A ViVEXELT (Viet Nam Virtual EXchange for English Language Teaching) Guide for E-CIIC[1] Mediators in Synchronous Online Zoom Breakout Rooms

Jenny Wells, Farida Butt, Marina Orsini-Jones, Kate Borthwick, Andrew Preshous, Yu-Hua Chen, Thuy Bui Thi Ngoc, Hoang Nguyen, Thi Thom Thom Nguyen and An Duc Nguyen.

With contributions from:

Nga Ha, Nguyễn Thị Hương Lan, Duyen Le, Van Thi Hong Le, Tra Luong, Tuan Minh Phi, Dang Thi Huong Thao, Thanh Vo, Omar Aazam, Dana Ciomag, Mike Cribb, Madeleine Hall-Roberts, James Henry, Guray Koseoglu, Jon Newcombe, Angela Schuster, Gabriella Vaughan and Benet Vincent.

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[1] e-Classroom Interactional and Intercultural Competences

CONTENTS

1. BACKGROUND

ViVEXELT is an action-research project funded by the British Council Vietnam Digital Learning Innovation Fund Pilot and supported by the NFLP (National Foreign Language Project) in Viet Nam. The funders aimed to encourage partnerships between the UK and Viet Nam which would generate new research, insight and/or innovations to improve the teaching and learning of English. With the impact of Covid-19 on learning, the British Council and Viet Nam's NFLP were keen to ensure that future remote and online learning opportunities would be more equitable and accessible to all, rather than just a few, and that they should be sustainable over time.

To address the brief, the ViVEXELT team set up a professional development (CPD) course for English language teacher education delivered through Virtual Exchange for a cross-sectional community of practice that included English teachers, teacher educators and students in teacher education from a variety of educational settings (primary, secondary, tertiary, private and a Non-Governmental Organisation) based in Viet Nam and in the UK. VE 'enables sustained, technology-enabled, research informed, people-to-people education programmes or activities in which constructive communication and interaction takes place between individuals or groups who are geographically separated and/or from different cultural backgrounds, with the support of educators or facilitators' (*What is VE?* EVOLVE, 2022).

ViVEXELT is led by Prof Marina Orsini-Jones at Coventry University (UK) and Dr Bui Thi Ngoc Thuy at Hanoi University of Science and Technology (HUST).

The project aims to foster the development of its participants' English language teaching (ELT) competences, particularly speaking skills and online interactional skills (Moorhouse, Li & Walsh 2021) critical digital literacy and intercultural awareness 'in' action, while doing the online course, 'on' action', reflecting on the course after its completion and 'for' action, thinking how they could apply their learning to their future ELT practice (Schön, 1983; Mann & Walsh, 2017). There is evidence that the VE approach for English language teacher professional development can be successful to support students and teachers involved in ELT with reassessing their beliefs and embracing innovative practice (Orsini-Jones et al. 2018).

Participants engaged in a VE course consisting of both asynchronous content and activities (delivered via the Open Moodle Learning Management System) and five live synchronous discussions/workshops on ZOOM on the following topics: 1. Introduction to ViVEXELT and e-CICs (e-Classroom Interactional Competencies); 2. Teaching Speaking Skills Online; 3. Communicative Grammar Teaching Online; 4. 'Tips and Tricks' to Support Online Interaction; 5. Reflective Practice.

Breakout Rooms (BoRs) were used extensively for group discussions and collaborative tasks during the live, synchronous sessions and this generated a considerable body of feedback and reflection on their use from all participants. Although relevant literature and prior projects recognise the importance of

facilitators in VEs (e.g. [EVOLVE)](#), a key theme emerged for mediators to be present in each BoR and 'scaffold and bridge learning' between the main, central teaching sessions and the smaller groups. Following on from the article by Moorhouse, Li and Walsh (2021), which discussed e-classroom interactional competencies (e-CICs) in synchronous online settings, the research team decided it would be useful to have a dedicated, trained mediator for each BoR. The **e-CIIC (e-Classroom Interactional and Intercultural Competences) Mediator**[2]. This guide has been developed by the ViVEXELT team to complement this role and is based on the findings and outcomes of the VE held between Viet Nam and the UK between March and November 2021.

2. WHY e-CIIC MEDIATOR?

Walsh defined classroom interactional competence (CIC) as *'teachers' and learners' ability to use interaction as a tool for mediating and assisting learning'* (2013: 65). Further to the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, Moorhouse, Li and Walsh (2021) identified three further areas of expertise required for successful online teaching: technological competencies, online environment management competencies and online teacher interactional competencies. These were named 'e-classroom interactional competencies (e-CIC)' by Moorhouse, Li and Walsh. As ViVEXELT synchronous sessions embraced a culturally diverse group, with predominantly Vietnamese and UK participants but also representation from many other countries[3], it was also felt necessary to recognise the importance of a fourth area of expertise: intercultural competence (where we also include intercultural communicative competence, see Figure 1 below by Helm and Guth and O'Dowd & Dooly, 2020). The acronym e-CIIC (e-Classroom Interactional and Intercultural Competences) therefore encompasses all these competences[4].

The choice of the word 'mediator' stemmed from a discussion had during a ViVEXELT team meeting, as it was felt it better represented the role than alternative terms used in other VEs. The options considered were 'moderator' (Salmon, 2011; Gutiérrez et. al., 2021), 'facilitator' (Berge 1995; Helm, 2016), 'mentor' (O'Dowd, Sauro & Spector-Cohen, 2021) and 'mediator' (normally preferred for law mediation disputes, see CADRE video, 2020 or for intercultural mediators for migrants: see TIME project 2015). In view of the experience on ViVEXELT, it was felt that the term 'mediator' would better represent the role, due to the challenges involved in carrying it out effectively.

ViVEXELT also aimed at preparing mediators to cope with the intercultural, digital and linguistic challenges that can arise when facilitating tasks in BoRs. Figure 1, by Helm and Guth, reproduced below (2010) summarises well the range of competences needed in VEs (also known as 'Telecollaboration') designed for second language learning. Most of the goals also apply to the ViVEXELT setting, that was aimed at English language teacher professional development and where

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[2] The extra 'I' stands for intercultural, a key word not included in Moorhouse, Li and Walsh's acronym e-CIC.

[3] The participating students on the MA in English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics from Coventry University were from: Albania, China, Cyprus, India, Iraq, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, and the USA.

[4] Moorhouse, Li and Walsh (2021) spell the word as 'competencies'. We use 'competencies' and 'competences' interchangeably here but prefer 'competences'.

English was used as the shared language for communication for participants who were, in the majority, L2 English speakers.

Framework for the goals of Telecollaboration 2.0
Helm and Guth 2010:74

New Online Literacies	ICC	Foreign Language Learning
Operational: The "technical stuff"		
Computer literacy Information literacies New media literacies	*Savoir apprendre/faire:* Skills of discovery and interaction *Savoir comprendre:* ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to one's own	Spoken production Spoken interaction Written production Reading Listening Codeswitching
Operational: Attitude: the "ethos stuff"		
Willingness to explore, learn from, participate in, and collaborate and share in online communities	*Savoir-etre:* attitude of openness and curiosity	Autonomy Motivation Willingness to communicate
Cultural		
Knowledge of literacy practises and appropriate ways of communicating online Propositional knowledge of topic	*Savoirs:* knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in own and other cultures; knowledge of the processes of interaction	Linguistic knowledge Sociolinguistic knowledge Pragmatic knowledge
Critical		
Critical Literacy Awareness	Critical Cultural Awareness	Critical Language Awareness

Figure 1 Framework for the goals of Telecollaboration 2.0

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5 Figure edited and used with permission. Originally published in Helm, F. & Guth, S. (2010) The Multifarious Goals of Telecollaboration

2.0: Theoretical and Practical Implications. In S. Guth, & F. Helm, F. (Eds.) (2010). *Telecollaboration 2.0: Language, Literacy and*

Intercultural Learning in the 21st Century, pp 69-106p. 74.

3. WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

This guide is aimed at ELT tutors and students in English teacher education working as mediators in BoRs in online/remote, synchronous settings. The guide should be particularly useful for large VE cohorts when one teacher cannot manage or monitor all BoRs. Those new to the role or with some previous experience of mediating will find practical tips and advice to maximise the effectiveness of BoR sessions[6]. It is hoped this guide could be used to support the training of 'expert students' willing to become e-CIIC mediators, as it is not always possible to have more than one tutor per e-classroom able to effectively monitor and scaffold activities in all BoRs.

Becoming a BoR mediator is an opportunity for participants in a VE to develop their own skills as a mediator in an online setting and will equip them with transferable skills for their own continued professional development and employability.

Learning about BoR mediation could also help with other remote teaching settings, not necessarily VE ones.

4. CONSIDERATIONS FOR EDUCATORS ORGANISING VIRTUAL EXCHANGE/OTHER REMOTE LEARNING CONTEXTS

Analysis of data collected throughout the project showed that using BoRs in ViVEXELT generally proved popular with participants. BoRs provided opportunities to socialise and interact informally, exchange ideas in small, intimate, friendly decolonised Third Space[7] (Bhabha & Rutherford, 2006) learning environments and build intercultural and interactional skills in safe and secure spaces.

In view of the lessons learnt on ViVEXELT, to maximise the learning opportunities within BoRs, it is recommended that the following areas are considered:

- **Assign numbers of participants to each BoR.** Experience from ViVEXELT showed that with a large cohort (e.g., 50+), 6-8 participants per BoR was a good working group size.
- **Determine group member make-up.** ViVEXELT functioned optimally with pre-assigned group members, rather than opting for randomising allocation, as this facilitated interaction and confidence amongst BoR participants as they constructed their own micro e-communities. The benefits of having repeated interaction in pre-determined groups consisted in being able to move from socialisation and familiarisation towards task-based learning, or to the right and upwards in Gilly Salmon's 5 stage model (see Figure 2 below). However, this advantage was counteracted by the variability of attendance and difficulties

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[6] The ViVEXELT team would welcome suggestions from more experienced mediators that could be added to this guide, please email Marina Orsini-Jones if you have any: m.orsini@coventry.ac.uk

[7] Bhabha and Rutherford see the Third Space as a fertile ground for intercultural and decolonised encounters in Higher Education.

involved in the organisation of large numbers of participants. The easiest way to do this was to send lists with pre-assigned BoRs and ask each participant to join their respective BoR, each coordinated by a mediator. Using the pre-registration tool in Zoom will also facilitate this task and provide organisers with an idea of which participants would be attending each session.

- **Allocate sufficient time for BoR activities.** Key findings from ViVEXELT included acknowledgement of the time needed to socialise and to process information and the need to provide very clear instructions before starting BoR tasks. Familiarisation with technology was also time consuming as was written interaction on the Padlet wall (Padlet.com, an interactive online notice board) when required by the task. Being generous with time allocated and not making assumptions about familiarity with technology (including BoRs) were important learning points. Raising awareness of roles and responsibilities of participants in the BoR before assigning them (e.g., scribe for the Padlet wall for each BoR, spokesperson for each BoR to report back to the main room) could expedite the accomplishment of allocated tasks as participants are prepared and ready to work together.
- **Select mediators.** The role and desirable attributes of the BoR mediator as observed throughout the ViVEXELT project are detailed in 'What is the role of the e-CIIC mediator' below. It is also recommended that the VE project leads identify potential participants willing to act as e-CIIC mediators and that as many VE participants as possible are trained as mediators, normally on a volunteering basis.
- **Train mediators.** Briefing/debriefing mediators on tasks/activities in BoRs became an established practice during the ViVEXELT project and ideally mediators should receive a briefing before each main session. Familiarisation with the required tools, software and apps should also be covered to support participants effectively.
- **Share key documents.** Despite using a shared repository (Open Moodle) for documents in ViVEXELT, not all participants were able to access these. Consequently, documents/worksheets/links and other relevant documentation were shared using email/Zoom chat box before BoR sessions. Timely access to the documentation is essential to successful BoR activity and enabling this access is a key consideration for the VE lead. Also, it should not be assumed that participants have accessed the relevant documentation, so each mediator should have all documents at hand before entering the BoR.

4.1.   SAFEGUARDING

The safeguarding of participants was a key consideration throughout the project and VE leads should assess their own contexts and implement any safeguarding measures applicable to their contexts and to those of their VE partners. Some considerations when children are appearing on camera include obtaining parental consent, having at least two adults present, not recording the session and disabling one to one anonymous chat. It is however imperative to consult any national/local regulations or guidelines in this area and in a project like ViVEXELT all partners had to comply with UK-based safeguarding and ethical considerations as the funding body was the British Council. Some useful links on safeguarding are included in Appendix 1.

To maximise the integrity of the Zoom sessions in ViVEXELT, meeting pre-registration links were sent directly to participants who were then asked to register in advance and join the session

later through a link sent automatically by the Zoom platform after registration. In addition to its security benefits (e.g., preventing 'zoom-bombing'[8]), this 'two-pronged' approach also generated a register of potential attendees which was useful for planning BoR configurations and assigning mediators.   Also, the Zoom package used was the institutional one approved at Coventry University.

5.   WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE e-CIIC MEDIATOR?

The proposed role of the e-CIIC mediator is to **mediate interaction and participation** while being aware of **intercultural sensitivities** within the BoR to support completion of tasks set in the main teaching session.

The e-CIIC mediator's aims are to:

- Create a safe, secure and welcoming space conducive to learning.
- Ensure all participants are 'listened to and noticed' (including those not on camera).
- Maximise the use of technological features available, including those features that enable and enhance accessibility (e.g., microphones, cameras, emojis, chat, screen sharing, caption activation).
- Scaffold activities, building them in stages, step by step.
- Manage the allocated time carefully.
- Monitor technology is working/accessible for all participants.
- Facilitate intercultural knowledge-sharing.

While being mindful of:

- Different levels of digital and linguistic proficiency and 'tech anxiety'.
- Technical issues and limitations (e.g., poor Wi-Fi, background noise, participants' settings and constraints).
- Presence of participants operating in different time zones (this may lead to an unwillingness to be on camera e.g., if it is very late and/or there are children at home).
- The 'right to lurk' (some participants might be unwilling to actively participate/contribute for a variety of reasons).
- Not dominating the BoR interaction.
- Providing 'space' for different viewpoints.

And exercising:

- Awareness of and empathy for the perspectives of others (Byram's '*savoirs*', 1997, in the Helm and Guth Figure 1).
- Respect for cultural difference.
- Sensitivity and swift action (e.g., switching of a participant's camera) in relation to safeguarding measures whenever necessary.

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[8] Zoom bombing or Zoom raiding refers to the unwanted, disruptive intrusion, generally by Internet trolls, into a video-conference call.

6. SALMON'S 5-STAGE MODEL

'For online learning to be successful and happy, participants need to be supported through a structured developmental process'[9] (Salmon, 2022). Salmon's five-stage-model is a framework for online interaction and activities that supports participants as they move forward in their online learning journey (see Figure 2 below). The five-stage model stemmed out of online learning and teaching at a time when synchronous classroom interaction was in its infancy, but parallels can be drawn between its stages and those required in a BoR setting. Feedback and participants' reflections were considered and acted upon to develop and refine each ViVEXELT session in participatory action research cycles (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). A sequence of steps was devised to apply to BoRs, under the guidance of a mediator, to maximise success. Tailor-made preparatory BoR mediator training was also delivered following the first cycles of the ViVEXELT course in June-July 2021.

The ViVEXELT mediators found it useful to refer to the steps below, further information is available on Salmon's website.
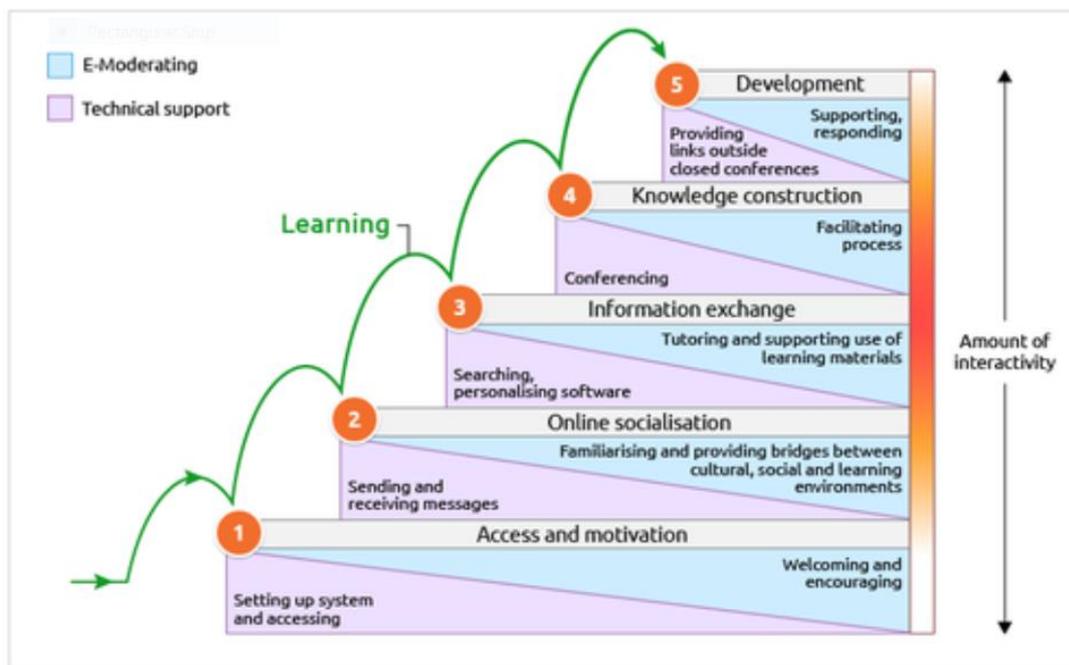

Figure 2 Salmon (2022) The Five Stage Model. Available at:

https://www.gillysalmon.com/five-stage-model.html#:~:text=For%20online%20learning%20to%20be,paced%20programme%20of%20e%2Dtivities

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[9] Quote from Gilly Salmon's 5 stage model at: https://www.gillysalmon.com/five-stage-model.html#:~:text=For%20online%20learning%20to%20be,paced%20programme%20of%20e%2Dtivities.

In the next sections the ViVEXELT team lists the 'BoR Tips and Tricks' that ViVEXELT mediators and 'expert participants'[10] suggested for an optimal use of BoRs.

7. TIPS AND TRICKS FOR BoRs

7.1. BEFORE ENTERING THE BoR

Once participants have been assigned to a BoR, there is no access to the main Zoom meeting area/slides/materials/links; e-CIIC mediators should therefore:

- Ensure they have a clear understanding of any tasks set.
- Ensure they know how much time has been allocated to the task/activity before entering the BoR.
- Have copies of and/or access/links to any essential materials so these can be shared in the BoR.
- Rename themselves (if appropriate) as a 'mediator NAME' (using the 3 dots next to the video camera).
- If the BoR composition has been pre-set, ensure they know what their room is and select it.

7.2. THE FIRST BoR SESSION

7.2.1. SOCIALISATION

Introductions and informal chat should be encouraged to facilitate *'creating a 'safe, secure' and welcoming space conducive to learning'*. Each participant should be invited to contribute whether it be speaking with their camera on/off or responding via the chat feature. Names of participants should be learnt and used (if possible).

It is recommended that some ground rules are set within the BoR environment to help facilitate this including highlighting some of the technological features of Zoom:

- Use the 'raised hand' icon for turn-taking
- Mute/unmute - it is good practice for participants to be muted unless speaking. This cuts out background noise and ensures the best sound quality for the speaker. It might be necessary, on occasions, to mute all participants. In this case it is good practice to tell participants why it was done.
- Demonstrate the chat box feature and encourage the use of this for any participants reluctant to speak.
- Demonstrate the use the 'thumbs up' icon to show agreement or the 'clapping' icon for applause.
- Use the camera being mindful of one's positioning.

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[10] A focus group on BoRs was held on 16/2/2022 and this guide aimed at capturing what both mediators and 'expert participants' suggested during the focus group, after having read the initial draft of this guide that was originally written by mediators only.

- Encourage participants to set their cameras to display a head and shoulders image but avoid insisting on camera, as participants might have valid reasons not to be able to use it (e.g. children in the room, this could be an issue in terms of the UK privacy law, the above mentioned GDPR).

7.2.2. TASK MANAGEMENT IN THE FIRST BoR SESSION

Participants should be reminded of the main task and encouraged to interact and engage by building on the techniques already introduced.

- Use the chat box to share links and/or screen share to ensure everyone can access the materials required.
- Ask for/nominate volunteers for key roles e.g.: a Padlet[11] scribe, a spokesperson to report back to the main session.
- Use open and closed questions to steer the conversation and check understanding.
- Monitor 'turns' and aim for equal length contributions although this will depend on the willingness of participants to engage.
- Check the chat box regularly for written responses and ensure these are integrated into the conversation.

7.3.   SECOND AND SUBSEQUENT SESSIONS

As participants gain confidence in their online environment and working with each other, the mediator should aim to encourage the development of the participants' e- and intercultural competencies:

- Invite some informal chat at the beginning of each session to help participants to feel at ease.
- Introduce further technological features of Zoom e.g., the whiteboard, annotations.
- Ask/nominate participants to screen share their ideas with the group.
- Empower ownership of the task by encouraging interaction between participants and reducing the input from the mediator.
- Encourage participants to share knowledge from their individual contexts.
- Encourage comparisons and reflections on different and/or similar teaching practices and cultures, while at the same time avoiding stereotypes.

8. TROUBLESHOOTING COMMON PROBLEMS IN BoRs:

Working as an e-CIIC mediator can be challenging. There are numerous situations to manage, often simultaneously, and within a short timeframe. Also, critical intercultural incidents can occur. Experience from ViVEXELT showed that BoR interactions for e-CIIC mediators were often different to those anticipated and consequently mediators found themselves multi-tasking from the outset and using creative approaches to achieve positive outcomes. Delegating whenever possible and enlisting the skills and experience of participants in the BoR were seen as key in scaffolding interaction while enabling the mediator to focus on core activities. For example, if one participant had not

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[11] A free online tool used as an online notice board

received/accessed a key document for the task, the mediator could ask another participant to share it rather than themselves, thereby saving time while also involving others.

Below are some suggestions on how to cope in a variety of challenging BoR tasks. All mediators should be given the co-host role, to enable them to carry out some of the actions mentioned below.

8.1.   TECHNOLOGY:

Issue	Possible solutions
Background noise is ruining the sound quality and making it difficult to hear.	Ask participants to mute their microphones. If the above does not work the e-CIIC mediator will need to mute participants.
Participants' microphone not working.	Ask them to respond in the chat box.
Participant is speaking but you can't hear them.	Ask them to unmute. If this does not work, ask them to check their settings and/or volume.
A technical issue persists.	Ask participants to leave the meeting/BoR and then come back in. Alert the tutor in the main room that this has happened as they will need to reallocate the participant to the relevant room.
Participants are 'bounced out' of the breakout room after the task	Warn participants before your stat with the task that this might happen (it will depend on their connection) and tell them to just re-enter the main room and possibly email the tutor in the main room

8.2.   ENVIRONMENT AND TIME MANAGEMENT:

Issue	Possible solutions
No one has their camera on.	Encourage everyone to put their camera on if only to say hello but avoid insisting on this.
Children appear on camera.	Ask the relevant participant to turn their camera off via a private chat message. If they do not do so, turn it off yourself (mediators should be co-hosts).
Participants cannot access worksheets/materials for the BoR tasks.	Share documentation in the chat or email or ask other participants to do this (saves 'mediator' time).
Participants cannot access the digital tool recommended for a task.	The tutor in charge of the session should have checked the accessibility of the tool in specific settings/countries (e.g. Google not accessible in China; Ideaboardz not accessible in the UK). If this still happens provide an alternative/ask other participants to enter the contribution of the participant who does not have access on the

	shared tool on the participant's behalf, ask them to share their screen in the BoR
There is not enough time to do the task.	Try to have a rough 'time management plan' in the BoR – factor in some time to 'sum up' so the group can give some appropriate feedback in the main session.

8.3.   INTERACTION:

Issue	Possible solutions
Participants are reluctant to interact.	Exploit Zoom features to the full and use a range of open and closed questions e.g. Type a closed question in the chat box and ask for responses there. Build confidence in the technology and environment. Follow up by asking open questions and eliciting longer responses. Respond positively to contributions either verbally, in the chat box or using emojis (but make sure emojis mean the same thing in the countries involved in the VE to avoid misunderstandings).
Prolonged non-interaction of a participant.	Avoid drawing attention to non-participation and be inclusive, regardless of whether contributions are made. Some L2 speakers are very conscious of their English, particularly while interacting with L1 speakers both orally and in writing.
The BoR is dominated by one participant.	Be strict with time, nominate and encourage other participants to respond. If necessary, send a carefully worded private chat message to the relevant participant pointing out time constraints.
Many 'black boxes' on screen and no interaction.	Try to keep calm and keep encouraging participation. If the main tutor has set the ground rule that participants should be on camera in BoRs unless they have mitigating circumstances preventing this, remind them of the rule.
Participants do not carry out the task.	Support participants, provide hints, remind them of what is required.
Participants strongly disagree on an answer to a task/question	Sensitively point out that there are various interpretations of the point. If one of the participant's answers is completely wrong, constructively direct them towards the right answer without drawing attention to it if possible.

8.4.   INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING:

There are existing guides for language teachers that address the intercultural dimension of a Virtual Exchange, for example the [Mentoring Handbook for Virtual Exchange Teachers](#) (Gutiérrez et al, 2021) and some intercultural issues have already been covered above. The aspects of interculturality and in particular the Intercultural Communicative Competence features highlighted in Figure 1 by Helm and Guth reproduced above were all relevant to ViVEXELT. Many of these intercultural competences could help with respecting individual differences and approaches in the BoR space in a globalised context, *e.g.,* "an openness to partner teachers' alternative pedagogical beliefs and aims" (O'Dowd, 2013, p. 9).

As ViVEXELT involved teachers from the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors, as well as teachers from an NGO (non-profit organization) in the UK (the Coventry Migrant and Refugee Centre) and private schools in Viet Nam, the intercultural dimension of the project also involved negotiating different specific needs for different educational settings in a variety of different countries, as most of the participants based in the UK were from a variety of nationalities (see footnote 3).

Another point to bear in mind is that most participants in this virtual exchange were students in teacher education, teachers of English or English teacher trainers who were not L1 English speakers, so they were very conscious of their English, particularly when the mediator who was allocated to their room was an L1 English speaker. Their reluctance to speak and/or contribute was partially resolved by offering them to provide contributions in writing on Padlet or other e-tools anonymously, to make them feel more at ease about their input.

One area of intercultural challenge was that of ethics and safeguarding: privacy laws in one country may be less or more strict than those of the other country(ies) involved in a VE. Mediators should set ground rules in this respect to make sure participants are aware of the 'dos' and 'don'ts' of online ethical presence (e.g., children coming on camera).

Another area of intercultural interest was that of the country-specific traditions in relations to ELT approaches: these can be very varied and might be dictated by government policies. It is important to listen to each other, share knowledge, if possible apply best shared practice. Respect for the opinions and ideas of others was of fundamental importance in the ViVEXELT BoRs, where task activities often involved the sharing of individual, professional and context-specific teaching beliefs and approaches.

A way in which intercultural knowledge was successfully discussed and explored was the cross-sectional creation of online lesson plans based on the [United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals](#). The lesson plans enabled participants to engage with both local and global themes in a comparative intercultural way and the task stimulated numerous student-centred 'spin offs' (e.g.: videos, blogs and posters, see https://vivexelt.com/resources/ and https://www.facebook.com/groups/savingwaterproject.sdg6/?ref=share).

The following recommendations could help with 'respecting difference':

- Facilitate and mediate in the most neutral way possible.

- Try not to make assumptions.

- Be aware that politeness strategies vary in different countries and you could be misunderstood.

- Be warned that emojis are used in different ways in different countries, use them with caution.

- Be aware of individual sensitivities around language proficiency in written or spoken media.

- Utilise a variety of ways for individuals to engage with content (e.g., Padlet, chat forum, verbally on camera).

Finally, setting ground rules in a BoR can also help with minimising intercultural critical incidents.

9. ACCESSIBILITY

Teaching and learning in online environments can be very demanding in terms of cognitive load. Short breaks of 5-10 minutes were included during the sessions. The transcription capture was also activated for accessibility purposes and speakers were asked to be on camera while speaking.

Other accessibility measures included the colour scheme on the Power Point presentations and on the Padlet walls and the choice of font for the materials (Arial).

10. CONCLUSION

This guide was written with the intention of providing a practical and informative resource for mediators in BoRs. The project website https://vivexelt.com/ is a further source of tips, information and ideas for both mediators and VE leads. The ViVEXELT team welcomes suggestions from the readers of this guide, that they view as a 'live' and evolving document[12].

11. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank all participants who took part in ViVEXELT and the British Council Viet Nam staff who supported the project throughout its duration, Mr David Guarini Gilmartin and Ms Nga Le in particular.

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[12] Email Marina Orsini-Jones on m.orsini@coventry.ac.uk if interested in contributing to this guide

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APPENDIX – USEFUL SAFEGUARDING WEBSITES

NSPCC Undertaking Remote Teaching Safely

NSPCC E-safety for Schools

NSPCC Hosting Live Streaming Sessions

NSPCC Use of social media and how to Safeguard Children

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