Integrating Telecollaborative Networks into Foreign Language Higher Education: The INTENT project

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Telecollaboration

The use of online communication tools to bring together classes of language learners in geographically distant locations to develop their

> foreign language skills
> intercultural competence

through collaborative tasks and project work
The Bologna Process & EHEA

• A clearly defined common goal: to create a European space for higher education in order to enhance the employability and mobility of citizens and to increase the international competitiveness of European higher education;

• The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was launched along with the Bologna Process' decade anniversary, in March 2010, during the Budapest-Vienna Ministerial Conference. It is meant to ensure more comparable, compatible and coherent systems of higher education in Europe.
Mobility is important for personal development and employability, it fosters respect for diversity and a capacity to deal with other cultures. It encourages linguistic pluralism, thus underpinning the multilingual tradition of the European Higher Education Area and it increases cooperation and competition between higher education institutions.

In 2020, at least 20% of those graduating in the European Higher Education Area should have had a study or training period abroad.

– Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve, 28-29 April 2009
‘Virtual mobility’ for the remaining 80%?

Virtual mobility, i.e. the use of the internet and other electronic forms of information and communication, is often a catalyst for embarking on a period of physical mobility. Although not a substitute for physical mobility, it does enable young people to prepare a stay abroad and can create conditions for future physical mobility by facilitating friendships, contacts and social networking etc. ....

– It can also provide an international dimension to those learners who, for different reasons, are not able or willing to go abroad. In that context, ICT can be used for “electronic twinning” … etc.

Commission of the European Communities: Green paper: promoting the learning mobility of young people.
Why integrate online exchanges into your university classrooms?

For Students: Development of FL competence, intercultural awareness, electronic literacies

For University Educators: Opening up of classroom / Authentic communication and project work / Developing international network of collaborators

For Mobility Officers: Preparation for physical mobility / Alternative to physical mobility

For University Management: ‘Low cost’ internationalisation strategy / Opening up new university partnerships
Established models of online intercultural exchange in Europe and beyond

Language learning oriented
• eTandem
• Cultura

Multidisciplinary
• eTwinning
• the Soliya model
Telecollaboration ... an 'add-on' activity in higher education?

> lack of pedagogical training for educators
> fear of extra work-load (lack of support and resources)
> no long-term stability in partnership with other universities
> lack of academic credit
INTENT

Integrating Telecollaborative Networks
Into Foreign Language Higher Education

Financed By The European Commission - Lifelong Learning Programme

Co-ordinated by Robert O’Dowd at the Universidad de Leon, Spain
8 European partners (PH Heidelberg, Grenoble III, Padova, Czestochowa, Groningen, UA Barcelona)

October 2011-March 2014
The INTENT Project

- Carry out a study of Telecollaboration in European HEI’s
- Identify and develop strategies for Integration of TC
- Develop tools & platform to support Telecollaboration in European HEIs
- Provide training through workshops & online resources
Products

1. Survey of HE teachers (practitioners and non-practitioners of telecollaboration) and learners.

2. A Project Website/Virtual Platform, supporting telecollaborative practice, for teachers, learner, administrators and educational policy makers.

3. A Practitioner Databank, containing case studies of telecollaborative exchanges.

4. An E-Portfolio of learner competences developed in telecollaborative exchanges.
5. A Databank of telecollaborative tasks, with user guidelines
6. A Dissemination strategy and programme, including training workshops for tutors, presentations at conferences and academic publications.
7. An International Conference (Leon, 2014)
8. Project evaluation and testing.
Online surveys from December 2011 - February 2012
Language versions: English, German, French and Italian
Three surveys:
- Experienced teacher telecollaborators (102 responses)
- Inexperienced teacher telecollaborators (108 responses)
- Experienced student telecollaborators (131 responses)
Responses from 142 universities in 22 countries

Qualitative Case studies: 7 representative examples of telecollaboration around Europe

Aims:
- Identify types of telecollaborative practices undertaken by European university educators
- Explore the barriers to telecollaboration and the strategies used to overcome these barriers
Geographic distribution of partners
Telecollaboration is worthwhile: Experienced university practitioners give their feedback on their projects:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have found it difficult to find reliable partner classes for OIE.</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIEs have helped me to develop a more collaborative and less individual approach to learning in my classes.</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students find OIEs relevant and important for their learning.</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating with partner-teachers is challenging.</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIEs have been time-consuming.</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIEs have been difficult to organise.</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrying out the Online International Exchanges in my classes has been a positive experience.</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings

• Most OIEs currently involve European universities with US universities.
• Few foreign language educators find OIE partners through institutional partnerships such as Erasmus. Most are informal contacts made through colleagues and at conferences.
• OIEs are strongly believed to have the potential of supporting physical mobility but very few examples of such exchanges were found.
• OIEs are generally carried out by highly motivated and dedicated educators who may have experienced OIE as part of their training.
• Educators who have had experience of OIE are more likely to repeat it.
• The most frequently used tools in OIEs in Europe are email and virtual learning environments, but also high use of audio/video conferencing and rise of social networks.
• Many students reported that participating in OIE led them to become more open to others, accepting and understanding of difference and to realise that their own points of view are not necessarily “the best or only ones”.

• Telecollaboration can also contribute to educators’ academic careers, by establishing connections to new academic networks and engaging in staff mobility visits with other universities etc.

• Telecollaboration is seen as a useful ‘first step’ on the way to developing physical mobility exchanges between institutions.

• Most teachers with experience of OIE believe it is a valid alternative to physical mobility for those students who cannot participate in mobility programmes.
Comments from students

“je n'ai pas vraiment vécu la télécollaboration sous l'angle d'une rencontre inter-culturelle, mais d'une rencontre tout court.”

- Eine gute Idee, aber nur wenn sie sinnvoll geplant und durchgeführt wird.
- Gespräche in Echtzeit fände ich sehr hilfreich und auch spannender für die Teilnehmer. Somit hätte man vielleicht eher die Möglichkeit auch persönliche Gespräche mit den Austauschpartnern zu führen.
- I encourage all students to participate in a cultural exchange
- I think it was a great idea and experience. I think Skype would be a better way of oral communicating.
- I think, it was fine and also, that it would be a necessary part in the degree of people who are learning a foreign language.
- I will encourage everyone to participate in exchange programs
- Ich denke, dass interkultureller Onlineaustausch besonders für Studierende, die bisher nur wenig interkulturelle Erfahrungen gemacht haben, sinnvoll ist.
- Ich glaube, dass IOAes sehr eindrucksvoll sein können, aber leider habe ich es nicht erlebt. Ich habe aber Ideen wie ich so eine Onlineaustausch organisieren würde.
- Its a useful too. I think that all the foreign language students should use it to realise that studying a language involves more things than studying grammar and phonetics.
- Our University should organise more exchanges.
- Peut-etre Skype pour communiquer de plus.
- Si on organise la télécollaboration je'exigerais comme prof un laps de temps obligatoire pour parler (p.ex. les élèves doivent avoir une conversation pendant une heure par semaine..)
- They are so useful for students that they should be compulsory for everyone.
In your opinion, what are the reasons why telecollaborative exchange is not more popular in university education?

- Time necessary to set up and run exchanges
  - (Mentioned 49/98 practitioners)

- Difficulties in integration & assessment due to institutional requirements
  - (Mentioned by 28/98 practitioners)

- Lack of pedagogical knowledge about how to run and integrate exchanges
  - (Mentioned by 20/98 practitioners)

- Teachers lack e-literacies/required technological knowledge
  - (Mentioned by 19/98 practitioners)

- Difficulty in finding appropriate partners
  - (Mentioned by 9/98 practitioners)
Recommendations

• Support the establishment of online exchanges between European countries in much the same way as they have supported physical mobility.

• Draw up models of Erasmus agreements specifically for virtual mobility programmes.

• Establish European grants for virtual mobility to help cover the organizational costs.

• Support the establishment of OIEs for students prior to their period of physical mobility. With the training and support of international office and language centre staff exchanges, these ‘pre-mobility exchanges’ could improve the quality of physical mobility by promoting integration of Erasmus students in host universities.

• Integrate OIE in teacher education programs as this will encourage future educators to integrate telecollaboration into their practice.

• Provide incentives and support for educators embarking on their first experience of OIE.

• Provide a technical and administrative infrastructure which will support educators in their telecollaborative activity.

• Find more systems of awarding credits (ECTS) for students’ participation in OIEs. Other ways of awarding credit, such as explicit mention of the activity in the European Diploma Supplement, are also worthy of exploration.
Supporting virtual intercultural exchange between university classrooms across Europe and beyond

Teacher

This platform is aimed at supporting university educators and mobility coordinators to organise and run online intercultural exchanges for their students. In these exchanges, students are divided into small groups and hosted online by students from another country. This creates a unique opportunity for students to engage with peers from across Europe and beyond in a safe virtual environment.
Supporting virtual intercultural exchange between university classrooms across Europe and beyond

Teacher

This platform is aimed at supporting university educators and mobility coordinators to organise and run online exchanges for their students. In these exchanges, students from universities in different countries collaborate together using online communication tools to carry out collaborative projects and to learn about each other’s language and culture. Part in such projects, students can develop foreign language skills, intercultural awareness, electronic literacies and more.
Latest classes looking for partnerships

Français en première ligne
See the site: http://w3.u-grenoble3.fr/fle-1-ligne

English for European Studies
These students will be studying English as part of their MA in European Studies...

Task-based language learning in international encounters
My students are future primary and secondary TEFL school teachers. In this...

Latest registrations

Melinda Dooly
I work at the Faculty of Education, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Spain)....

Francesca Helm
I have been a language teacher at the University of Padova since 1992, and...

Institutions joined

FELS, The Open University
United Kingdom

University of Padova
Italy

University of Groningen
United Kingdom

Pädagogische Hochschule
Heidelberg, Germany
Germany

Université Stendhal
Grenoble, France
France

Università de León
Spain

KMi, The Open University, UK
United Kingdom

University of Groningen
Netherlands

Announcements

Study on Telecollaboration in European Universities
The INTENT project team presents their first progress report on telecollaboration in European universities...

Conferences

Clone of INTENT project presentations in 2012
During 2012 the INTENT project team will be carrying out various international activities and...

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Research

New article in LL&T
The article PROMOTING DIALOGUE OR HEGEMONY IN PRACTICE? POWER ISSUES IN...
Case studies

The aim of this databank is to bring together in one location a series of exchange scenarios that have been implemented in a wide range of contexts. We hope that these case studies will provide ideas and inspiration and innovative methods of developing online intercultural exchanges.

Click the column headings to change the order; use the filters to reduce the list; or use the Search at the top of the list to look for specific keyword in the descriptive fields. Click to create a new Case study of your own.

Keywords

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Posted</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-mobility eTandem</td>
<td>This project was set up as an eTandem for students from US universities coming to the University of Padova in Italy, and for students at this...</td>
<td>University of Padova</td>
<td>29 May 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LanguageTwin</td>
<td>LanguageTwin is an educational video chat platform that allows foreign language students to converse one-on-one with native speakers who are also...</td>
<td>Universidad de León</td>
<td>11 May 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soliya Connect Program in Padova</td>
<td>A multilateral exchange of university students aimed at discussing the relationship between ‘the West’ and ‘the predominantly Arab and Muslim world’</td>
<td>University of Padova</td>
<td>8 May 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Get involved

• Read our Report on Telecollaboration in Europe:
  – www.intent-project.eu
• Upcoming platform for collaboration and networking:
  – www.uni-collaboration.eu
Thank you!

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francesca.helm@unipd.it