

INTERACTIONAL FREQUENCIES AND PATTERNS OF INTRACULTURAL CONTACT AMONG ETHNICALLY DIFFERENT FACULTY MEMBERS AND STUDENTS IN A SYNCHRONOUS DISTANCE INTERACTIVE CLASSROOM CONFERENCING

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ABSTRACT

The southeastern region of Turkey is home to significant populations of Turkish nationals of Kurdish and Arabic heritage. Objective of the study is to analyze the interactional frequencies and patterns of intercultural contact among ethnically different faculty members and students of Istanbul University (IU), Istanbul, and Harran University (HU), Urfa, involved in a project of Synchronous Distance Interactive Classroom Conferencing between the two universities. A total of 260 students at IU, 150 students at HU and 16 faculty members were involved. Method of direct observation instrument was used to analyze the contact patterns that occurred among various Turkish students from IU and Turkish students of Kurdish ethnic background at HU. Faculty members and students from IU for the most part, were urban-educated in Istanbul and found themselves having to interact with the faculty members and students of HU located in Urfa, Southeastern Anatolia. Results: This model permitted interaction between the students at IU and HU and instructor in real-time during and off the class time and problems did occur as a result of intracultural differences. Both sides lacked sensitivity and knowledge about issues related to cross-cultural communication and interaction. In conclusion, The findings revealed that the groups engaged in narrow interaction patterns and there was a virtual wall between the students of IU and HU which was difficult to overcome.

Keywords: cross-cultural contact; intercultural contact; intercultural relations undergraduate education, synchronous distance learning, distance education, classroom conferencing, intercultural communication, virtual walls