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**Jala SALMANOVA,**  
orcid.org/0000-0002-4846-1514  
Dissertation Student  
Azerbaijan University of Languages  
(Baku, Azerbaijan) salmanovajala@gmail.com

## THE ORGANIZATION OF INTERACTIVITY THROUGH VIDEO CONFERENCING

*The primary purpose of teaching foreign languages to students in accordance with the state standards of general education is to equip them with the necessary skills to develop as independent individuals and competent professionals in society. In this regard, the enhancement of students' communicative skills in a multilingual and multicultural environment is prioritized. This, in turn, enables them to effectively engage in communication in both their native and foreign languages for personal and professional purposes. Foreign language instruction is not just about imparting the ability to speak and communicate in the target language but also encompasses the understanding of the cultural and national values, traditions, peculiarities, and differences of the country where the language is spoken. It promotes intercultural awareness and readiness for dialogue with representatives of other cultures, contributing to intercultural tolerance. The process of learning a foreign language and culture includes the exploration of the fundamentals of intercultural interaction and communication, a subject that has been extensively researched by many scholars. The acquisition of the socio-cultural experience through language broadens horizons, stimulates the development of intercultural communication, and fosters mutual engagement. The communicative process encourages the language learner to establish mutual connections while simultaneously aiding in recognizing and addressing the complexities that may arise in diverse social situations. It should be emphasized that the primary aim of our research is to ensure interactivity in higher education institutions through intercultural dialogues. The objective is for students to explore communication issues from various aspects via video conferencing and to employ diverse interactive teaching methods in addressing these problems.*

**Key words:** interactivity, distance education, video conference, communication, intercultural competence.

**Джала САЛМАНОВА,**  
orcid.org/0000-0002-4846-1514  
диссертант  
Азербайджанського університету мов  
(Баку, Азербайджан) salmanovajala@gmail.com

## ОРГАНІЗАЦІЯ ІНТЕРАКТИВНОСТІ ЧЕРЕЗ ВІДЕОКОНФЕРЕНЦІЇ

*Основною метою навчання учнів іноземних мов відповідно до державних стандартів загальної освіти є сформувати в них навички, необхідні для становлення як самостійної особистості та компетентного професіонала в суспільстві. У зв'язку з цим пріоритетом є вдосконалення комунікативних навичок студентів у багатомовному та полікультурному середовищі. Це, у свою чергу, дозволяє їм ефективно спілкуватися як рідною, так і іноземною мовами в особистих і професійних цілях. Навчання іноземній мові – це не лише набуття вміння говорити та спілкуватися цільовою мовою, а й охоплює розуміння культурних і національних цінностей, традицій, особливостей та відмінностей країни, де говорять мовою. Він сприяє розвитку міжкультурної обізнаності та готовності до діалогу з представниками інших культур, сприяючи міжкультурній толерантності. Процес вивчення іноземної мови та культури включає вивчення основ міжкультурної взаємодії та спілкування, предмет, який активно досліджується багатьма вченими. Набуття соціокультурного досвіду через мову розширює кругозір, стимулює розвиток міжкультурної комунікації та сприяє взаємній взаємодії. Комунікативний процес заохочує тих, хто вивчає мову, встановлювати взаємні зв'язки, одночасно допомагаючи розпізнавати та вирішувати складності, які можуть виникнути в різноманітних соціальних ситуаціях. Слід підкреслити, що першочерговою метою нашого дослідження є забезпечення інтерактивності вищих навчальних закладів через міжкультурний діалог. Мета полягає в тому, щоб студенти досліджували проблеми спілкування з різних аспектів за допомогою відео-конференцій і використовували різноманітні інтерактивні методи навчання для вирішення цих проблем.*

**Ключові слова:** інтерактивність, дистанційна освіта, відеоконференція, комунікація, міжкультурна компетентність.

**Introduction.** The necessity of the era has led to significant advancements, particularly in the widespread application of information technologies, as observed in various fields, including the realm of education. The aim of online education, which is a student-centered teaching method, is to create an environment that facilitates self-directed learning for students. Thanks to the continuously evolving and increasingly pervasive new technologies in all aspects of life, online meetings, conferences, and similar activities have found their place in the digital world. What is a video conferencing system? What are its advantages, and what aspects should be considered when organizing such conferences?

Video conferencing or video teleconferencing is a telecommunication technology that allows two or more locations to engage in video and audio communication simultaneously. Through these teleconferencing systems, numerous individuals can easily conduct interactive audio and video calls, facilitating the mutual exchange of knowledge and skills (Bawane, 2009). The geographical proximity of participants during the organization of video conferencing is irrelevant. Individuals from any location in the country or around the world with internet access and electronic devices can participate in planned video teleconferences. Consequently, significant time is saved, both during the meeting and upon returning afterward. This time efficiency also translates into cost savings, making it one of the most significant advantages of video conferencing systems. Students who are planning to participate in scheduled meetings, may save on transportation, travel, and meal expenses. If we observe exemplary lessons offered by the world's most prestigious and high-quality universities, it becomes evident that a majority of the courses conducted by these universities prioritize distance learning.

**The level of problem elaboration.** One of the primary advantages of video conferencing or video teleconferencing systems is their ease of use. During video teleconferences, all materials to be shared with other participants, such as documents, files, videos, or presentation slides, can be uploaded to the video conferencing system and easily shared with participants through screen sharing. However, it should be noted that one of the main challenges of working with video conferencing systems is the potential interruption that may arise in the internet network. Furthermore, during video conferencing, participants will always have their attention focused on the instructor. Paying attention to gestures and facial expressions, smiling at appropriate times, and giving importance to the use of body language and control enhances engagement and functionality during the meeting. Problems of

organizing online learning are a leading area in modern teaching methods, since the latest information technologies are used here. This issue was considered by such researchers as G. Zarate [Zarate, 2003], J. Bawane [Bawane, 2009], N. Château [Château, 2000], A. Romiszowski [Romiszowski, 2004], and others [Williams, 2002].

**Aim and Objectives.** The advantages of live video conferencing methods for organizing lessons include the following:

- The opportunity to learn foreign languages and engage in cross-cultural communication, irrespective of time and geographic boundaries;
- Creating an environment of communication as close to real-life as possible;
- The development of cross-cultural connections and worldviews;
- The ease of communicating with students and teachers from different languages, cultures, and values.

### **Main Section**

**Distance education.** Course topics prepared by instructors or teachers are presented using various synchronous or asynchronous media (such as video, animations, podcasts, PDFs, etc.). Instructors or teachers plan, assess, and evaluate various activities aimed at minimizing physical distance between themselves and the students. In turn, students participate individually or collectively in these activities, such as research, response, or reporting during their own turns.

Now, what is synchronous and asynchronous learning in distance education?

Distance education, within the framework of the opportunities and possibilities offered by contemporary educational technologies, is implemented through two primary modes: **synchronous** and **asynchronous**. These modes are tailored to meet the specific instructional requirements and preferences (Martin, 2014).

*Synchronous* learning entails the simultaneous execution of the learning process. In this mode, students have the capability to congregate in a virtual environment from various geographical locations, fostering real-time audio and video interactions, as well as the exchange of diverse experiences. Utilizing a spectrum of programmatic tools, such as audio and video connectivity, instant messaging, and video conferencing applications over the internet, this approach not only facilitates the dissemination of course materials but also cultivates an interactive, context-rich learning environment.

On the other hand, *asynchronous* learning constitutes a learning process that unfolds at distinct temporal intervals and is unburdened by geographical constraints. It materializes in an online

learning environment where instructional content is disseminated via assorted programmatic mechanisms and archived for future access. Participants in asynchronous distance education, regardless of their locations, can conveniently enter this virtual space. Notably, in asynchronous distance education, the accentuation is placed on the learner-content interaction, while the learner-teacher interaction is orchestrated with a temporal lag. Channels like emails, discussion boards, and forum activities are prevalently harnessed in asynchronous distance education settings (Selçuk, 2020).

The synchronous and asynchronous instructional models offered in distance education programs are designed to adapt to the utilized environments and the stipulated educational requirements. The instructional processes carried out in these environments are fundamentally rooted in fostering mutual interaction.

Research reveals that the advantages of organizing video conference lessons on online teaching platforms lie in their independence from time and geographical boundaries, thereby enabling the development of foreign language and cross-cultural communication. Communication takes place through the mutual linkage of the language and culture being studied, covering topics of interest to all participants. However, it should be noted that the distance communication method, both of a technical nature (requiring ICT tools) and involving psychological and emotional factors, can present certain challenges, including:

- Students may encounter difficulties related to motivation and lack of prior preparation;
- The student's indecision can lead to psychological discomfort;
- Predicting the student's psychological discomfort or sense of independence beforehand is not possible;
- Issues related to entering into communication due to the student's limited communicative skills may arise.

To address the aforementioned issues and achieve the effectiveness of this method, teachers must delineate their objectives and responsibilities. It is imperative to preplan the lesson, ensuring the efficient organization of the proposed activities, with particular attention paid to the analysis of the outcomes of these activities in subsequent classes for practical application.

When it comes to the selection of educational materials, textbooks or chosen resources must adhere to the requirements of the State Standards and Programs of General Education, taking into account the age and language proficiency levels of students. The chosen method, in alignment with the principles of cross-disciplinary relationships, should be applied in accordance with the planned educational objectives.

The practical portion of our research centers around the concept of a one-time-organized video conference format, which entails deep immersion into language materials pertaining to a specific topic and various preparatory tasks for the consolidation of theoretical knowledge. Through this learning approach, students' initial knowledge is assessed, preparing them for cross-cultural and interactive encounters. During video conferences, prevalent activity types involve cross-cultural assignments, group work, interactive activities in a cross-cultural context, role-playing games, and simulation games. These assignments contribute to fostering interactive mutual engagement and the development of communicative experiences among students.

As a result, behavioral and etiquette norms are established between parties engaging in communication during lessons. Different cultural characteristics, values, traditions, common values are harmoniously united in the same atmosphere (Marquet, 2003).

In this context, the “Cultural Project” method-based lesson, organized through video conferencing, was implemented among French-speaking students of Azerbaijan State University of Languages and Kostroma State University of Russia. Considering that both countries (Azerbaijan and Russia) possess different languages and cultures, the aim during the lesson was to create cross-cultural dialogue and communication in the French language, ensuring the development of students' language skills and values in a foreign language. Thus, the lesson conducted via the Zoom platform between universities in both countries (Azerbaijan and Russia) can be summarized with the following general information:

**Teachers:** Head Teacher Jala Salmanova, Elena Orekhova

**Number of participating students:** 15 (9 students – Azerbaijan University of Languages, 6 students – Kostroma State University)

**Language proficiency of participating students:** B1–B2 (CEFR)

**Lesson Content:** Stereotypes or Realities

**Additional internet resource used during the lesson:** (2) Cliché ! version française – YouTube

**Total duration of the lesson:** 1 hour and 20 minutes

**The general course of the lesson (before and after the video conference):**

The experiment was conducted with the participation of 4th year students majoring in the French language from the “Education-2” department of Azerbaijan University of Languages and the “Pedagogical Education (English, French)” faculty of Kostroma State University. It should be noted that the common language of communication among the students is

French (at the B1–B2 level), and prior to this project, the students did not know each other and had never communicated.

In the first stage of the video-conferencing project, before the video conference itself, the participating students held online group meetings and gathered information about general stereotypes that reflect the specific characteristics of “foreign” peoples (Azerbaijanis and Russians). Additionally, in this phase, the students from Russia and Azerbaijan were tasked with creating video presentations about the universities where they were studying and their hometowns. This assignment aimed to help them get to know each other better and eliminate any online communication difficulties with unfamiliar fellow students from other countries during the online classes. This task motivated them to create video presentations about each other and overcome potential communication challenges during online classes. Finally, the participating students were well-prepared before the video conference, having successfully completed their assignments. It's worth mentioning that both groups of students fulfilled their tasks effectively, and the introductory phase of the lesson, which was more presentation-based, was a source of motivation for them to proceed to the next stage.

The subject of the language project “Stereotypes or Realities” encompassed the comprehensive exploration of the customs, traditions, and fundamental aspects characterizing the French, Azerbaijani, and Russian societies. This thematic domain aimed to scrutinize the essence and idiosyncrasies of the impressions formed by students regarding represent-

atives of diverse nationalities within the context of intercultural dialogue. Throughout this process, students undertook an inquiry into the veracity or inaccuracy of linguistic-cultural stereotypes pertaining to the nations under investigation, using a survey method that consisted of interviews.

The principal objective of this project lay in the examination of the authenticity of stereotypes, which provide insight into the worldviews held by individuals from various cultures. In pursuit of this goal, students were tasked with identifying the nuances and distinctions in the stereotypical perceptions held by students hailing from the participating nations. This endeavor empowered the students with a comprehensive comprehension of national and cultural knowledge specific to each of the three countries, thereby equipping them with the capacity to foster effective communication, free from the pitfalls of misunderstandings, disputes, or conflicts.

Upon careful analysis of Tables 1 and 2, one can readily discern that the task bearing the title “Stereotypes or Realities”, prepared by the students in the interview format, was carried out adeptly, underscoring their commendable proficiency in tackling this thematic domain.

It should be noted that the queries of the task prepared in Table 1 were investigated and formulated by Azerbaijani French-speaking students before the video conference, while Table 2 was compiled by Russian French-speaking students.

Students from both universities responded to the questions listed in the tables by selecting one of the answers, “Vrai – true,” “Faux – false,” or “On ne sait

Table 1

Les stéréotypes / clichés sur la Russie	Vrai	Faux	On ne sait pas, ça dépend
1. On dit qu’au nord de la Russie il y a des villes où on voit toujours des ours blancs marchant partout dans la rue	x		
2. On dit que la recette du gâteau “Napaléon” a été inventée pour célébrer la victoire de la Russie contre la France			x
3. On dit que les russes considèrent la bière comme une boisson non alcoolisée			x
4. Oymyakon est une ville la plus froide de la Russie, la température moyenne est de – 50 degrés	x		
5. Est-ce que le prénom du père peut remplacer le nom de l’enfant en Russie?		x	
6. C’est vrai qu’un bouquet de fleur n’est pas le symbole d’amour en Russie, mais de funérailles qui porte malheur?	x		
7. On dit que beaucoup de russes sont très superstitieux. Par exemple: avant de partir en voyage ils s’assoient quelques minutes sur leurs valises; le voyage se passe sans problème	x		
8. Les russes sont de meilleurs hackers puisqu’ils sont très bons en maths			x
9. En Russie, chaque personne a un prénom ayant deux différents sens de celui du passeport, par exemple: Ivan-Vanya, Alexandre-Sacha, Maria-Macha etc...	x		

Table 2

Les stéréotypes / clichés sur l'Azerbaïdjan	Vrai	Faux	On ne sait pas, ça dépend
1. C'est vrai que les azerbaïdjanais mangent de la viande au petit déjeuner?	x		
2. On dit que la ville de Bakou est une ville demi orientale et demi occidentale culturellement	x		
3. On dit que les azerbaïdjanais sont très émotionnels, impatientes pendant qu'ils se parlent ou discutent de quelque chose		x	
4. C'est vrai qu'en Azerbaïdjan les filles/fils ne quittent pas leur famille jusqu'à l'âge de 30 ans s'ils sont pas mariés ?			x
5. Les azerbaïdjanais respectent beaucoup les liens familiaux	x		
6. On dit qu'en Azerbaïdjan les enfants ne peuvent pas faire du ski parce qu'il n'y a pas de neige là. C'est vrai?		x	
7. D'après nos recherches, la plupart des familles en Azerbaïdjan préfèrent avoir beaucoup d'enfants, comme plus de trois	x		
8. On dit qu'en Azerbaïdjan la température est très différente, c'est à dire, en été il fait très chaud mais en hiver froid	x		

pas – we don't know,” and provided detailed information corresponding to each answer, engaging in extensive discussions.

Within the framework of this project, we organized and executed a series of three research activities:

- Investigation of the practical significance of video conferencing as an effective means to enhance communication in a foreign language within the context of intercultural dialogue;
- Ensuring the participation of students from diverse nationalities in the preparation and implementation of the multicultural project;
- Identifying the means to address and resolve communicative difficulties that arise during the student's interaction process.

The methodological framework of the research includes:

1. Investigation of national-cultural stereotypes by students before the video conference and the implementation of the research through survey methodology;
2. Identification of difficulties during communication and means for their removal through motivational techniques, particularly encouraging questioning;
3. Inculcating ideas of personal responsibility during interactive activities through the use of key terms (*Interculturalité, habitudes, comportements, influence de l'école, de la famille, des médias etc...*) during classes.

It is also worth noting that, at the conclusion of the research, students engaged in mutual exchange of discussions and suggestions about the research question and the topic. Thus, in the primary stage of the project's core, considerable emphasis was placed on the discussion and analysis of prepared questions concerning the national traditions and customs of the Azerbaijani people within the context of “intercultural dialogue”. The first phase of the class involved

discussing the differing and similar aspects of stereotypical ideas about the cultures and lifestyles of Russian and Azerbaijani peoples in conditions of cultural exchange. Despite the common foreign language being French, the students had no hesitation in engaging in conversation.

The mistakes made during the dialogue did not hinder them from expressing their ideas freely.

In the next stage, both groups, the French students and the Azerbaijani students, worked on the third table to identify coincidences, differences, and stereotypes related to the French and French culture after watching the video titled “*Clichés français de Cédric Villain*” (Chaves, 2012).

Table 3

La France et les Français	
Chaque groupe remplit le tableau suivant :	
Personnages célèbres	
Monuments connus	
Alimentation	
Habitudes et comportement	
Les mots français dans les langues étrangères	

In the third table, after working individually on the assigned tasks, group discussions were held on the answers related to stereotype ideas. After watching the video, students discussed the descriptions provided by the author to confirm or refute these stereotypes. Essentially, they developed emotional opinions among themselves that could change the quality of communication about the country and its residents. This, in turn, encourages them to better understand the values, norms, and beliefs of their own countries and foreign cultures.

In the final stage, students, along with the teachers, consolidated the results of the project, emphasizing the necessity of using the video conferencing format in the teaching process. According to their perspective, the ability to use information and communication technologies in the classroom broadens the boundaries of knowledge, providing opportunities to access new knowledge, worlds, and cultures.

Thus, the teaching method organized in the video conferencing format contributes to the strengthening of language skills, automates communication skills, and fosters the development of skills in understanding other people, building relationships, and constructively resolving communication difficulties with representatives of one's own nation and foreign social-cultural environments. In addition to this, the students concluded about the importance of learning about their own and other countries' cultures. They highlighted the significance of knowledge about value systems, norms, customs, stereotypical behavioral patterns in the learning process of different countries' residents, social interaction, and intercultural communication. They believe that intercultural communication is not only about having good knowledge but also about a complex and multifaceted issue that requires preparation. Its absence can lead to communicative disharmony, psychological and communication difficulties, and a decrease in the chance for constructive and effective dialogue.

Furthermore, during the course of our project implemented in the video conferencing format, students from both countries faced similar challenges in intercultural communication:

- Apprehension related to transitioning from a traditional classroom setting to a different teaching format;
- Lack of an extensive vocabulary in some situations during verbal communication;
- Cognitive difficulties concerning linguistic and cultural knowledge misinterpretation in the context of the situation and differences in thinking styles among representatives of various national cultures;
- Minor emotional difficulties arising from participants' emotional states and personal initiatives during interactive dialogues.

Despite the intercultural communication challenges that emerged during the research, the process

of intercultural mutual understanding among the students was characterized by shared motivation, emotional openness, a high level of empathy, and an interest in representatives of other cultures, as well as a willingness to work together in a team.

Research shows that in the modern world, learning foreign languages effectively is not possible without getting as close as possible to the foreign language environment, which includes space-time relationships, social interactions, and communicative situations. Therefore, it is recommended to develop programs with a psychological and cultural "context" that is either individual or group-based or involves the participation of representatives of various cultures (Bange, 1996). Participants in intercultural communication who possess contextual knowledge and understand its importance and variability will find it easier to find a common language in various social situations and choose the right path to overcome communication difficulties.

**Conclusion.** The foundation for improving the interactive teaching process is the coming together of representatives of different countries and cultures. This social interaction occurs in various cultural situations. Language learners not only develop their language skills through mutual communication but also engage in comparative communication with their own languages and cultures with different cultures (Candelier, 2003).

The experimental lesson experience we conducted with students from two different countries with distinct cultures yielded successful results, demonstrating that video conferencing, within the context of the classroom teaching process, is an effective tool to enhance intercultural foreign language learning when all its components are integrated. Thanks to its technical components, video conferencing allows for real-time organization of the learning process, discussion, and collaboration on selected topics with students from any university in the world. This simplifies the acquisition of experience in planning, organizing, and implementing intercultural communication and cooperation. Through the establishment of the process of intercultural collaboration and mutual interaction, this method allows for the deepening of knowledge about other languages and cultures.

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