

Preparing for the unexpected: Exploiting teaching moments in telecollaboration

Context of the Study

The presenters analyze how ESL/EFL student teachers in the U.S. and in Turkey designed technology-based language tasks for each other. More specifically, in local teams, student teachers designed technology-based tasks for a target English learner population for their institutional contexts. They tried out their tasks with their global (telecollaborative) student teacher partners, who executed and evaluated the tasks, and provided feedback for revision. Global teams used Web 2.0 tools such as Google Sites, Blogger, and Google docs to collaborate.

Collaborative Exchanges and Technology Tools

Student teachers at Teachers College, Columbia University (TC), collaborated with cross-institutional counterparts at the Boğaziçi University (BOUN), Department of Foreign Language Education/Turkey to analyze and reflect on Web 2.0 tools and to design tasks for each other and provide feedback for one another. The purpose of the research was to analyze different perspectives of groups of student teachers and learning experts in different institutional contexts on social networking tools, and how they engaged in implementing technology and computer-mediated communication (CMC) in technology-based task design. Student teachers explored different tools (e.g., blogs, wikis, podcasts) and exchanged their reflections on the experiences in an online forum. In Global Teams, student teachers exchanged profiles via podcasts and designed technology-based tasks for English language learners. Each Local Team executed their counterpart's task and provided an evaluation. The task requirements for participants were categorized according to O'Dowd and Ware's typology of telecollaborative tasks – information exchange, comparison and analysis, and collaborative task - with increasing levels of complexity (2009, pp. 175-178). This collaboration enabled participants to learn more about other teaching contexts and practices. Furthermore, the project aimed at helping student teachers become more proficient in technology use while collaborating via computer-mediated communication with one another. The working language was English.

Research Questions

- How do student teachers perceive telecollaboration during a time of political unrest?
- How do global teams deal with a social media ban and its impact on the collaboration?
- How can teacher educators encourage student teachers to explore and exploit such teaching moments?

Research Design

This exploratory case study draws on action research and triangulates questionnaires, telecollaboration logs, and CMC data (emails, blogs) and involves emic perspectives from the fifteen student teachers and the two Researchers-Instructors. The presenters analyze available affordances (e.g., trained facilitators, a curriculum with sensitive topics, multimodal environments for different forms of communication) as laid out in Guth et al. (2012) that helped or hindered dialogue and collaboration. Within a sociocultural framework for telecollaboration studies (Dooly & O'Dowd, 2012; Reinhardt, 2012), this exploratory case study shares characteristics of ethnography such as emic and holistic principles (van Lier, 1988) and action research (Nunan & Bailey, 2009).

Participants

	Teachers College, Columbia University TC Local Team	Boğaziçi University BOUN Local Team	Total number of participants in Global TC-BOUN Teams
Researcher- Instructor	1	1	
Team 1	3 Syng (Chinese) Le (Vietnamese) Jeanette (Korean)	2 Mehmet (Turkish) Seyfullah (Turkish)	5
Team 2	3 Adam (English) Barry (English) Marija (Serbo-Croatian)	2 Sera (Turkish) Samed (Turkish)	5
Team 3	3 Samantha (English) Madison (English) Fernanda (Spanish/Chilean)	1 Jeltje (Dutch)	4