

# 7 Multifaceted dimensions of telecollaboration through English as a Lingua Franca (ELF): Paris-Valladolid intercultural telecollaboration project

Paloma Castro<sup>1</sup> and Martine Derivry-Plard<sup>2</sup>

---

## Abstract

Intercultural telecollaboration allows for a radical change in language education. New technologies enable learners of different languages and cultures to practice their intercultural skills. Teachers no longer need to design ‘fake’ role-plays to develop interaction in the target language. Above all, teachers have the possibility to address the cultural and intercultural dimensions of language education. This paper presents the multifaceted dimensions of a telecollaboration project in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) with university students in science from UPMC, Sorbonne-Universities, Paris and university students in education from University of Valladolid, opening further questions on the exploration of intercultural telecollaboration in higher education.

**Keywords:** intercultural telecollaboration, higher education, intercultural education.

---

## 1. Introduction

Intercultural telecollaboration allows for a radical change in language education as, for once, the intercultural dimension can be seriously taken into account.

---

1. University of Valladolid, Valladolid, Spain; pcastro@dyl.uva.es

2. University of Bordeaux, Bordeaux, France; martine.derivry@u-bordeaux.fr

**How to cite this chapter:** Castro, P., & Derivry-Plard, M. (2016). Multifaceted dimensions of telecollaboration through English as a Lingua Franca (ELF): Paris-Valladolid intercultural telecollaboration project. In S. Jager, M. Kurek & B. O'Rourke (Eds), *New directions in telecollaborative research and practice: selected papers from the second conference on telecollaboration in higher education* (pp. 77-82). Research-publishing.net. <https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2016.telecollab2016.492>

Online telecollaboration allows learners to develop their language skills directly and authentically. Teachers have the possibility to address the cultural and intercultural dimensions of language education as they mediate ‘in vivo’ between learners of different languages and cultures thanks to the common platform used. Whereas the linguistic dimension of language education has always been prevailing at the expense of the cultural and intercultural dimension (Byram, 2008; Castro & Sercu, 2005; Chi & Derivry-Plard, 2010; Zarate, Levy, & Kramersch, 2011), online telecollaboration opens up pathways to develop intercultural skills, know-how and knowledge in different cultures (O’Dowd, 2007; Kramersch, 2009; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013).

To get to know *Others*, as this is one of the leading objectives of language learning in a super-diverse world (Derivry-Plard, 2015), teachers need to tackle the cultural dimensions of language learning and take them earnestly. For instance, engaging learners in mini-anthropological or sociological tasks is a way to deal with the challenge of addressing cultural and intercultural objectives. In language learning, it adds an intercultural dimension to the basic negotiation of meaning-making (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013) that telecollaboration potentially provides.

Furthermore, the direct link that traditionally binds language and culture – sometimes in a very essentialist approach – is cast aside using ELF with people from different L1s as the medium of negotiating meaning to get to know about cultural perspectives. Prioritising the intercultural dimension allows any language to be used as a lingua franca, and be the medium of getting information, knowledge and access to other cultural environments and people.

## 2. Methodology

The project was carried out in higher education from January-March 2015. The participants were 10 second-year university students in science from UPMC Sorbonne Universities and 10 third-year university students in education from Valladolid University. Students were asked to design a sociological dossier on the topic of climate change as a group task, and to write their journal of

experience as an individual task. The sociological dossier was intended to provide students opportunities to do a joint research, exchange different perspectives and learn about their own culture and the culture of others, whereas the journal of experience aimed at developing awareness in learning skills, cultures and languages. By using Moodle and Google Hangouts, an intercultural learning environment was created, allowing students from both universities to interact and work together under guidance with scaffolding activities designed by the teachers to complete the tasks.

During the first Hangouts meeting, students shared their interests on particular research themes dealing with the broad topic of climate change. Students participated in dyadic interactions using ELF in order to complete the whole project. The activities were organised around the development of a mini-survey: definition of subtopic, research questions, data collection, data analysis, writing the report and powerpoint presentation. Using synchronous and asynchronous communication tools, students fulfilled the tasks required for the mini-survey, which provided opportunities for making joint decisions, solving problems and misunderstandings, and negotiating meaning. During all the process, students were asked to write in their experience journal.

### **3. Multifaceted dimensions of Paris-Valladolid intercultural telecollaboration**

In order to analyse the multifaceted dimensions of our project, we conducted action research using data collected from the following sources: a questionnaire, the students' experience journals and the sociological dossier. Data were analysed according to the language and intercultural dimension, the learning and teaching dimension, and the theoretical and practical dimension.

For the language dimension, telecollaboration seemed to enhance students' communicative competence in the target language as they definitely developed confidence in using English: *“it is an interesting tool to communicate with non English speakers using a foreign language. It is not only good to improve the*

*language, but also to feel comfortable speaking it, know different cultures, different ways of working*". Being engaged in communication with speakers of different L1s allowed students to identify the communicative role of language and to be aware of what they have in common, for example the same difficulties for communicating, rather than their differences: *"I notice that our level of English was different and we had to solve situations of lack of understanding using our mother tongue"*. The use of ELF implied using languages as resources and being more at ease in using English with others.

For the intercultural dimension, telecollaboration seemed to enhance students' awareness of intercultural skills for successful communication: *"This experience has taught me to solve situations of misunderstandings with foreigners"*. Students identified skills such as the ability to mediate conflict situations, to solve misunderstandings, to negotiate and to make agreements: *"I could mention some learning strategies that I have learnt such as patience, to be able to empathise, to adapt myself to other demands, to make agreements and negotiate with others"*. Students also showed awareness of attitudes such as empathy, patience, open-mindedness and confidence in relating with others through another language.

For the learning and teaching dimension, the pedagogical process of the telecollaboration project was based on a socio-constructivist approach of learning that fully took into account the intercultural dimension of communication. In this sense, we linked the target language, the cultural background of speakers and the content of communication by adopting a social science approach to develop de-centering perspectives through viewpoints analysis.

For the theoretical and practical dimension, Paris-Valladolid telecollaboration combined theory and practice as the objective was to test practically the intercultural dimensions that telecollaboration theoretically provides. The practical process was focused on feasible objectives and relevant tasks suited to objectives that needed to be adapted throughout the telecollaborative experience. In this sense, communicative skills were monitored, intercultural skills were put into practice through working together and the social science approach was

focused even though it was limited, due to time constraints. The theoretical process was thus constructed from data provided by the multifaceted dimensions of the telecollaboration (English communicative skills, relating to others from a different background, working with others with a common project and deadline, developing a social science approach to deal with better informed differences and similarities in people from different background, developing intercultural know how) in order to inform and describe practice.

#### 4. Conclusion

The analysis of the multifaceted dimensions of Paris-Valladolid telecollaboration suggests that the integrated environment of intercultural telecollaboration allowed for being critical, learning through doing, using ELF, and developing communicative and intercultural skills. In order to be sure of these intercultural multifaceted results, we will need to follow students in further telecollaborations. So, all these *savoir être* and attitudes are potentially there to be developed and sustained, but a 24 hour project face to face in a three month period of time cannot be sufficient to assess these basic intercultural outcomes.

In the context of higher education, the results reveal that the intercultural dimension was potentially present. To evolve further we would need to integrate a coherent set of activities exploring social science approaches. It has been experienced, but for students to be aware, we need more time in a credited course to reach our high educational objectives. This will allow us to monitor more feedback on the different steps of the telecollaboration and better address the challenges of intercultural education within a super-diverse world (Derivry-Plard, 2015; Kramersch, 2009; Zarate et al., 2011).

#### References

- Byram, M. (2008). *From foreign language education to education for intercultural citizenship. Essays and reflections*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

- Castro, P., & Sercu, L. (2005). Objectives of foreign language teaching and culture teaching time. In L. Sercu, with E. Bandura, P. Castro, L. Davcheva, C. Laskaridou, U. Lundgren, C. Méndez, & P. Ryan (Eds), *Foreign language teachers and intercultural competence. An international investigation* (pp. 19-38). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Chi, H., & Derivry-Plard, M. (2010). Médiations culturelles à travers une expérience d'e-twinning franco-taïwanaise. *Actes du Colloque de l'ACEDLE : Les langues tout au long de la vie*, 56-73. <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-00832025/document>
- Derivry-Plard, M. (2015). *Les enseignants de langues dans la mondialisation. La guerre des représentations dans le champ linguistique de l'enseignement* (postface de C. Kramersch). Paris: Éditions des Archives Contemporaines.
- Kramersch, C. (2009). *The multilingual subject*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Liddicoat, J. A., & Scarino, A. (2013). *Intercultural language teaching and learning*. Chichester: Wiley- Blackwell. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/9781118482070>
- O'Dowd, R. (2007). *Online intercultural exchange. An introduction for foreign language teachers*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Zarate, G., Levy D., & Kramersch, C. (Eds). (2011). *Handbook of multilingualism and multiculturalism*. Paris: Éditions des Archives Contemporaines.

Published by Research-publishing.net, not-for-profit association  
Dublin, Ireland; Voillans, France, [info@research-publishing.net](mailto:info@research-publishing.net)

© 2016 by Editors (collective work)  
© 2016 by Authors (individual work)

**New directions in telecollaborative research and practice: selected papers from the second conference on telecollaboration in higher education**  
**Edited by Sake Jager, Malgorzata Kurek, and Breffni O'Rourke**

**Rights:** All articles in this collection are published under the Attribution-NonCommercial -NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) licence. Under this licence, the contents are freely available online as PDF files (<https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2016.telecollab2016.9781908416414>) for anybody to read, download, copy, and redistribute provided that the author(s), editorial team, and publisher are properly cited. Commercial use and derivative works are, however, not permitted.



**Disclaimer:** Research-publishing.net does not take any responsibility for the content of the pages written by the authors of this book. The authors have recognised that the work described was not published before, or that it was not under consideration for publication elsewhere. While the information in this book are believed to be true and accurate on the date of its going to press, neither the editorial team, nor the publisher can accept any legal responsibility for any errors or omissions that may be made. The publisher makes no warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein. While Research-publishing.net is committed to publishing works of integrity, the words are the authors' alone.

**Trademark notice:** product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

**Copyrighted material:** every effort has been made by the editorial team to trace copyright holders and to obtain their permission for the use of copyrighted material in this book. In the event of errors or omissions, please notify the publisher of any corrections that will need to be incorporated in future editions of this book.

Typeset by Research-publishing.net  
Cover design and cover photos by © Raphaël Savina ([raphael@savina.net](mailto:raphael@savina.net))  
UNICollab logo – Harriett Cornish, Graphic Designer, KMi, The Open University

ISBN13: 978-1-908416-40-7 (Paperback - Print on demand, black and white)  
Print on demand technology is a high-quality, innovative and ecological printing method; with which the book is never 'out of stock' or 'out of print'.

ISBN13: 978-1-908416-41-4 (Ebook, PDF, colour)  
ISBN13: 978-1-908416-42-1 (Ebook, EPUB, colour)

**Legal deposit, Ireland:** The National Library of Ireland, The Library of Trinity College, The Library of the University of Limerick, The Library of Dublin City University, The Library of NUI Cork, The Library of NUI Maynooth, The Library of University College Dublin, The Library of NUI Galway.

**Legal deposit, United Kingdom:** The British Library.  
British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data.

A cataloguing record for this book is available from the British Library.

**Legal deposit, France:** Bibliothèque Nationale de France - Dépôt légal: novembre 2016.

---