reflection, peer feedback and guided dialogue could help strengthen this dimension in future transnational educational initiatives.

4.4. Perceived importance of Co-Constructing intercultural awareness

Table 6. Perceived Importance of Co-Constructing intercultural awareness

Descriptive Statistics	N	Mean		Std. Deviation	Variance
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic
Developing intercultural awareness benefits my personal and professional growth	104	2.45	.139	1.420	2.017
Co-constructing intercultural awareness helps me better understand different cultural values and perspectives	104	2.44	.140	1.427	2.035
Co-constructing intercultural awareness enhances my ability to collaborate effectively with international peers	104	2.44	.139	1.413	1.997
I believe co-constructing intercultural awareness is a key element in transnational education	104	2.58	.136	1.391	1.936
Participating in co-constructive activities helps me become more open and respectful toward cultural differences	104	2.46	.139	1.414	1.999

Participants, both volunteers and learners, reported moderately high levels of agreement on the importance of co-constructing intercultural awareness. The belief that this process benefits personal and professional growth had a mean of 2.45 (SD = 1.420). Recognizing its role in understanding different cultural values and perspectives scored 2.44 (SD = 1.427) and the perception that it enhances collaboration with international peers also stood at 2.44 (SD = 1.413). Notably, the highest mean was for the belief that co-construction is a key element in transnational education (M = 2.58, SD = 1.391). These results reflect a shared view that intercultural awareness

is integral to the effectiveness and sustainability of cross-border educational activities.

The findings align with Byram’s (1997, 2021) and Deardorff’s (2016) emphasis on intercultural competence as a core outcome of transnational education and are consistent with the OECD’s (2021) global competence framework, which highlights intercultural understanding, critical thinking and responsible action as essential for global citizenship. Porto (2014) similarly illustrates how educational projects can combine language learning with intercultural citizenship development. The relatively consistent means suggest that

participants value intercultural awareness not only for personal growth but also as a functional tool for effective collaboration. This perception sets a conceptual foundation for

identifying the core factors-discussed in Section 4.5-that enable such awareness to develop in real-world settings.

4.5. Core factors enhancing intercultural awareness

Table 7. Core factors enhancing intercultural awareness

Descriptive Statistics	N	Mean		Std. Deviation	Variance
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic
Participating in transnational projects - creating opportunities for exposure to and understanding of other cultures	104	2.54	.138	1.407	1.979
Working in multicultural teams - learning to communicate, collaborate and adapt	104	2.37	.137	1.395	1.945
Reflecting and sharing experiences - encouraging a positive view of cultural differences	104	2.46	.138	1.407	1.979
Using multilingual learning resources and global technologies - expanding vision and connectivity	104	2.48	.138	1.407	1.980
The role of instructors - guiding and supporting the process of understanding and respecting other cultures	104	2.37	.137	1.394	1.943

Five main factors were identified as enhancing intercultural awareness: Participating in transnational projects, which create opportunities for exposure to and understanding of other cultures (M = 2.54, SD = 1.407); Working in multicultural teams, fostering communication, collaboration and

adaptability (M = 2.37, SD = 1.395); Reflecting and sharing experiences, which encourages a positive view of cultural differences (M = 2.46, SD = 1.407); Using multilingual learning resources and global technologies, expanding vision and connectivity (M = 2.48, SD = 1.407).

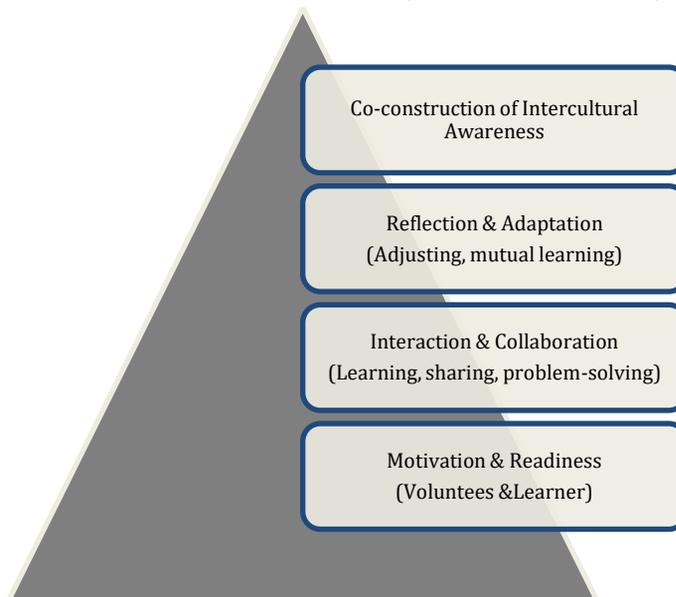


Figure 2. Four-stage pyramid illustrating the co-construction of intercultural awareness between international volunteers and Vietnamese learners.

The role of instructors, guiding and supporting the process of understanding and respecting other cultures (M = 2.37, SD = 1.394).

These factors correspond to the practical mechanisms through which the perceived importance (4.4) can be realized. While participants recognize the value of intercultural awareness, these results indicate that sustained engagement-via structured projects, team collaboration, reflective practices and guided mentorship-is necessary to transform belief into tangible skills. The relatively lower means for working in multicultural teams and instructor support may point to areas where institutional interventions could be strengthened. Pham Thi Lan Anh (2019) similarly notes that structured guidance and reflective practice are essential for fostering intercultural skills in Vietnamese foreign language education, while Holmes, Ganassin & Li (2022) highlight the role of interpretive, dialogical approaches in sustaining engagement. Porto (2014) further supports the integration of multilingual resources and digital collaboration to broaden intercultural perspectives in educational projects.

4.6. Integration of qualitative data

The interview results from volunteers and learners provide detailed illustrations that complement the trends observed in the survey above. The primary motivations for participating in transnational projects include experiencing multicultural environments (70%), enhancing personal skills (60%) and contributing to international education (60%). Regarding participation approaches, respondents engaged through self-initiated projects (40%), being nominated (50%) or being referred (40%), with these approaches directly influencing the level of interaction and collaboration effectiveness. The current state of intercultural co-creation indicates strong group collaboration (90%) but also highlights challenges arising from cultural differences (70%), while the core factors contributing to project success include effective communication (100%), clearly defined roles (60%) and the use of supportive tools/resources (50%). As summarized in table 8, these interview findings provide concrete illustrations, explain the reasons behind the observed trends and offer a comprehensive understanding of participation methods, challenges and key factors in intercultural co-creation.

Table 8. Summary of interview results from volunteers and learners (N = 10)

Issue/Category	Key Points	Number of Respondents	%
Motivations for Participation	Experiencing multicultural environments	7	70%
	Enhancing personal skills	6	60%
	Contributing to international education	6	60%
Participation Approaches	Self-initiated projects	4	40%
	Nominated participation	5	50%
	Referred participation	4	40%
Current State of Intercultural Co-creation	Group collaboration	9	90%
	Challenges due to cultural differences	7	70%
	Learning from practical experiences	5	50%
Core Factors	Effective communication	10	100%
	Clearly defined roles	6	60%
	Use of supportive tools/resources	5	50%

Thus, the interview findings serve to illustrate specific examples, elucidate the underlying reasons behind the observed survey trends and underscore the critical factors that facilitate effective intercultural co-creation.

5. Recommendations and Conclusion

5.1. Recommendations

The discussion of findings reveals a dynamic but uneven landscape in the co-construction of intercultural awareness. While participants display strong engagement in task-oriented and collaborative practices, certain receptive skills and structural supports remain underdeveloped. These patterns highlight both the progress achieved and the areas where targeted interventions are necessary. Building on these insights, the following section outlines specific recommendations to strengthen intercultural awareness in transnational education:

5.1.1. Integrate structured reflection into project design

Encourage guided self-reflection and peer feedback after intercultural interactions to address the lower scores for receptive engagement (e.g., active listening, $M = 2.62$, $SD = 1.388$; reflection and sharing experiences, $M = 2.46$, $SD = 1.407$). Reflection prompts and collaborative debriefing sessions can help balance speaking and listening competencies. This recommendation is grounded in interpretive approaches to intercultural learning, which emphasize dialogic engagement with others' perspectives (Deardorff, 2006; Holmes, 2022).

5.1.2. Enhance training for both volunteers and learners before participation

Pre-departure or pre-engagement training should include intercultural communication skills, critical reflection techniques and strategies for handling cultural misunderstandings. This is particularly necessary given the uneven preparedness demonstrated in the survey. The design of such training can draw on Byram's

model of intercultural communicative competence (1997, 2021), which highlights skills of interpreting and relating and Deardorff's process model (2016), which underlines adaptability and critical self-awareness.

5.1.3. Promote multilingual and technology-enhanced collaboration

Expand the use of multilingual resources and digital platforms to increase inclusivity and access, as these were rated only moderately ($M = 2.48$, $SD = 1.407$). Empirical research has shown that digital platforms and collaborative online international learning (COIL) foster intercultural dialogue and equitable participation across borders (Holmes, Moskal, & Rajab, 2022). Such practices support the diversification of voices and reduce linguistic barriers in transnational classrooms.

5.1.4. Foster multicultural teamwork with equitable role distribution

Encourage role rotation in multicultural groups to ensure all members practice both leadership and supportive roles, thereby addressing disparities in confidence between active and receptive practices. This is supported by findings that collaborative problem-solving ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 1.334$) was stronger than receptive engagement, suggesting the need to balance competencies. The strategy aligns with Jackson's (2019) work on intercultural teamwork, which demonstrates that structured role-sharing enhances negotiation and adaptability skills.

5.1.5. Strengthen instructor and institutional support

Provide ongoing mentorship and cultural mediation from instructors, who can help participants navigate cultural differences and co-construct intercultural understanding. Instructors scored relatively low in their perceived role ($M = 2.37$, $SD = 1.394$), highlighting an urgent need for investment in professional development on intercultural

pedagogy. Institutional policies should allocate resources for sustained project engagement rather than one-off interactions, consistent with internationalization frameworks that emphasize long-term, structured engagement (Byram, 2020).

The systematic adoption of these recommendations is expected to strengthen intercultural awareness while laying a foundation for more inclusive and sustainable transnational education practices.

5.2. Conclusion

Based on the findings, several actionable recommendations have been proposed to enhance the co-construction of intercultural awareness among both volunteers and learners. These recommendations address identified strengths, target weaker areas and build on best practices observed in the study.

This study employed a mixed-methods approach-combining surveys and interviews-to examine the motivations, participation methods and practices of volunteers and learners engaged in transnational educational activities, with a particular focus on co-constructing intercultural awareness. The findings revealed a progression from foundational motivations (such as language improvement and cultural exchange) toward more advanced practices of collaborative problem-solving and intercultural competence development. However, the relatively lower scores for receptive engagement (e.g., active listening) highlight the need for pedagogical strategies that promote balanced communication skills.

Overall, the results reinforce theoretical models by Byram (1997, 2021), Deardorff (2016) and Holmes & et al (2022) as well as the OECD's (2021) global competence framework, by demonstrating that intercultural awareness is both a personal and collective asset in transnational education. Sustained institutional support, reflective practices and equitable participation structures are essential to translating this awareness into long-term

transformative learning. Importantly, the findings also provide practical implications that can be applied to similar transnational education projects, offering a framework for fostering intercultural awareness across diverse educational contexts.

In the context of Vietnamese education, these findings suggest that policymakers and institutions may consider integrating co-constructive learning approaches into teacher training programs, promoting international collaborations and supporting digital tools for intercultural engagement. Such initiatives can strengthen intercultural competence among learners and educators and contribute to a globally connected education system in Vietnam.

6. Limitations and Future research

While this study provides valuable insights into the co-construction of intercultural awareness in transnational language projects, it has several limitations. First, the sample size was relatively small and limited to volunteers and learners participating in specific community-based English programs, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Second, the reliance on self-reported data from surveys and interviews may introduce biases related to participants' perceptions and willingness to disclose experiences. Third, the cross-sectional design captures participants' perspectives at a single point in time, limiting the ability to assess how intercultural awareness evolves longitudinally.

Future research should address these limitations by employing longitudinal studies to monitor the development of intercultural competence over time. Expanding the sample size and diversity to include participants from various cultural and institutional backgrounds would enhance the robustness of findings. Additionally, incorporating observational methods or performance-based assessments could provide more objective measures of intercultural awareness. Finally, experimental or

intervention-based research could evaluate the effectiveness of specific pedagogical approaches designed to foster co-construction and intercultural learning in transnational educational contexts.

Author declaration

In preparing this manuscript, ChatGPT was used exclusively for language-related purposes,

including grammar checking, phrasing suggestions and enhancing clarity of expression. It was not used to generate ideas, design methodology, analyze data or interpret results. All scholarly content and responsibility for the work remain entirely with the authors. We hereby confirm that this manuscript is an original work and has not been published elsewhere.

REFERENCES

- Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence*. Multilingual Matters.
- Byram, M. (2020). *The responsibilities of language teachers when teaching intercultural competence and citizenship: An essay*. *China Media Research*, 16(2), 77-84.
- Byram, M. (2021). *Teaching and assessing intercultural competence: Revisited*. Multilingual Matters.
- Byram, M., Nichols, A., & Stevens, D. (2001). *Developing intercultural communicative competence in practice*. Multilingual Matters.
- Deardorff, D. K. (2006). Identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 10(3), 241-266. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315306287002>
- Deardorff, D. K. (2016). *How to assess intercultural competence*. In Z. Hua (Ed.), *Research methods in intercultural communication* (pp. 120-134). Wiley Blackwell.
- Devereux, P. (2008). *International volunteering for development and sustainability*. *Development in Practice*, 18(3), 357-370.
- Dervin, F. (2016). *Interculturality in education: A theoretical and methodological toolbox*. Palgrave Macmillan. DOI:10.1057/978-1-137-54544-2
- Ferri, G. (2018). *Intercultural communication: Critical approaches and future challenges*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gehlbach, H. (2010). The social psychology of education: Volunteering and cultural competence. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 102(4), 806-818.
- Holmes, P., Ganassin, S., & Li, S. (2022). *Reflections on the co-construction of an interpretive approach to interculturality for higher education in China*. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 22(5), 503-518.
- Holmes, P., Moskal, M., & Rajab, T. (2022). *Participation, understanding and dialogue: Intercultural learning among students in higher education and refugee youths*. In L. Jackson & J. Dervin (Eds.), *Critical intercultural pedagogy for difficult times* (1st ed., pp. 117-137). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003150756-7>
- Jackson, J. (2018). *Interculturality in international education* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- Jones, A. (2005). Assessment and learning: Identity and reflection in volunteer work. *International Education Journal*, 6(2), 154-162.
- Lough, B. J. (2011). International volunteers' perceptions of intercultural competence. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 35(4), 452-464. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2010.06.002>

Mezirow, J. (1997). *Transformative learning: Theory to practice*. New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 74, 5-12.

OECD. (2021). *PISA 2018 Global Competence*. <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/innovation/global-competence/>

Pham.T.L.A. (2019). Intercultural education in foreign language training in Vietnam: Current situation and solutions, *Journal of Foreign Languages and Education*, 25(1), 21-29.

Porto, M. (2014). *Intercultural citizenship education in an EFL online project in Argentina*. Language and Intercultural Communication, 14(2), 245-261.

Song, L. (2009). *Teaching English as intercultural education: Challenges of intercultural communication*. Intercultural Communication Research, 1, 261-277. <https://kns.cnki.net/kcms/detail/detail.aspx?bcode=CCJD&dbname=CCJDTEMP&filename=KWJY200900019>

Tiessen, R., & Heron, B. (2012). Volunteering abroad: A critical inquiry and case for reflexivity. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, 33(2), 217-231. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02255189.2012.681341>