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A Facebook-based Debate through English as a Lingua Franca: A Move toward Intercultural Awareness for a World of Differences

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Opening Scene/ Rationale

- The main objective in education regardless of the field of study is shaping and reshaping students' minds with different facts and views about issues in life for a better sense of citizenship.
- This eminently needs us to readdress the sort of competences we, as users of English, might need.
- With English of a global status, understanding culture-language relationship needs to form the basis of judging how successful or not our communication at the international level is.
- This paves the way for language educators to move beyond a designed set of linguistic features for language learners/ users to 'master' with reference to a particular group of a particular nation (mostly UK or US) as a model (Baker, 2015: 11).

Research Focus

- This work focuses on students' intercultural awareness via setting up an Facebook-based debate program between groups of English language learners at the university level from Iraq and some other international students from a different university in the US.
- With the use of English as a lingua franca (ELF), the English used among speakers of different lingua-cultural backgrounds for intercultural communication (Jenkins, 2014 and Seidlhofer, 2011), as a language of debate, students are expected to shape an online-community to practice their Englishes for intercultural awareness purpose.
- For Baker (Ibid: 12), “ELF offers an interesting and productive field for investigating the relationships between language and culture as communication through ELF is currently probably the most common scenario for intercultural communication”.

Research Questions

- To what extent does a Facebook-based debate group between students of English at an Iraqi university and students at an international US university work on developing intercultural awareness?
- What are the students' perceptions of the use of such a Facebook-based debate group in relation to intercultural interactions and communication?
- What are the students' perceptions of English on this Facebook-based debate group?

Study Significance

- It helps to show the intricate relationship(s) between culture, language, and communication in a 'non-essentialist' way (Baker, 2015: 22).
- It is an attempt to challenge how (intercultural) communicative competence is normally conceptualized- where culture is 'traditionally' represented and approached on the basis of 'nation states'.
- This assists debating students to easily characterize their own culture(s) through moving between what is 'global', 'national', 'local' and 'individual' as 'cultural frames of reference' (Baker, 2009: 567), a point that shows the intricate interplay between language and culture in intercultural communication (Baker, 2011).

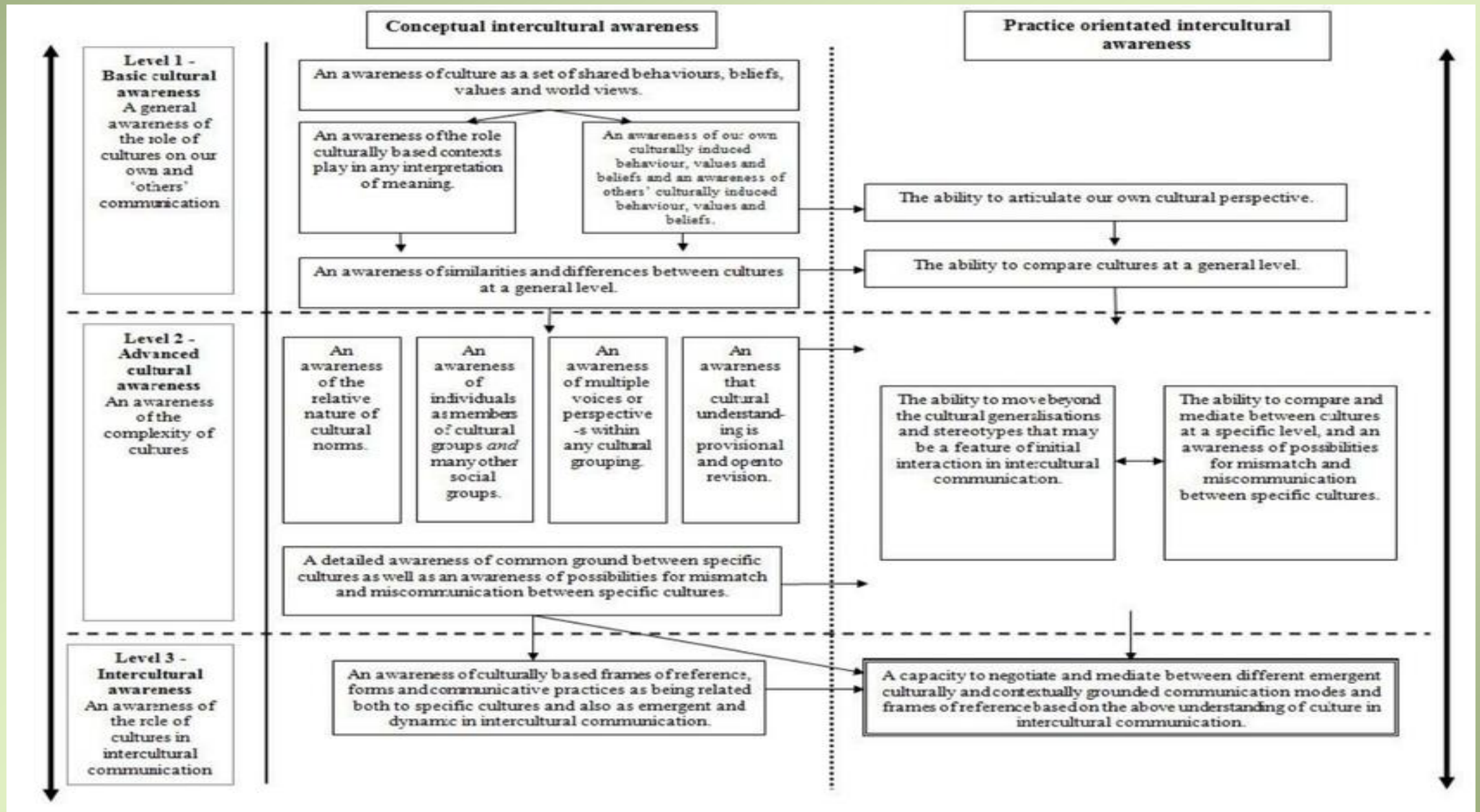
Study Model: Baker's (2015) Intercultural Awareness (ICA)

- With his specific reference to intercultural communication through ELF, Baker (2011) argues that intercultural awareness (ICA) is what speakers need in heterogeneous communities to successfully negotiate, construct and share meanings and social practices.
- **Intercultural awareness** is “a conscious understanding of the role culturally based forms, practices and frames of reference can have in intercultural communication, and an ability to put these conceptions into practice in a flexible and context specific manner in real time communication” (Ibid: 202).

Baker's (2015) Intercultural Awareness (ICA) Model

- Baker's ICA model consists of three interacting levels: 'basic cultural awareness (CA)', 'advanced cultural awareness' and 'intercultural awareness'.
- In his attempt to link what is there in the intercultural speaker's mind to social behavior, Baker classifies ICA into two parts: 'conceptual ICA' and 'practice-oriented ICA' (nonlinear relationship).
- 'conceptual ICA' is fundamentally concerned with the individual's attitudes in relation to culture and culture-related knowledge for effective engagement in intercultural communication and how it might be possible for intercultural speakers to articulate such a kind of attitudes and knowledge.
- 'practice-oriented ICA' is more related to the practical side of the ICA in its focus on individuals' skills and behavior in applying that knowledge in intercultural communication.

Baker's (2015) Intercultural Awareness (ICA) Model



- How can we put such a line of thoughts in practice

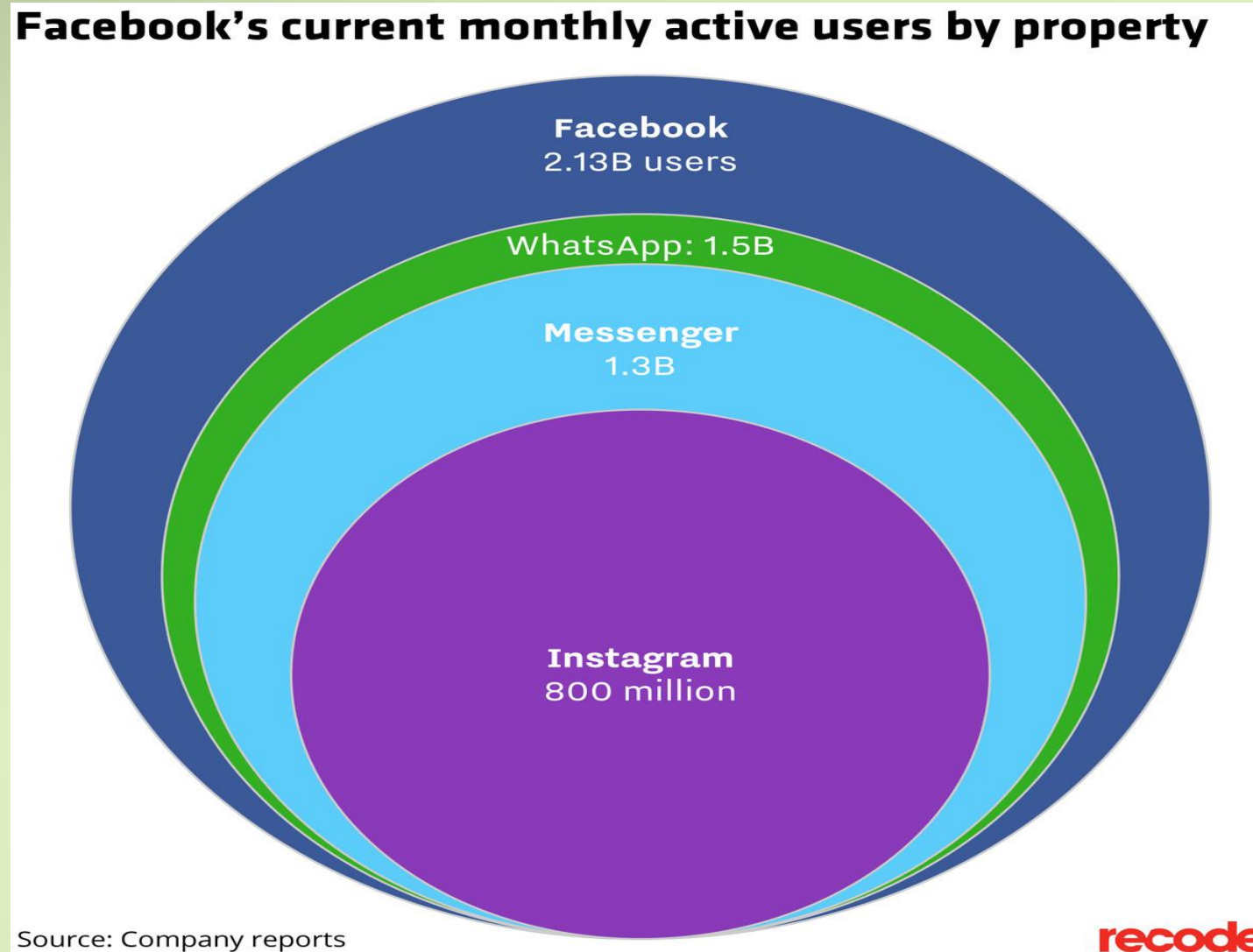




<https://www.google.iq/searchh>

A Facebook-based Debate through ELF as a Platform for Intercultural Awareness

- Why Facebook?



A Facebook-based Debate through ELF as a Platform for Intercultural Awareness

- Debate is a social practice.
- Debating individuals need to critically approach issues in life with a kind of evidence (e.g. Kennedy, 2007: 184)
- Considering others' views is the core of that practice (Zare & Othman, 2013 and Jackson, 2009).

Description of the 'Great Debate Program'

- **Time Duration**

- The debate is designed to be an **eight-week** long program.

- **Recruiting Participants**

- **12** male and female participants in total from Seattle University and Al-Qadissiyah University.

- **Debated Topics**

'Islam phobia', 'Western phobia', 'Terrorism', 'Economic Dominance', 'Nuclear Power', 'Immigration', 'Poverty', 'Human Rights', 'Animal Rights', 'Gender Issues', 'Hate Speech', 'Free Education' and 'Democracy'

Methodology

- A qualitative approach was found the right choice to approach the cognitive side of the research participants.
- Semi-structured interview (Morgan, 1996).
- “Emic view”/ “inductive reasoning” (Cohen et al., 2007:407 and Maxwell, 1992: 288-90).
- Discourse and content analysis were used to approach the collected data (participants’ posts, videos on the closed Facebook page and the IV data), triangulation (Bryman, 2012: 401; Dubois & Gadde, 2002: 556).
- Nvivo 10 software package was made use of in the analysis phase.

Research Ethics

- Research participants were clearly informed about the research aim, their roles and how confidential their participation is going to be prior signing the consent form.
- The researcher was clear enough regarding their right to withdraw whenever they like to do so.

Data Collected

- Recorded Videos
- Facebook Posts and Comments on the debate topics
- Reflection Posts
- Interviews

Topics of Debate (examples)



<https://www.google.iq/search>

Poverty and Terrorism

Iraq/US Great Debates ccourse 20...



Amm

Hi H , so that is an interesting position...do you think that it is not possible to have a country that eliminates grinding poverty? Can you think of any country that have come close to this? Is it a worthy and possible goal? And if so, how could it actually be achieved and maintained? i am curious what you and others on your team might think about this...



8 mths Like Reply More

IQp

Hi guys 🙋. I agree with you all. Poverty is hard and makes the people who suffering from it does a lots of illegal things and they will be criminals and robbers. So, the governments should control on it .

8 mths Like Reply More

Iraq/US Great Debates ccourse 20...



Amm

Yes, H , I can imagine how someone could feel that desperate and feel it is the only way to feed and support their family...but what an awful dilemma to feel you have no way out but that way....



8 mths Like Reply More

Amp

I completely agree with you Mr. Tuke and Hind, I was from the Philippines where one of it's region's city was conquered by the terrorists who were fighting against the government and their main motive I believe is to get the whole city and make it as an independent city and I think one of the reasons is poverty and because of the government failures too... that was just last year and I was aware how awful it was for the people on that city, called Marawi. It caused so much destruction of properties, innocent lives being taken away and fear to the people.



8 mths Like Reply More

Amp

it was an awful dilemma 😞



8 mths Like Reply More

IQp

yeahhh G definitely they say that life has it's ups and downs but some ppl live only in downs mood of life that y there is no country ever can omit the poverty percentage from their economic statistics and at last they r the victim of "revolution of economy " in way or another .

Corruption

← Iraq/US Great Debates ccourse 20... 

  shared a **link** to the group: **Iraq/US Great Debates ccourse 2018**.
9 May at 09:59 · 


My current event this week is a video regarding the upcoming parliamentary elections in Iraq. This video discusses various prominent issues, with a specific focus on the corruption in politics over the last decade and a half. This is an important topic to cover because the elections are this Saturday (the 12th) and will impact the lives of every Iraqi citizen for years to come. Eliminating corruption and electing honest and proactive politicians will be extremely beneficial for the Country as a whole.



ALJAZEERA.COM
Iraq corruption watchdog: \$320bn stolen over 15 years
Will the new prime minister be able to tackle corruption and make a fre...

 You and 2 others

Seen by 35

Amm
Do you see any elements of corruption in the US system, **C** or **F** or **H**? And if so, what would you propose to do about it that would be effective?  1

7 mths Like Reply More

IQp
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/may/12/anti-corruption-summit-us-united-kingdom-tax-havens> this is the answer dr.Greg Tuke



To end corruption, start with the US and...
theguardian.com

7 mths Like Reply More

Reflection Posts (examples)

- Self and Other

- Amp1:

One of the most important skills I learned in this class is being able to be open minded to other people even if you disagree with what they say. Prior to this class i would be enraged if i hear someone say something that I thought was wrong or against my values, but now I understand not everyone grew up the same so different experiences affect people differently and lead to different views, I use the opportunity to inform them of my own opinions and why I disagree with theirs and if they feel the same way I understand that I don't have the right to force them to.

Reflection on Participants

- *your students significantly exceeded my expectations. Their English, on the whole, was excellent, and their ability to argue from a position that might be contrary to their own personal view was quite good. Several Iraqi students not only had English skills stronger than some of my students (who had immigrated here or been born to immigrant parents), but were in the top 10% of both classes in terms of listening well and being able to articulate various positions persuasively on a social issue that spoke to various "audiences" here and in Iraq.*

Conclusion

- An international dimension to language education is significant to reshape our understanding of what language competence/proficiency in English as a lingua franca is.
- This also has a key role in understanding the kind of relationship between 'nation, culture, and language', 'self and other'.
- Debates at the international level work on developing students' criticality, linguistic and cultural awareness.
- Technology, Facebook in this context, proves to be the right choice for setting up an international debate.

Implication

- This work is limited in terms of the context and number of participants.
- So, generalisation is not an aim in this work.
- More work is required on the role(s) English as a lingua franca potentially has in developing students' self-other understanding.
- An assessed intercultural-oriented learning program is needed in English language context.

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Any Question?



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