



ONLINE INTERCULTURAL MEETING BETWEEN RURAL COMMUNITIES OF COLOMBIA AND GUATEMALA

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Abstract

This research focused on the interpretation of meanings, explanation of needs, entrepreneurship and description of events. Rural communities from Colombia and Guatemala participated in the research through an online intercultural encounter. Communication and exchanges were fostered between farmers distanced from the cities and with difficulties accessing relationships with other cultural communities. Meetings were held before the online meeting in each country, and the communities were convened to explain their participation in the project. These virtual meetings were recorded by recording. The research was defined within Garfinkel's perspective of ethnography as a perspective that allows for observing and interpreting events in everyday life.^[1] It was possible to establish that the digital gaps are evident. Participants are unaware of ways to access online or virtual technical assistance to improve their crops. The needs of the communities are similar in aspects such as access routes and product marketing. In the Colombian community, greater participation of women in the family economy was observed.

Keywords: Interculturality, online meeting, rural community, history.

RESUMEN

El propósito de esta investigación se centró en la interpretación de los sentidos, explicación de las necesidades, emprendimiento y descripción de acontecimientos. En la investigación participaron comunidades rurales de Colombia y Guatemala a través de un encuentro intercultural online. Se propició la comunicación y los intercambios entre campesinos distanciados de las urbes y con dificultades para acceder a relacionarse con otras comunidades culturales. Se realizaron reuniones previas al encuentro online en cada uno de los países y se procedió a convocar a las comunidades para explicar su participación en el proyecto. Estos encuentros virtuales se registraron mediante grabación. La investigación se definió dentro la perspectiva de etnografía de Garfinkel, como una perspectiva que permite la observación e interpretación de acontecimientos de la vida cotidiana^[1]. Se pudo establecer que las brechas digitales son evidentes. Los participantes desconocen formas de acceder a asistencia técnica online o virtual para mejorar sus cultivos. Las necesidades de las comunidades son similares en aspectos como vías de acceso y comercialización de productos. En la comunidad colombiana se observó mayor participación de las mujeres en la economía familiar.

Palabras clave: Interculturalidad, encuentro online, comunidad rural, historia

RESUMO

Esta pesquisa teve como foco a interpretação dos sentidos, a explicação das necessidades, o empreendedorismo e descrição de eventos, das comunidades rurais da Colômbia e da Guatemala, participantes de um encontro intercultural online. A comunicação e o intercâmbio foram promovidos

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entre camponeses distantes das cidades e com dificuldades de acesso a outras comunidades culturais. Foram realizadas reuniões prévias ao encontro on-line, em cada um dos países, e as comunidades foram convocadas para explicar sua participação no projeto; esses encontros virtuais foram gravados. A pesquisa foi definida na perspectiva etnográfica de Garfinkel, como uma perspectiva que permite a observação e interpretação de eventos da vida cotidiana^[3]. Pode-se notar que as lacunas digitais são evidentes, os participantes não sabem como acessar a assistência técnica online ou virtual para melhorar suas plantações, as necessidades das comunidades são semelhantes em aspectos como vias de acesso e comercialização de produtos; na comunidade colombiana observou-se maior participação das mulheres na economia familiar.

Palavras-chave: Interculturalidade, encontro online, comunidade rural, história.

INTRODUCTION

This research is based on the progress of the new information and communication technologies, which, through simultaneous gauging, make it possible to close the digital gap in communities, especially in Latin America, where it has recently worsened.

It is known that computer resources have great coverage for communication, thus transcending that centered merely on writing; nowadays, it can converse while simultaneously seeing each other¹. Today, individuals and groups have the possibility of this social interaction in networks. However, it must be recognized that there are social groups for whom this is not possible due, among other reasons, to their purchasing power or remoteness from large cities, which leads to a limitation in accessing intercultural communications.

With the introduction or implementation of ICTs, it has been noted that digital gaps have a direct relationship with the level of development of the regions; thus, in Europe, the connectivity gap is 74.4%, while in Africa, it reaches 12.8%. These data show that “there are significant gaps between regions, countries and, of course, between the inhabitants of each of these, it marks a crack that can have a strong negative impact on the quality of life of many of the inhabitants of the latter continent” (Digital Citizenship, 2018, p. 3).⁴

This digital divide is added to other deficiencies of rural populations in South America and the Caribbean, which by 2021 will have 667 million inhabitants (World Bank, 2021), whose basic needs for food, food, and health, among others, are unsatisfied, so that access to a digital platform is far from being a reality; therefore, much of the population is far from globalization.

In this regard, it is noteworthy that, from the UNDP reports in 2014, attention is drawn to the existence of a “very high proportion” of Latin Americans at risk of seeing their welfare severely affected if a crisis were to occur (health, economic) since their income is between 4 to 10 dollars a day, which makes them a vulnerable population, the population proportion for the date was 38% which would mean more than a third of the regional population, It also refers that those who are vulnerable to an economic and health crisis are not only the rural poor, but also informal workers who have historically been socially excluded, because they have limited capacities, among other things due to the scarce access to knowledge and online media, which excludes them from the possibilities for personal and community development, and consequently they have little empowerment⁵. Moreover, as MaliK (2014) UNDP Administrator refers to “addressing vulnerabilities will enable all people to participate in development gains, thus making human development increasingly equitable and sustainable” (p. 21).

Digital divides have worsened in today’s societies from the social, economic and cultural points of view. Countless populations that are far from the big cities build their life alternatives, ignoring the diversity of opportunities for their lives; because of the conditions of their environment, they are separated from global events or those that occur in big cities; they are distanced from access to new

⁴ “Fostering Interculturality and Bridging Social Gaps” Digital Citizenship, 2018, Accessed March 26, 2020, <http://tecnologias.org/docentes/oportunidades-de-las-tic/favorecer-la-interculturalidad-y-disminuir-brechas-sociales/>.

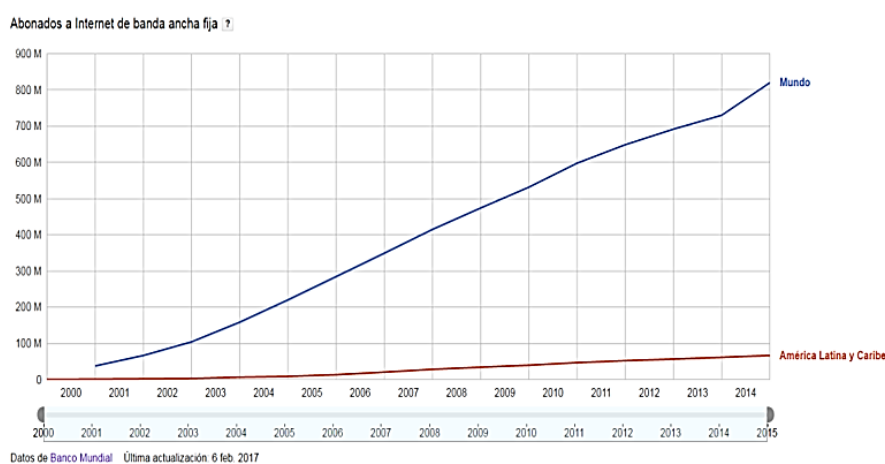
⁵ “One-third of Latin Americans at risk of poverty, says UNDP,” United Nations Development Programme UNDP, 2014, Accessed May 20, 2020, <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/es/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2014/08/26/un-tercio-de-los-latinoamericanos-en-riesgo-de-caer-en-la-pobreza-dice-el-pnud.html>.

conditions as the benefits offered by computer networks and their connections, that is, there is the digital divide.

However, it is necessary to recognize that most of these remote areas, many of them rural, have access to mass media such as television and cell phones; technologies that allow rural people to learn about the news and events of their nearby areas and their countries of origin, therefore, it would be foolish to assume that these people are unaware of any event in the global world. Therefore, this research could be called to investigate the representations and imaginaries that villagers have formed with access to television news and communication with others at great distances, but being far from educational centers for the specialization of knowledge and other ways to improve their daily living conditions.

A recent report reveals that globally in Latin America and the Caribbean (Martinez, 2020), there has been an increase in the use of the Internet in the urban population; this may be due to the great usefulness in formal and non-formal educational processes for both individuals and communities⁶ (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Fixed broadband Internet subscribers⁷



Source: World Bank.

Given the advance in technologies and their capacity, as in the case of videoconferencing and video meetings, resources to which only large organizations such as companies and universities have access, it is necessary to broaden their horizon of socialization. Today, with an adequate internet connection, a video bean, and a laptop, these meetings would be possible for those who have been unknown to them.

It is necessary to keep in mind that there is a diversity of populations far from the large urban centers, who are left only with information from mass media such as television and cell phones, technologies that allow them to learn about news and events, but not to access or interact with other people or communities in order to develop economic projects or integrate technologies to their daily work, as well as to participate in new school or trade learning. In other words, there is a digital divide between rural and urban areas; however, it would be foolish to assume that these people are unaware of any event in the global world.

On the one hand, this research is oriented to recognize how the representations and imaginaries that farmers have formed with access to television news and communication with others at great

⁶ "Fixed Broadband Internet Subscribers," World Bank, 2017, Accessed May 20, 2020, <https://datos.bancomundial.org/indicador>.

⁷ Figure 1, Fixed broadband Internet subscribers, World Bank 2017.

Note: Fixed broadband Internet subscribers are the number of broadband subscribers with a digital subscriber line, cable modem or any other high-speed technology.



distances, but being far from educational centers, which offer knowledge in various disciplines and knowledge.

Furthermore, on the other hand, it intends to provide opportunities for encounters between equals, in this case, rural people from different countries who, through online debates, can be proactive, transform their worldviews and meanings in their habitats, and generate recognition of self-worth, self-esteem and new competencies to face the challenges posed by these realities integrated into global flows. These intentions are only located in the place of hypothetical assumptions.

Interculturality

It is a term whose origins refer to the concept of culture; its definition is complex and involves a diversity of theoretical perspectives, so that both interculturality and culture (Zúñiga, 1997)⁸, rather than an operative definition of each of them, essential elements that involve these conceptions are considered.

The term culture has given rise to many interpretations, and there are still ‘theories of culture’ that come from various disciplines such as anthropology, communication and sociology, among others. However, given the purposes of this research, the concept of culture is taken as a preamble to that of interculturality and is observed from two nuclear perspectives. The first was from the anthropologist Clifford Geertz and the second was from the Latin American thinker García Canclini. The anthropologist Geertz proposes dynamic concepts regarding culture instead of static conceptions of it. Culture is understood within socially established structures of meaning; as a system composed of symbols and meaning commonly shared to manifest worldviews, feelings and thoughts; structures from which people generate behaviors imply understanding the value and meaning of things. “To consider the symbolic dimensions of social action - art, religion, ideology, science, law, morality, common sense - is not to turn away from the existential problems of life to some empirical realm of forms devoid of emotion; on the contrary, it is to immerse oneself during such problems. The essential vocation of interpretive anthropology is not to answer the deepest questions, but to give access to answers given by others” (Geertz, 2003, p. 40).⁹

On the other hand, for Garcia, the Latin American thinker who characterizes the phenomena of the hybridization of cultures; the migratory processes have been different from the European ones and the populations have a high indigenous component but have been highly influenced by foreign interventions of European and North American origins; individuals generate their own and diverse cultures. He comments that there are so many definitions of culture that at the time of his writing of *Hybrid Cultures for Latin America*, he found more than 340; there are many definitions, depending on who issues them and the scope to which they refer.¹⁰

The interculturality constructor intends to horizontally and synergistically describe the interactions between two or more cultures; it includes diversity, cultural, political and economic hegemony of countries and regions, communicative difficulties such as language, integrationist policies of the States, but also includes conditions that in many occasions become problematic such as social classes, excluding economic regimes hegemonically sustained by discriminatory ideologies, which promote ignorance among cultural groups.

Interculturality as a guiding principle also orients social processes that attempt to build based on the recognition of the right to diversity Granja, D. O. (2015) against discriminatory tendencies and social inequality, but in search of dialogic and equitable relationships between culturally different individuals. To understand how cultural transformations occur from the change in mentality, in the way of perceiving the other and the environment, in the collective imaginary, from cultural data different from their own. These experiences are expected to contribute to the generation of new knowledge and the integration of cultures for peace.

⁸ Madeleine Zúñiga and Juan Ansión, *Interculturalidad y educación en el Perú* (Lima: Lecturas Complementarias. Facultad de Educación de la Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia, 1997), 6-9.

⁹ James Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Barcelona: Gedisa, 2003), 40.

¹⁰ Néstor García Canclini, *Diferentes, Desiguales y Desconectados, Mapas de la Interculturalidad* (Barcelona: Gedisa, 2004).



It is possible that, with the growth of broadband, there are encounters between these cultures, which means exchanges of signs and symbols, but in the community, they are conducive to building knowledge in group work in interaction with information networks.

The encounters between different cultures through online media are an opportunity to manifest an educational ideal supported by the mediation of new networks of high connectivity. Martín (2015). Bringing these networks to different social scenarios (example: WiMax networks) allows synchronous communication through videoconferencing that facilitates debate and knowledge among members who share particular affinities (agriculture, art and education).

In order to understand this modality of encounters, it is necessary to refer to what has been said about culture and interculturality; these concepts will form the basis of the research, from which it is expected that theoretical constructs will emerge to support the basic formulations of this study.

The Ágora Informática

The metaphor of the Agora, as a democratic principle, originated in Athenian culture as an instance for public participation and a decision-making model for governments; it provides an open space for free expression, dialogic exchange and conflict resolution within a community. Romero (2006). The metaphor of the Agora, as a possibility for public participation and decision-making, is conducive to cementing the acts of communication of its collective social practice.

Habermas uses this metaphor to propose his theory of “the public sphere” as the essential assembly space for a community’s debate, decision-making, and conflict resolution¹¹. This theory has been appropriated by the promoters of information and communication technologies as an opportunity to create communicative actions and dialogue. The metaphor of “The informatics public sphere”, in the democratic scenario and using communication networks, aims to generate the situation of assembly and public debate. In this sense, researchers such as (Dahlberg, 2001; Gimmler, 2001; Morganti 2000 and Winocur, 2001), members of the information society and democracy have coined the term to decipher how citizens communicate through the Internet, form groups and create debates to participate in public issues.

Sassi, based on the approach proposed by Habermas, sees the Internet as a new political tool. He recognizes how, thanks to the network, political and social changes are taking place as a mechanism through which citizens can express their opinions and debate politically¹². This condition is part of the transformations of modern society. In his paper ‘Toward the Virtual Public Sphere’, Morganti also argues that the Internet is undoubtedly a rapid means of communication that is widely disseminated in society¹³. This reflection focuses on the possibilities that cyberspace on the Internet can represent and generate new instances of public debate. The author accepts that this environment is constituted as an electronic and virtual public sphere, where democratic debate is renewed, values that take place in the connectivity between citizens.

Likewise, Schneider considered that the change in the forms of communication offers this possibility. The author proposes to differentiate the conditions of communications with extensive, homogeneous and undifferentiated transactions for others that are heterogeneous, distinguishable and identifiable for their participants (referring to the possibility of personalized communications)¹⁴.

In the same vein, Dahlberg compared online discourses from the perspective of interpreting the public sphere. He reported how research related to online interactions revealed limiting factors for online expansion. It also controlled intervening factors in its hypotheses, such as marginalization by commercial sites, virtual communities of common interest and political practices of liberal individualism.¹⁵ The research concluded that expanding the public sphere through the Internet

¹¹ Jürgen Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action* (Madrid: Taurus, 1987).

¹² Sinikka Sassi, “The Transformation of the Public Sphere?” , in : *New Media and Politics*, Axford, Barrie, & Huggins, Richard (Eds), (London: Sage, 2001), 89-108.

¹³ Luciano Morganti, “Toward the Virtual Public Sphere,” *Ethiek-and-Maatschappij* 3, no. 4 (2000): 6-35.

¹⁴ Steven Schneider, “Creating a democratic public sphere through political discussion: a case study of abortion conversation on the Internet,” *Social Science Computer Review* 14, no. 4 (1996): 373-393.

¹⁵ Lincoln Dahlberg, “Democracy via cyberspace: Mapping the rhetorics and practices of three prominent camps.” *New media & society* 3, no.2 (2001): 157-177. doi: 10.1177/1461444440122226038.



requires not only deliberative spaces but also that these be transformed into attractive centers for citizen participation.

In this *Ágora Informática*, as Derridá proposed, the idea is to pay attention to the roots, to read the premises on which the transformations have been based and, from there, to present the ideas for the new approaches.¹⁶

With the support of ICTs, communicative activities can articulate the differences between its members, not only of this community but those cooked in the intimacy of any human community. What was insurmountable in the relations between its inhabitants is now losing its value when other research has shown that, in the tool of ICT-mediated forums, how indiscriminately people can integrate in favor of a common goal.

In this regard, Dahlberg states that the public sphere through the Internet requires not only deliberative spaces but also that these become attractive centers for citizen participation¹⁷. Hence, establishing other scenarios for interaction and public life can recover the democratic spirit and renew public awareness.

State of the art: Digital Divide

The problem of the Digital Divide and the lack of knowledge in rural areas about the inclusion of “Information and Communication Technologies” (ICT) is not only a matter of Latin America; it is a condition that affects several countries in Europe as well as in Australia, as presented below.

Research by Hodge *et al.* was conducted in rural settings to identify how service providers and intermediaries were connected in a system of Internet use for service access.¹⁸

The researchers focused on two main lines: connectivity and inclusion. Regarding connectivity, the authors explain how there are persistent and growing differences in the quality of data infrastructure between urban and rural areas. They comment on how policies should be oriented towards the availability or improvement of data infrastructure, which is currently outdated and requires a broadening of market conditions to improve conditions in the sector.

For inclusion, Salemink *et al.* propose that poor connectivity has hindered the use of technologies, which is why the average levels of education and technological skills in rural areas are low and have a negative impact on the adoption and use of these technologies.¹⁹ In addition, policies for rural areas neglect specific local needs, which becomes a paradox given that rural communities are the most in need of support to improve their living conditions.

The study analyzed data from interviews with older residents and locally based public and community service providers. Service providers included health services, financial services, information and education agencies, local government, sports and recreation groups, and local voluntary organizations.

Social network analysis (SNA) was also applied to people’s Internet use. This methodology made it possible to visualize the levels of connectivity and conformation of communication structures in web spaces; this technique was used with the service, providers and intermediaries connected through the Internet. The authors conclude that in the network analytics dominated economic thinking, the urban market approach is considered a contextual fact when talking about the rural position, as in the case of subsidies, which highlight the urban-rural divide.

Park presents a study conducted in rural areas, and the author states how entry into the digital society in rural Australia continues to be disadvantageous. As ICT penetration increases in Australia’s

¹⁶Jacques Derridá, *La desconstrucción en las fronteras de la filosofía* (Barcelona: Paidós, 1989).

¹⁷ Dahlberg, “Democracy via cyberspace: Mapping the rhetorics and practices of three prominent camps,” 157-177.

¹⁸ Heidi Hodge, Doris Carson, Dean Carson, Lareen Newman, and Jaime Garrett. “Using Internet technologies in rural communities to access services: The views of older people and service providers,” *Journal of Rural Studies* 54, (2017): 469-478 doi:10.1016/j.jrurstud.2016.06.016.

¹⁹ Koen Salemink, Dirk Strijker, and Gary Bosworth. “Development in the digital age: A systematic literature review on unequal ICT availability, adoption, and use in rural areas,” *Journal of Rural Studies* 54 (2015): 360-371 doi:10.1016/j.jrurstud.2015.09.001.



urban population, there is a need to examine the deep-seated digital divide and how it is intertwined with issues of social exclusion in rural communities.²⁰

This study focused on remoteness in digital exclusion and investigated its relationship with other dimensions of social exclusion. The data analysis revealed how the digital divide was aggravated by other sociodemographic factors such as educational levels and employment status. Therefore, supply (infrastructure) and demand (education levels, industry sector, employment opportunities, socio-demographics) must be considered when implementing digital inclusion strategies.

Similarly, Park concludes regarding rural areas, confirming that remote areas have significantly lower Internet and broadband penetration, a condition aggravated by low educational levels, higher median age, higher indigenous population, and less wired rural city dwellings compared to suburban areas. However, not only is there an infrastructure gap between urban and non-urban areas, but there is also an adoption gap that characterizes these populations, which concludes in poor conditions about other aspects of quality of life such as low income, lack of education and widespread poverty.²¹

On the other hand, Saleminck *et al.* reviewed studies of 157 documents on digital developments in rural areas in so-called advanced countries.²² These authors' intention focused on understanding this sector's conditions and reviewing them to improve them in other countries and places, emphasizing two lines of research, connectivity and research for inclusion.

Regarding connectivity, they refer to the persistent and growing differences in the quality of data infrastructure between urban and rural areas. Likewise, as in the previous case, they recommend how public policies need to focus on improving data infrastructure.

In terms of inclusion, the low levels of education and skills in rural areas negatively impact the adoption and use of these technologies, thus boosting productive activities. The paradox is that rural communities are the most in need of improved digital connectivity to compensate for their remoteness, but the reality is that they are less connected and, therefore, less included.

In summary, these studies have dealt with two fundamental problems: first, those of infrastructure and connectivity, and second, those related to the education and skills of people in rural areas. They also commented that these are goals that governments should propose to provide more significant opportunities to the rural sectors, with the motivation that they can be included in the large markets and improve their living conditions.

State of the art: Interculturality

The concern for interculturality, when it occurs with the mediation of ICTs, is one of the facts of human behavior that are present today with the entry of information networks in everyday life. It is evident that the new applications, conducive to interaction, have favored the interconnection and interactivity between people from diverse spaces with differential cultural characteristics.

In the face of these new developments, reflection returns to the paths of interculturality, but this time to recognize the particularities and developments of this exchange between cultures through digital media. Today, research experiences and Web portals exclusively oriented to intercultural work through online mediation are presented.

About Web portals: the *Intercultural Classroom*, an educational portal oriented to Intercultural activities, as its name suggests, is dedicated to activities where users are allowed to do different activities.²³ At the time of this consultation, 36 tabs are presented, whose links allow various opportunities for users to include documents, multimedia such as videos, and users' work. In addition, there are specific spaces for boys and girls, by language, by gender, by country, by educational level, specific for teachers and students. Therefore, this portal represents an excellent opportunity for intercultural studies.

²⁰ Sora Park, "Digital inequalities in rural Australia: A double jeopardy of remoteness and social exclusion" *Journal of Rural Studies* 54, (2017): 399-407. doi: 10.1016/j.jrurstud.2015.12.018 0743-0167.

²¹ Park, "Digital inequalities in rural Australia: A double jeopardy of remoteness and social exclusion," 6.

²² Saleminck, "Development in the digital age: A systematic literature review on unequal ICT availability, adoption, and use in rural areas," 360-371.

²³ "Tic and Social Networks," Intercultural Classroom, 2014, Accessed May 20, 2020, <https://aulaintercultural.org/comunicacion-2/tic-y-redes-sociales/>.



Another portal is *Interculturality and Technological Resources*, which presents a series of activities that can be carried out to interact with each other.²⁴ It is pretty conceptual, but at the same time, it provides novel ideas for intercultural activities, and this Web portal also allows for writing and submitting contributions.

The Digital Citizenship website states in its content that new technologies have positively affected many citizens. ICTs, when accessible in different spaces and countries, implies the possibility of communication between people from a variety of distant places. On the Internet, media tools such as social networks and technological devices favor contact and communication, shortening distance and time.

These technological options allow a diversity of people, including children, belonging to different cultures and geographic territories, both nationally and internationally, to share with their peers and exchange knowledge, information, points of view, and in general, their daily lives, accepting each other as digital citizens, offering and receiving knowledge and valuable experiences.

ICTs contribute to the enrichment of interpersonal relationships, their diversification, the shortening of distance and time for interactions, and the reduction of social gaps. In this sense, it is proposed that economically disadvantaged children and young people have the possibility of accessing the Internet and technological devices through educational programs proposed by governments, which donate computers to them. This gives them the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of ICTs, thus opening up future opportunities for their communities' personal and social development.

Particularly in classroom experiences, Mazuecos Quintanilla implemented several game strategies to encourage participation and ICTs did it as a game with collaborative tools that facilitated interactive participation²⁵ in a Madrid school that houses a high proportion of foreign children. In addition, these strategies fostered coexistence and integration of the various cultures that converge there.

Sánchez, using the design of a didactic strategy that included planning, intervention and evaluation, with continuous interactivity and technological mediation,²⁶ analyzed intercultural education in English. They used Glogster digital murals with the pedagogical assumption of collaborative learning, so students will act interdependently in completing tasks.

On the other hand, Leivay and Ameta reflect on the potential of ICTs to facilitate interculturality in schools²⁷. To this end, the proposal reflexively explores theoretical and practical aspects that have taken place in virtual learning environments in which interculturality is favored within some educational centers. From this, an interest in interacting culturally and educationally through virtual platforms and social networks is evidenced.

Reflection texts, such as the one mentioned above, present their analysis based on critical pedagogy, highlighting the need to integrate and generate innovative pedagogical anagrams that promote social change in the contemporary educational environment from a perspective of digiculturality means taking advantage of interculturality through ICTs. Thus, digiculturality is presented as an emerging trend for a more humane and inclusive virtual education, showing the need to promote intercultural competencies as essential elements of virtual interactions in a society in permanent social and technological change.

Fernández set out to analyze the effect of the use of ICT tools in the classroom on linguistic immersion in Gijón.²⁸ The innovative aspect of this research lies in specifying how the affective

²⁴ "Interculturality and ICTS," *Interculturality and Technology Resources*, 2014, Accessed May 20, 2020, <https://aulaintercultural1.wordpress.com/>.

²⁵ Eva Pilar Mazuecos Quintanilla. "Interculturalidad y TIC en un aula de tercero de Educación Infantil" (Undergraduate thesis, Universidad Internacional de La Rioja Facultad de Educación, 2012), 48.

²⁶ Ruth Sánchez Roldán. "Intercultural education through the use of ICT. Creation of a digital mural (glogster) in the English classroom" (Undergraduate thesis, University of Valladolid University School of Education of Palencia, 2013), 76.

²⁷ Juan José Leiva Olivencia and Estefanía Almenta López. "The "digiculturality" or interculturality through ICT: an emerging trend of humanizing e-learning." *Scientific electronic journal of Education and Communication in the Knowledge Society* 13. No.1 (2013). <http://eticanet.org/revista/index.php/eticanet/article/view/15/17>

²⁸ Fernández Valdés Esther Lloret. *ICT in the ELE classroom. Interculturality and affective development. Propuesta de una Unidad Didáctica TIC para un aula de enseñanza de ELE afectivamente eficaz* (Madrid: Universidad Internacional Menéndez Pelayo, 2007).



component makes the affective-effective teaching-learning process possible. The communicative approach through ICT centered on the student, where his or her performance consists of being the constructor and responsible for his or her learning. The Internet allows the creation of a learning community in which the “intercultural” element is in force. Materials for the acquisition of linguistic and cultural contents were proposed through the network. Emphasis was placed on inter-nautical communication and how meaning was negotiated between multicultural groups, mediated by ICTs. The didactic activities were programmed with ICT tools. The information was presented through applications such as PowerPoint and selected web pages from which the students should carry out a search, the conclusions to be published in the classroom blog. Facilitating and reinforcing activities created with the *Hot Potatoes* program were also suggested.

The studies above concern implementing activities that bring together diverse cultures through interactive computer media. The factors involved in these intercultural activities, the changes, difficulties and benefits of these exchanges are studied. Education has been one of those favored by these intercultural activities; from these results, web portals and new proposals are generated to promote intercultural educational action.

It is also recognized that these computer media have increased their communicative capacity; now, people can communicate in addition to the written text through the so-called videoconferencing, where they can talk and see each other simultaneously, and it is possible for individuals or groups.

This research aims to facilitate communication and exchange between rural people who are far from urban centers and without access to intercultural communication options. In this communicative space, people can dialogue and see each other at a distance. On the other hand, in the face of the evident digital divides. This study aims to provide an opportunity for exchange with meetings mediated by online video meetings between people living in rural areas, originally from Colombia and Guatemala, to recognize aspects such as interpretive skills in the face of their realities and factors of personal and group recognition such as self-worth. With this research experience, it is expected to initiate a series of projects that lead to sharing of knowledge and experiences among these rural communities.

Research Problem

What are the events, explanations and meanings shared in the interaction between rural communities in Guatemala and Colombia in online encounters?

Objectives

General Objective.

Interpreting the meanings, explanation of needs, entrepreneurship and description of events of rural communities from Colombia and Guatemala, participants in an online intercultural encounter.

Specific Objectives.

To provide people with minimal access to the Internet with the possibility of learning about these technologies for their personal and community benefit.

Contribute to reducing digital divides among the communities participating in the project.

To know the meanings that peasant subjects assign to their reality, their interpretation, and actions they have undertaken and to detect the explanations for the events that have determined their way of living.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Type of Research

Unlike other types of research in the Social Sciences, which have sought to study the objective reality of the social event, *ethnomethodology* is installed in everyday life events, as Garfinkel stated²⁹. It is a knowledge of everyday affairs that can be revealed through practical reasoning. Ethnomethodological studies make it possible to study everyday activities firsthand through their actors so that they can be “explainable” and reportable.³⁰

²⁹ Garfinkel, “Estudios en Etnometodología Traducción Universidad UNAM”, 20.

³⁰ Garfinkel, “Estudios en Etnometodología Traducción Universidad UNAM”, 10-34.



Thus, the ordinary activities carried out by people become, from this perspective, ways of analyzing the tasks and practical situations, and an attempt is made to understand the common sense contained in social arrangements.

From this perspective, Ethnomethodology is considered pertinent for this research since the analysis to be carried out of the dialogue between peasants in two countries in America (Guatemala and Colombia) must focus on the search for meanings that peasant subjects assign to their reality, their interpretation, actions they have undertaken and detect the explanations to the events that have determined their way of life.

Ethnomethodology allows for firsthand knowledge of the experiences lived by the participants, at the same time that it favors the knowledge of new knowledge. It highlights the leading role of the knowledge of those participating in the research process. In terms of Ten Have, “... *is a type of research whose epistemological approach focuses on the look at real-life events, people’s behaviors and especially how they approach the facts of logic in these real-life situations*”³¹. In line with the above, for Garfinkel, ethnomethodology is helpful because it gathers “the data in its original purity, it maintains the freshness of the story lived” by the actors (pg 18).³²

Participants

Participants were divided into two groups; one made up of 10 farmers from the central rural area of the department of Boyacá and the other of 10 farmers from the rural area of Santa Rosa, Guatemala. The inclusion criteria were: to be a Colombian or Guatemalan citizen, as appropriate; always having been an inhabitant of a rural area; being able to read and write; being between 20 and 40 years of age; signing the informed consent form. The criteria for non-participation were: having difficulties in expressive language; having physical limitations that prevent their displacement; having some intellectual disability, and not having signed the informed consent.

Research Categories

The categories of qualitative research observation included two alternatives: some emanated from the theories proposed in the study or deductive categories; the second, emerging categories or those that emanated spontaneously from the concepts gathered with the instruments used. The *emerging categories will be specified in the results section*. They will be observed below.

Deductive categories

- a) *Propositions*: All expressions that imply the intention to improve, modify or change for the program proposed in this research (broadband dialogue).
- b) *Senses of Habitats*: Participation allows members to express new ways of modifying or reaffirming living conditions.
- c) *Self-worth*: The recognition of their strengths and capabilities.
- d) *New interpretive skills*: Expressions that argue the program's benefit.

Stages of the study

- a) *Preliminary stage*: Contacting the government agencies that support the program (presentation of the proposal) and assigning project managers in the two countries Guatemala and Colombia.
- b) *Information and Training Stage*. It was necessary to select a group of collaborators to support the project, select and contact the participants, and raise awareness of the participants through two personal meetings with each community, two in Guatemala and two in Colombia.
- c) *Program implementation stage* Responsible persons were appointed in each of the countries.
- d) *Collection and analysis stage*: In this stage, the information was collected and analyzed, the final report was prepared, and the results were disseminated.

Scope and Limitations

The results are input for understanding the reality of rural communities in Colombia and Guatemala; although they cannot be generalized, they provide a glimpse of a lifestyle and socio-cultural conditions.

³¹ Paul Have, *Understanding qualitative research and ethnomethodology* (London: Sage, 2004).

³² Garfinkel, “Estudios en Etnometodología Traducción Universidad UNAM”, 20.



Ethical Considerations

During the development of the present study, all the ethical conditions that govern the practice of psychology, law 1090, were contemplated. Likewise, each participant was informed of the research's objective, scope and effects and the possibility of not participating if deemed necessary. All this was expressed in the informed consent they signed at the beginning of the sessions.

RESULTS

Two types of categories are presented below in this qualitative research: *First*: the deductive ones emanating from the intention of the study and with theoretical support; *Second*: corresponding to the emergent categories or those that followed from the same situation investigated, that is, from the concepts of the participants in the two rural communities of Guatemala and Colombia.

- **Proposals**

All expressions imply the intention to improve, modify or change the program proposed in this research (broadband dialogue). It is expected that this criterion with the proposed evaluation can be further codified in the second and final meeting of this project. Previous comments were as follows: In the *considerations* item, Guatemalan farmers were expressly asked about the encounter with Colombia and vice versa, Guatemalan farmers were asked about their expectations of Colombian people, and comments such as the following were identified (Annex 1):

- a) Expectations of learning from the other country about agriculture, Aspects of daily life such as cooking, In the exchange to know how people live in Colombia and tell them how to live in Guatemala. That they can buy our grains so they can get to know them.
- b) Expectations of learning about work processes and aspects of daily life. Expectations of increasing the commercialization of products.

- **Habitats Senses**

Participation allowed the members to express new ways of modifying or reaffirming their living conditions, as was widely observed in the visit to Guatemala, where communication with the farmers significantly impacts the collaboration in each community.

In Guatemala, a strong collaboration between families was observed; they are dedicated to simple and localized crops, such as medicinal plants and milpa (a type of cereal). However, there are fundamental difficulties for agricultural production because there are few water sources. On the other hand, in Colombia, it was observed that the women artisans of Macramé also show solidarity in their work and a desire to market their handmade products, and, similar to Guatemala, they report the existence of home plots where they plant vegetables in order to increase their income.

- **Self-worth. Recognition of strengths and capabilities**

These are different situations in the two cultural spaces. However, self-validation was present in both places. It was more recognition of their work efforts and a broad desire for self-improvement. In Guatemala, a case of a peasant farmer who fought for the land reached international organizations and after many national and international struggles in Spain, Belgium, Geneva, Switzerland and Canada, the public prosecutor's office paid attention, although they criminalized them. The government recovered the parcel of land, and the workers were taken into account with a house. Recognition of their leadership for the recovery of their land. Achievements in jobs such as cattle ranching. Specific case.

In Colombia, craftswomen recognize that their manual work is adequately elaborated. They identify as a strength because they can combine different agricultural activities with handicrafts and household work, the ability to generate additional resources to improve their living conditions.

- ***New interpretive skills, and expressions that argue the benefit of the program.***

Both populations expressed interest in participating in this interactive activity of mutual knowledge. They saw it as essential to communicate with another country, to look as in their words: to see how others live and think, which means an intercultural change.

They expressed their interests in agriculture and aspects of daily life such as cooking. They shared how people lived in Colombia and told them how people live in Guatemala.



- **Emerging categories**

The concepts given in each meeting were analyzed, the respective minutes were prepared, and detailed transcription of all the events had been previously made.

Four work reports were analyzed: three were carried out in Duitama and one was carried out in Guatemala, which was the most extensive. The analysis is shown in Annex 1.

A table was made with the following criteria:

- a) *Considerations*: the most important topics of the activity were extracted. The fidelity of the information was preserved.
- b) *Concepts*: the main ideas expressed by the people were extracted.
- c) *Categories* to these concepts were thus established, and a code was assigned to them, which would later acquire the significance of a common interpretation.
- d) *Frequency*: The frequency or number of times the previously defined code was presented in each record and participation, which was assimilated to the given category.

Thus, the emerging categories were presented as follows:

Table 1. Emerging categories

CODES	MEANING	FREQUENCY
Job	On-the-job training	7
Crafts	Craftsmanship, handicrafts, handicraft work	4
Marketing	marketing of products	7
Transportation	Transport of products	5
Government	Lack of government support	4
Indebtedness	Bank and third-party debts	3
Poverty	Precarious resources	3
Leadership	Projects and achievements	3

Note: The table presents the emerging categories of the research process.

- **Category: Job Training**

The need for more job training was identified in the meetings between the two countries. They openly expressed their desire to expand the means of job training.

In Guatemala, training was highlighted to improve and maintain their crops and agricultural processes. In Colombia, participants also expressed the need for collaboration on strategies to improve crops and implement innovative pest control tactics, for example.

Category: Handicrafts

This category is related to women's work and there were differences between the two countries: it was observed that in Guatemala, women are more involved in housework and have little autonomy in their work. The man is the one who directs all economic activity. Women are dedicated to housework and farm work, including vegetable gardens such as growing herbs, caring for domestic animals such as chickens, and tending and milking cows: handicrafts in this area are less important and have had little development. These women request options to increase their handicrafts.

This research highlighted a group of women in Colombia oriented to specialized macramé weaving, and they openly expressed their intentions to support the export of these products. Furthermore, the leadership exercised by women in the economic income activities of their households was evidenced, which is equal to that of men and, in some cases, surpasses it.

- **Category: Marketing**

The difficulties in marketing their products were widely expressed in the two communities in common. There is no knowledge of buyers or export systems. Markets and marketing conditions, such as basic quality controls, are unknown.

- **Category: Transportation of products.**



The difficulties in the transportation of agricultural products were also sufficiently commented on, as well as in cases such as in Colombia concerning the manufacture of handicrafts made by peasant women, where they say that it is the buyer-transporter who makes the most profit. Based on these conditions, the two communities require mutual support.

- **Category: Lack of government support.**

Although these concepts were present in both communities, they each had different connotations. It was noted that in Guatemala, there was a lack of governmental support for these peasants; the support provided by the government to the countryside is very precarious, leading these people who live in the fields to a situation of scarce purchasing power, which in some cases has led to situations of starvation. In addition, they do not have permanent essential services (water, electricity, sewage). In Colombia, the participants stated that more support and options are needed to expand the sale of their products. Although there are more subsidies and better life conditions, they said they need more opportunities and government support to market their products.

- **Category: Bank and third-party debts.**

In both communities, it was noted that to improve their agricultural and handicraft production conditions, they have had to resort to bank debts, which later, due to difficulties in marketing their products, they find it very difficult to meet their financial commitments.

- **Category: Precarious resources.**

This category broadly corresponds to peasants in Guatemala, who express their minimal subsistence conditions on many occasions for a dignified life. However, they also expressed deficiencies in sufficient water for their crops and home life irrigation. This becomes a flagship program that needs to be addressed for Guatemala.

- **Category: Projects and achievements.**

Four of the farmers in Guatemala commented on their leadership actions, such as the case of land restitution and allocation of their plots of land by the government, as well as on their international efforts.

CONCLUSIONS

This study's general objective was to interpret the behaviors of the rural communities participating in the particular meetings in each community as options prior to the call for exchange between Colombia and Guatemala. It was highlighted, in both communities, the request for training activities to qualify their work processes.

Regarding artisan work, distinctions were made in terms of short work. When it is present, it is not very elaborated in the Guatemalan community, conditions very different from those presented in Colombia, where a group of women have an elaborated work in Macramé and expect processes for exportation. Nevertheless, this category can be the basis for future projects to provide these people in the field with the skills to develop handicrafts.

One of the most significant difficulties presented by the farmers of the two countries is the expected difficulty in transporting and marketing their products. They also recognized the need to comply with product quality requirements before selling their products.


Participants in Guatemala reported little support from their government, which has led to subsistence and starvation conditions. Water has often been scarce.

In Colombia, there are more subsidies and better conditions for life, but they also express the need for more opportunities and government support to market their products. They also find it challenging to comply with bank debts, only with the aspiration of improving their agricultural and handicraft processes, often without the expected results.

In both countries, there is a lack of an agricultural policy to provide agricultural subsidies to help them overcome the inclement weather or the prices of products when harvesting and selling them.

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