

Chapter 6: What makes our schools unique? A telecollaborative experience from the perspective of two ‘new-comers’

Introduction

In this chapter, you will read about a telecollaborative project that was designed by two (relatively inexperienced) pre-service teachers. The virtual exchange project was designed and implemented during an internship in our fourth of final year of studies and right before for completing all the courses for a bachelor’s degree in primary education, with a minor in Teaching English as a Foreign Language. We studied for the degree at the Faculty of Education Sciences, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

The two schools involved, both located in the region of Barcelona, presented two very different contexts and therefore gave meaning to the project and inspired its design. It is important to bear in mind that Catalunya is a multilingual region, with both Spanish and Catalan as official languages and Catalan as the principal language of instruction in state schools. For the project, one of the sites was a private International school with a specific program of immersion in English (the school’s *lingua franca*). The students came from different backgrounds and it was a very rich school in terms of multiculturalism. On the other side, the other partner class was in a public state school, known for its innovative approaches to teaching. Most of the students had Spanish as their mother tongue, a reflection of the linguistic profile of the neighbourhood where the school is located. Even though both schools developed their curriculum through projects, their pedagogical approaches were significantly different as well as the day-to-day teaching practices in the classrooms.

Regarding the target groups, the project was implemented in the classes of Year 2 in the international school (herein called Queen Mary

School) and Year 3 in the Catalan school (we will call it School Vailet). Although there was only one year of difference between the two groups, the students were at different developmental stages and this was taken into consideration during the implementation; we created activities for the 3rd graders that allowed them to go deeper into some aspects of the content knowledge presented.

In the rest of this chapter we provide more detailed information and visual examples of the project whose principal feature is asynchronous telecollaboration. The project, entitled ‘What makes our school unique?’ dealt with a linguistic exchange between both schools in which the different L1¹ (English for Queen Mary School and Catalan for School Vailet) were used. Thus, for Queen Mary School the target language to be practiced was Catalan (which was the second language for some of the students but a foreign language for most of the class population) and English (as a foreign languages) was the target language for Vailet School. The main aim of the exchange was to provide the students with opportunities for purposeful interaction to improve their respective target language levels. In order to do so, the project revolved around the exploring and explaining the different areas and zones of the schools parts in order to discover what makes each school unique and different.

Rationale

First of all, it should be mentioned that the idea of implementing a telecollaborative project in our final internship was conceived after taking the subject TEPBLL², a course in the fourth year of our studies and compulsory for completing the minor. In this course, we ourselves were involved in telecollaboration with a partner university in the United States and the course content was focused on the use of technology and virtual exchange for promoting language education. Through that, we were exposed to this

1 We use L1 to stand for the lingua franca of the school.

2 Technology Enhanced Project Based Language Learning, taught by Dr. Melinda Dooly at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and Dr. Randall Sadler, at the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign. Both are members of the KONECT research team. See Sadler & Dooly, 2016.

approach empirically and felt that we had sufficiently comprehended it to give it a go on our own. During that course, both authors of this chapter had the chance to work together in the design of a telecollaborative project as one of their assignments and decided to challenge themselves once more, but this time, the project would be implemented in an authentic context (using telecollaboration in a teaching unit for school internship is not required; it was an additional feature that we decided to add on our own initiative). Still, we want to acknowledge that this idea would not have occurred to us if there had not been a propitious context which promoted this type of innovative thinking.

Luckily for us, it all went hand in hand: there was a great opportunity to implement a telecollaborative project because we were working in two schools with very different linguistic features and different commands of two potential target languages. Also, we had the concept fresh in our minds, we were motivated to do it, and we shared the belief that it was the perfect occasion to try it out while being supervised by a mentor and having the support of expertise teachers.

Moreover, it should be mentioned that besides our willingness, there existed other reasons that made the notion seem like a perfect option. Just to name the main ones, both schools presented a low level of L2/L3 and in some cases, a lack of motivation was identified throughout our observations. We thought there was a need to look for a project that was both appealing meaningful to the students. By this, we mean that there needed to be a clear reason to take part in the project and that there were some clear objectives that the pupils understood and shared. Last but not least, the technology was scarcely used as part of the process of foreign language acquisition. Through this telecollaborative project, both language and technology could be introduced in accessible and enjoyable ways that really aided and supported the students' learning.

The project description

The main idea of the project can be summarized as the following: two different schools connected by one common project. Both schools are located in the Barcelona region but, more concretely, one can be found in

the municipality of Barberà del Vallès while the other one is in the city of Barcelona; so, we were working in two quite different contexts. Also, as previously mentioned, the mother tongues present in each school were not the same. On the one hand, one of the school presented a multilingual environment due to the hosting of children with lots of different origins and with English as its lingua franca. On the other hand, the second class was mainly composed of Spanish speakers but with Catalan as its lingua franca as it could be seen in the following table.

Pupils in Vailet School had a high command of the Catalan language due to the importance given by the school to teaching this language, supported by an immersion program, however, in general the school has poor attainment levels for English as a foreign language. In Queen Mary School it was the opposite: the students tended to have an exceptionally good command of English but a very low level of Catalan (except the few students with this language as their mother tongue which on average was 1 or 2 students per class).

Table 1. Main features of partner classes' population

Vailet School	Queen Mary School
Location: Barberà del Vallès (town outside of Barcelona city)	Location: city of Barcelona
Number of students: 26 students.	Number of students: 18 students.
Students' mother tongue: mainly Spanish	Students' mother tongue: very diverse (Spanish, Catalan, Chinese, Arabic, Russian, English...)
Languages present in the school: L1 (language of instruction): Catalan L2: English Classes of Spanish are taken in accordance with the Catalan curriculum (approximately 2 hours per week)	Languages present in the school: L1 (language of instruction and L1 of many of the students): English L2: Spanish (3 hours/week) L3: Catalan (1 hour/week)

Once the context had been carefully observed, an exchange was proposed as a real and meaningful project to motivate the students while learning a foreign language. Moreover, these great amount of differences that the schools presented was seen as an advantage throughout the project because it could be used to help the students learn from each other and see that both schools are unique and special.

To succeed in our planning, we took as basis the main theoretical pillars for telecollaboration and project design as outlined by Dooly (2008; 2016) as well as issues of formative assessment as proposed by Sanmarti (2010). We were aware that designing a telecollaborative project there are many variables that must be taken into consideration simultaneously and that there is a strong need to have solid planning that is founded on a good theoretical framework. Because both schools already implemented project-based teaching, the application of technology-enhanced project based language learning seemed suitable. However, at the same time we were aware that we were introducing two new variables into the mix: the use of technological resources (not frequent in the classes) and collaborative learning between two schools.

On top of that, the project would allow us to establish links between different languages and help reduce the gap that is often marked in the bilingual society of the two schools (some communities are more Spanish-oriented, others are more Catalan-oriented). The project itself presented a bilingual essence: throughout it, pupils acted as 'models' or 'referees' in the L1 of their school and worked on it for some tasks, but they also needed to learn and develop their L2/L3 with the help of their telecollaborative mates.

Moreover, it is important to point out that the project not only consisted of moments in which virtual exchange took place, it also implied many other steps carried out during the in-class lessons. For example, gamification was used to work with the needed vocabulary and to present and practice specific language structures or formulaic chunks so the students were 'led' to the needed language in a fun and dynamic way. Also, because the project included collaborative learning, the class worked together in order to define what makes their school unique and to learn about the other school. To do so, smaller groups were organized in which each member held a different self-chosen role to keep throughout the project. It was our opinion that the pupils were at the right stage to get the idea of working together and become aware that they do not need to be competitive with each other in an inclusive environment. These collaborative groups could also help support students with special needs, accompanied with the proper scaffolding in each activity.

Another principal characteristic of this project would be the criticality of the assessment process. Making students active and reflective when evaluating their productions and looking for ways to improve (in self and others) was an established aim from the very beginning. With this, students could

gain awareness of the importance of assessment. The infograph (figure 1) provides a visual summary of the outstanding features of the telecollaborative project.

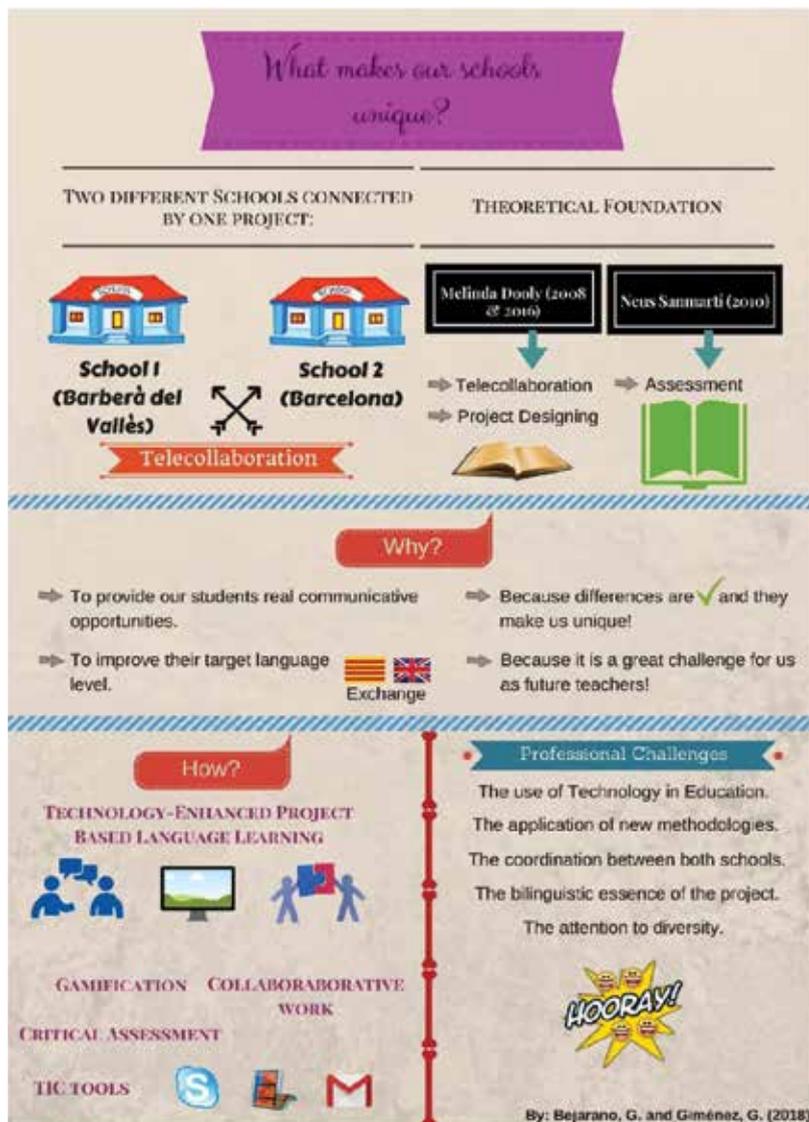


Figure 1. Main features of the telecollaborative project design

Facing the big challenge of getting started

After reading the project's description, you may guess that the project itself was a great challenge. If it is already difficult for student-teachers to design a teaching sequence and implement it, the task becomes even more complicated when facing a telecollaborative project. As a teacher involved in telecollaboration, you not only have to consider the subject you will be teaching, your objectives, the materials you will use and which is the best teaching approach, but you must also be completely in harmony with another class that belongs to a completely different context. While co-teaching or co-designing is considered as enriching or beneficial, as two heads together always think better than one, it is admittedly harder to structure and schedule since both teachers need to be on the same wavelength. For this, meetings between the two teachers were constantly required.

Furthermore, we challenged ourselves by setting out to do a widely ambitious project that not only included dealing with telecollaboration but at the same time working in collaborative groups, completing self and peer-assessment tasks, scaffolding special needs, ... all these goals within a very tight agenda and almost no experience as teachers. However, with all goals well-set, great communication between us and a plan B in our pockets, the challenge ended up successfully accomplished.

The Planning Process

As you can see in the next infograph (figure 2), the authors were very careful to map the different steps to follow when planning this telecollaborative project. As these projects are really complex, many considerations should be taken into account as reflected in the infograph. This infograph was designed by our telecollaborative group (involving both Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona students and University of Illinois Urbana Champaign students during our fourth year course on Technology-Enhanced Project Based Language Learning).



Figure 2. Guide for planning telecollaborative projects

Moreover, before outlining our project, it should be highlighted that the planning process did not occur in a linear way but it was a cyclical process, which required us to go back and forth several times to ensure that everything matched and was meaningful enough for the students. Furthermore, sometimes we had to select some activities over others as it was a very time-limited project. So, despite using the ‘map’ we had designed in our TEPBLL course as a kind of guide to plan the project, it has to be recognized that some of the steps were not taken in the exact order, as every telecollaborative project requires different planning. However, the guide provides a good outline of what should go into a telecollaborative project, so we use the guide’s sections to explain our own planning process, with examples based on our personal experiences teaching this project.

Gather/review background information

Our first step is actually related to the second section in the infographic and refers to choosing the main topic. It was first proposed by a teacher from the Vailet School. At the beginning of the internship, this teacher requested that the teaching unit be about the different areas of the school (theatre, playground, classroom...). However, this initial idea was remodeled a bit in order to make it more meaningful for the students. This was done by introducing the telecollaboration, so, through the use of the ‘target’ vocabulary (canteen, music conservatory, etc.) the students had to present each school to their telecollaborative partners, to spot the main differences between both schools and see how these differences are the items that make each of their schools unique.

After settling on the main topic or driving question, the gathering of the background information was started. As it was expected, the schools did not have any experience in doing this kind of projects, but administration and teachers in both centres were open to learn and experiment with this new methodology. The students’ prior knowledge was also limited. As it has been explained above, their foreign language level was low (that was the main motivation to start this linguistic exchange) and they had not been taught the vocabulary necessary to describe the school vocabulary before. Furthermore, the students were really young and they did not really know

how to read, write and speak properly in their second language, so, it was deemed necessary that the project and its activities be simple in order to let them learn, enjoy and not feel frustrated.

As to the available technology in the schools, some differences were detected in that area as well. Queen Mary School had more technological facilities than the public state school, as all their classrooms were technologically well equipped. Still, the target group involved in this project did not use them a lot due to their young age (according to the school ideology). That meant we needed to find some technological resources that suited both schools possibilities and which were also easy for the students to use as, at their age, they had used few technologies in their school lessons. Finally, it was decided to use the following technological resources (they will be explained in depth in the Section 3 describing the project implementation).

Table 2. List of technology resources and how they were used

Technological Resources				
Resource	Main use	Link		
Linoit	Virtual corkboard for doing the brainstorming.	http://en.linoit.com/ Windows Movie Maker	For editing the outcomes' videos.	
Youtube	For uploading the videos in order to watch them in class.	https://www.youtube.com/		
Kahoot	For doing the Quizzes (assessment).	https://kahoot.it/#/ Canva	For doing the farewell 'virtual' gifts.	https://www.canva.com/

Finally, the project's time frame had to be decided. As it was done during a teacher education internship, it was supposed to last for only one month (four weeks) but as it also was a complex project, it was quite difficult to achieve this timeframe. So, it was decided to talk with the schools' and university mentors to negotiation an extension of the project for two more weeks. So, in the end a six weeks project was designed and implemented.

Pre-planning

Due to the nature of the project (executed within the parameters of a teacher education internship), the pre-planning was shorter than it might be in a ‘regular’ classroom because some of the decisions that should be taken here (the partner, the main topic...) were already decided during prior steps.

Thus, having the topic, the partner, the technologies and, also, some activities in mind, we moved on to see which competences, goals and contents the project was going to focus on. At this stage the desired outputs were sketched (according to the infograph in figure 2 they should be decided in the third section), and it was not easy as there were lots of aspects to consider at once and they needed to be studied in a very limited time frame. Videos as final output (examples are given in the “Implementation process” section below) were chosen because both schools wanted the project to focus principally on oral language production. Consequently, when establishing each goal, how to assess this project (assessment criteria) had to be thought and which assessment tools were going to be used. For doing that, the Catalan Curriculum and the competences outlined there were constantly kept in mind and the teachers tried to adapt the goals, contents and criteria to these statements. So, at the end, the project’s main goals, contents and assessment criteria were the following:

Table 3. Goals and assessment criteria

General Goals
<p><u>Students will be able to...</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.– Improve their communicative skills in L1 and L2/L3 through real interaction. 2.– Work collaboratively in a group to achieve a common goal. 3.– Exchange information with another group of students in their target language with an authentic communicative purpose. 4.– Establish common points between two different schools and cultures. 5.– Name and describe the main areas of their schools in English and in Catalan in a real and meaningful context. 6.– Assess critically their partners’ outputs, the other group members, themselves and the project.

General Contents
1.– Specific lexicon related to areas of a school and general features related to buildings and locations. 2.– Present simple verb tense in English and Catalan. 4.– Communicative, interactive and intercultural skills. 5.– ICT and Technological resources.
Assessment Criteria
1.– Actively participates in the whole and small groups activities. 2.– Collaborates with group; assumes assigned roles and acts accordingly. 3.– Contributes to achievement of project goals. 4.– Uses effective communicative strategies to make themselves understood by others in the target language. 5.– Uses effective listening strategies to understand simple oral and audiovisual messages. 6.– Applies critical thinking in order reflect on new discoveries during the project development.

Formal planning

Once the general outline was determined, it was the moment to start with the formal planning, that is the scheduling of what was going to be carried out in the classes during the project. First of all, the final outcomes were decided: three videos. In the first one each school would make a presentation in their L1 (an icebreaking activity), the other two would be done in their L2 (target language): one video would be a presentation of each school, showing images and narrating descriptions of each area and the last one would show the items that make each school unique and different from the others.

Having decided the outcomes, the sequencing of the activities' sequence was started. An initial brainstorming session for thinking of all the possible activities was done and once selected, these were sequenced in the project's structure according to the natural process of communication. What we mean by this, it that first the project had to be presented to the learners, next the collaborative groups were set up, then the students got to know the vocabulary through "bridging activities" that were necessary for completing the intended final output. Having outlined the sequence and planning of the activities, we then considered the specific vocabulary and

language elements that the students were going to need for each activity and diagnosed potential ‘trouble’ areas and created scaffolding materials to ensure that the learners would have enough resources to complete the different activities.. Assessment activities and materials were also created during this stage. We designed continuous and formative assessment, with assessment activities for almost every session in the project. The assessment activities were diverse enough to include, self-assessment, peer-assessment and also some teacher-centered assessment.

Finally, it is important to point that the project planning included a ‘back-up’ plan; alternative activities were designed for moments that, potentially, might be problematic as we already knew the most probable limitations (most of them related to technology). Also, it has to be highlighted that, as this project used continuous and formative assessment, it was easy to detect which were the students’ concrete needs, their difficulties and interests and adapt the activities to them in order to let the kids benefit the most from this project. However, while it is necessary to have a back-up plan for such a complex project, it is also important to be flexible and ready to adapt the planned activities while it is being implemented in order to adapt it to our students and their immediate needs.

The time has come: The implementation process

The project was implemented between April and May 2017 for a duration of six weeks in total and comprising 8 sessions of 1 hour each: three of them in the L1 of the school and the other 5 in the L2/L3, though sometimes plurilingualism or translanguaging were employed (for more information regarding these concepts see Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010; García, Lin & May, 2017).

Below, you can find a summary chart that reflects how the project was structured and shows the activities undertaken in each session. Note that the activities underlined were those that involved the use of virtual exchange. As you can see, there is an average of three activities per session. It was important not to plan too many activities, as these might take longer than expected. Moreover, note that not all the activities are telecollaborative. In between the virtual exchange sessions it was necessary to

work on the vocabulary, grammar and content knowledge that would be used later on. Moreover, this project required interdependence between the schools as each group-class would be creating videos, sending them to their telecollaborative partners and later on providing feedback about their partners' use of their target language. The sequencing of the activities are summarized in the chart below.

Table 4. Summary of planned sessions and activities

Week 1	Session 1 Students' L1	Motivational Introductory Video Project presentation and magic hat/ tie dynamic Communicative strategies net dynamic. <u>Presentation of video.</u>
	Session 2 Students' L2/L3	Other school's presentation video display. <u>Kahoot! About the presentation video.</u>
		Collaborative groups' creation dynamic.
Week 2	Session 3 Students' L2/L3	"Schools' Video" presentation. Vocabulary acquisition activity: Memory.
		Vocabulary Centers Activities.
Week 3	Session 4 Students' L2/L3	Vocabulary refresh activity: Flashcards.
		Brainstorming about the video's elements in <i>Linoit</i> and groups' distribution.
		<u>Start preparing the videos' contents.</u>
Week 4	Session 5 Students' L2/L3	<u>Continue with the video preparation, rehearsal and videos' recording.</u> In parallel, extra activities and games for the groups who are waiting.
		Session 6 Students' L1 and L2/L3
<u>Provide feedback about the video with rubrics.</u>		
Spot similarities and singularities activity.		
Week 5	Session 7 Students' L2/L3	<u>See own school video + other school's feedback.</u> <u>Create a reflective video about the other school "What makes them unique?"</u> In parallel create a "thanks" gift for the other school.
		Session 8 Students' L1 and L2/L3
Peer and Self-Assessment.		
"What makes us unique" and "What have we learnt?" Assembly.		

Development of the sessions

In this following section a brief description of each session is provided, accompanied by some examples so that the reader can better understand how the project was carried out.

- Session 1: To start with the project, there was a need to find a unifying thread that made sense, motivated the students and made the project meaningful. For this, an introductory video was created prior to be initiation of the project by the student-teachers. In the video, the teachers requested help from their pupils, claiming that they were unable to find by themselves what makes their schools unique. Even though the first session was implemented in the L1, the video was bilingual in order to prime the students with the the idea of the linguistic exchange.³ After showing the video, each student-teacher devoted some time to describing the project and the goals so their pupils could understand what they would be working for. Moreover, an important element during the whole project was introduced: the magic tie or hat (depending on the school). In this project the student-teachers were both teaching L1 and L2/L3 to the students. As this was a problem for one of the schools because they associated “one face to one language” a ‘magic’ element was introduced so each time the teacher wearing the ‘magic’ hat or the tie the (target) L2/L3 (English or Catalan) would be used. After this, there was a short activity in which the whole group reflected about the different communicative strategies that they could need throughout the project. For this, a ‘human’ net was created using a wool ball (the students toss the wool ball to each other, give an idea and then toss the ball to another student, eventually weaving a ‘human’ net. Finally, the first session ended with the creation of a very simple presentation video in the L1 of the students in order to establish a first contact between the schools and break the ice in front of the camera. The students were instructed to bear in mind that their partner schools did not comprehend their L1 as well as they did, exposing them to a simple, but important intercultural feature of communication strategies.

3 The video can be viewed in the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Y3uqfZUs0U&t=1s>

- Session 2: The second session started by watching the other school's video. Taking advantage of the difference in languages, student-teachers played a Kahoot game afterwards which served as an additional reinforcement of newly presented vocabulary in the target languages. Once this was done, the students were assigned their collaborative groups, decided the roles they would take on, signed 'contracts' (as the one in the following picture) and began thinking about their assigned role in the group.

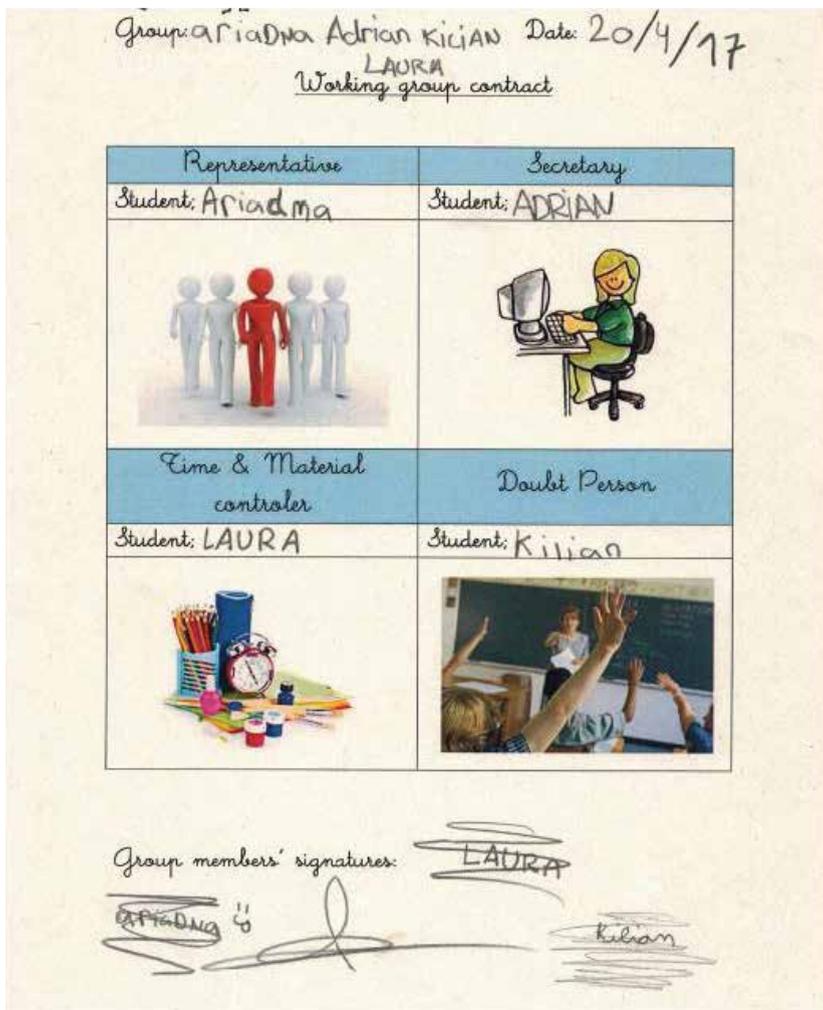
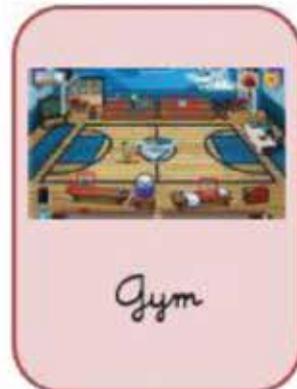
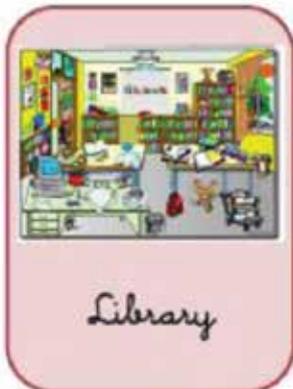
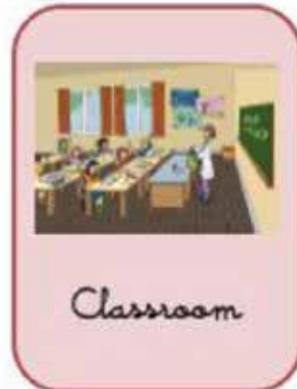
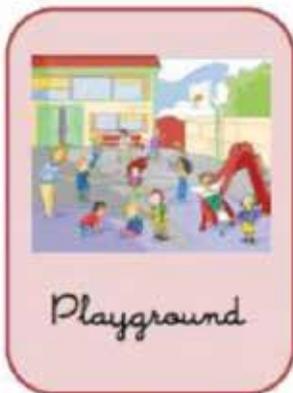


Figure 3. Example of a role assignment contract

- Session 3: This session was carried out in the target language. The session began by introducing the students to the idea of what they would be doing long term (one of the main outputs): a video that would describe the different areas of their school, using the language they were studying (English or Catalan). To do so, vocabulary needed to be previously introduced so some 'mini activity centres' or corners with different activities/games (memory game, domino, riddles and movement games) were created for the different collaborative groups.



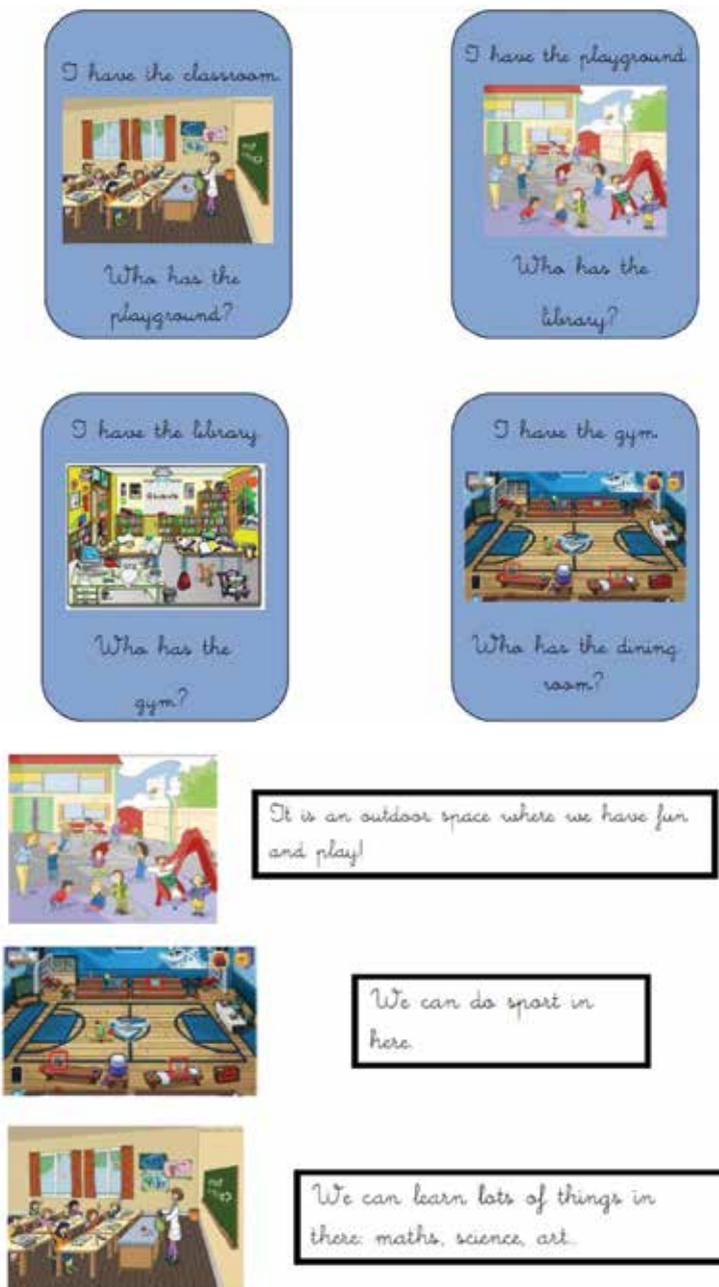


Figure 4. Example of flashcards used for memory game, domino and riddles

- Session 4: Since the vocabulary taught in the previous session had not been reviewed for a week, a quick ‘refresher’ activity was needed. Following that, most of the time was devoted to plan the descriptive video. To do so, the students brainstormed all together, with the aid of Linoit, a virtual corkboard where you can tag and save ideas (see figure 8). Finally the chosen contents were distributed between the groups so they could start preparing their performance or video narrative. To do this, scaffolding materials were provided to help them construct grammatically correct sentences.

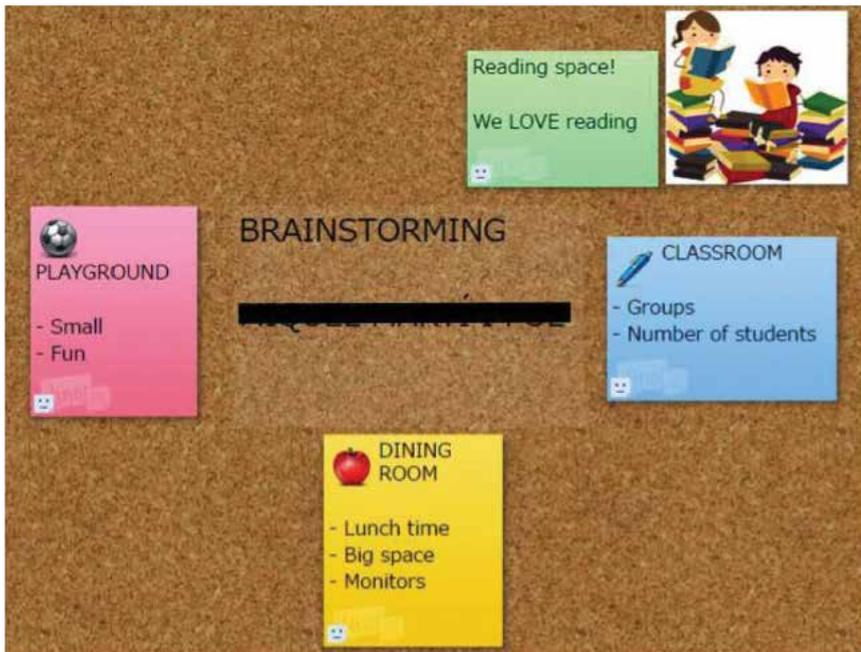


Figure 5. Linoit Example

Vocabulary

Vocabulary				
Playground	Classroom	Library	Gym	Dining Room
Open Air	Closed	Colorful	Passive	Wide/small
Natural	Small	Broad	Broad	Welcoming
Funny	Big	Funny	Funny	Flow lines
Big/small	Special	Exciting	Exciting	Marble
Amny	Colorful	Ballroom	Hot/Cold	Food
Easy	Welcoming	Welcoming	Seats	Fluffy
Play	Chair	Funny	Games	Clean
Friends	Desk	Reading	Physical	Stair
Fun	Computer	Studying	Educator	Kitchen
Boys	Learning	Books	Play	Cook
Ball	Boys	Computers	Exercises	Tables
Guest	Posters	Dictionaries	Balls	Memo
Basket	Materials	Games	Dance	Chef
Breakfast	Half	Furniture	Meat	Play
	Scenelike			

Let's prepare the video!

Look at the example and complete the following chart

School's Part	Characteristics (Adjectives or actions)	What
Example: Playground	Big, funny, colorful, sunny, play...	- The funny. - We play

Figures 6 & 7. Video preparation activity (language support)

- Session 5: The session was fully devoted to preparing the video in the collaborative groups, rehearsing and filming. As all the groups had a different working pace, some complementary activities (a word search and a crossword) were brought in for those who finished faster.
- Session 6: The session started with the viewing of the other school's video (previously edited by the student-teachers). Following that, some assessment rubrics were given to the collaborative groups to evaluate the other class' performance. The grid was read out loud and doubts about vocabulary and the required activity were discussed and clarified. The students had to critically evaluate their partner's videos and then there was an activity (also in telecollaborative groups) to spot differences between both schools.

Group:

Date:

Video Assessment

Names of the members: EVALUATION CRITERIA	 Good job!	 So so...	 Could improve
Fluency (Not too fast nor too slow)			
Were sentences correct?			
Were the descriptions adequate?			
Clarity (We were able to understand the message)			
Images			
Other comments (originality...)			

Figure 8. Peer-assessment rubric

Singularities and Similarities

Think about the other school. Which things make it unique? Which things are similar to our school? Write ideas down, as many as you can, on the corresponding column.

Similarities	Singularities (make the other school unique)
Example: Both schools have a whiteboard in the classroom.	Example: [redacted] school does not have a boat on the playground.

Figure 9. Spot the differences activity

- Session 7: As in the previous session, the video from the other school was shown again. However, in this session there was time to watch the own production and listen to the feedback that the student-teachers had collected from the telecollaborative peers. Once this was completed, it was time to create another video, this time with more reflection in which the students could explain to the other school what makes them unique and what they had enjoyed learning about the other school. When the different collaborative groups had finished their intervention, they could work on a “thank you” virtual gift for the other school.

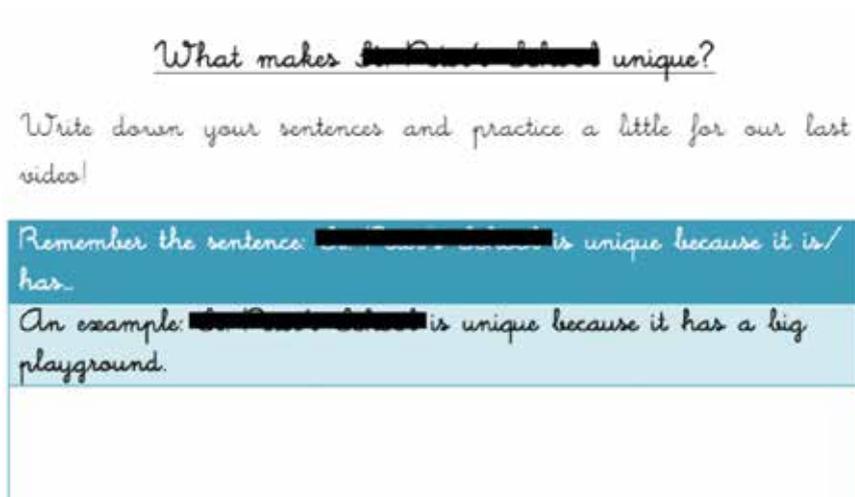


Figure 10. Video preparation worksheet

- Session 8: The first thing done during the last session was to view the other school’s reflective video to see what the other school had enjoyed about their video. After that, the gift from the other school was brought in and shown by the student-teachers (who had met previously to exchange them). Then the students completed peer and self-assessment rubrics, thereby assessing both their mates’ performances in the collaborative groups as well as their own implication in the project. The project was finalized with a whole group activity: a group discussion about what had been learnt through the project and which activities or points they had enjoyed or disliked. Every single student participated.

Self Assessment

			
<i>Group Work</i>			
Collaboration			
Role assumption			
<i>Video realization</i>			
Giving ideas			
My performance			
<i>Learning Process</i>			
I have learnt new things			
I have done a great effort to learn			
<i>What have I learnt? (3 aspects)</i>			
1.-			
2.-			
3.-			
<i>What to improve? (3 aspects)</i>			
1.-			
2.-			

Figure 11. Self-assessment rubric

Peer Assessment

  			
<i>Representative</i>			
Name:			
Direct the group			
Group Unit			
<i>Secretary</i>			
Name:			
Guide Conversations			
Write Agreements			
<i>Time & Material Controller</i>			
Name:			
Control the time			
Care the material			
<i>Doubt Person</i>			
Name:			
Ask Questions			
Ask Doubts			
<i>Comments</i>			

Figure 12. Peer-assessment rubric

Telecollaborative project outcomes

Despite being a short project, it can be said that it was also a very productive one. As it has been explained and described above, there were three main output which were the videos that each class elaborated for the other school. These were essential for the development of the project.

Table 4. Main output

Main Output
Video 1: Brief presentation to introduce ourselves to the other class.
Video 2: Characteristics of the different spaces in our school.
Video 3: <i>What makes the other school unique?</i>

Moreover, there were other things the students produced which can be labeled as “auxiliary products”. These correspond to the different worksheets the students completed which were necessary to produce the final output (the videos). In order to identify exactly how much the students had learnt throughout the project, a look was taken at the previously planned SWBAT⁴ of each session. All in all, to provide a general overview, we have found that the students have learnt/ developed three principle aspects:

- 1– Content: The areas of the school in their L2/L3 and some basic language structures, in particular, descriptive terms related to buildings, places, etc.
- 2– Communicative skills:
 - Presenting something to a group that has a different L1, which requires the use of communicative strategies in order to make themselves understood.
 - Sharing ideas in a very basic debate in order to reach a group consensus.
 - Applying new vocabulary in authentic interaction.
 - Planning an oral text according to their needs and interests through the use of the presented language cues (e.g. present simple tense).
- 3– Learning to learn:
 - Learning to work cooperatively.

4 SWBAT stands for *Students will be able to...*

- Selecting the most important information about a real situation.
- Providing group feedback (what is feedback, why is important to provide it, how we should provide it, etc.).
- Self-awareness: learning about themselves by accepting and recognizing which aspects of their L2 they still need to improve or work on.
- Valuing and appreciating feedback received from others.
- Critically assessing both their own performance and the performance of the other members of their collaborative group.
- Expressing their feelings throughout the teaching sequence.

Assessment

Assessment had a really important role throughout the whole project. As it has been shown in the previous sections of this chapter, it was quite a complex project and a great challenge for future teachers so evaluating each session was very useful in order to make small changes that were necessary to adapt to our students' needs. However, it is important to bear in mind that during the project development different kinds of assessment⁵ were used:

- **Formative assessment:** This typology was used to assess both the students' and the student-teachers' performances. Focusing on the students, some individual and group observation grids were created to be completed throughout all the sessions in order to have an overview of each pupil's performance and group development during the whole project. On the other hand, the two in-practice teachers had a meeting after each session between them and also a little talk (if needed) with their school mentors in order to exchange impressions and to make the necessary changes in further sessions.
- **Student-initiated assessment:** The authors felt it was really important that the students actively participate during the assessment process because it could help them realize what they had learnt and how they were evolving during the sessions. This assessment typology was

5 Note that in order to design the assessment of the project the work by Santmartí (2010) was taken into consideration.

- carried out at three different phases: in the telecollaborative exchanges (this will be explained further on), during the interaction with the teachers (they were asked for their opinion at certain times during the project) and at the end of the project when they were asked to complete a self-assessment and collaborative partners peer-assessment grid.
- **Teacher-initiated assessment:** Student-teachers wanted to ensure formative and continuous assessment throughout the project. In order to be as fair as possible when evaluating the students and not only consider the final products, different rubrics were created. In the case of assessment of ‘on-the-spot’ performance of different tasks or activities, the teachers assessed different aspects such as the language used by the learners and other aspects such as their use of images (semi-otic strategies), information (thinking skills), clarity (communicative skills) and so on. The other rubrics considered more general aspects such as behaviours and attitudes.

Individual Observation Grid		
STUDENT	ITEMS	COMMENTS
	Motivation	
	Participation	
	Behaviour	
	Learning Process	
	Others	

Group Observation Grid		
Group	ITEMS	COMMENTS
1. Members:	Cooperation and Collaboration	
	Role Assumption	
	Motivation	
	Participation	
	Interventions	
	Others	

Video: Teacher Grid		
Assessed Group:		
EVALUATION CRITERIA	LEVEL (1-3)	COMMENTS
Fluency		
Structure of the sentences		
Concordance: Adjective + Space		
Clarity		
Message		
Images		
Other comments (originality, ...)		

Figure 13. Examples of different rubrics used for assessment

- **Telecollaborative assessment:** Since the telecollaborative exchange, involving the creation of videos for another school and providing their partners feedback, was a key component of the learning process, these activities were integrated into the assessment as well. This was done through simple rubrics where the students were able to write some comments to give feedback.
- **Final assessment:** At the end of the project, there was specific time allotted for a global/final assessment as a whole group. The teachers asked the students their impressions about the project and also asked them for feedback and suggestions for future improvements. A large individual assessment grid was created, based on Ioannou-Georgiou and Pavlos (2003) model that allows teachers to have a wide vision of each student development during the project based on the results from the other assessment instruments.

Items	Student:				
	1	2	3	4	5
Attitudes					
Shows interest in other cultures.					
Shows interest and enjoys the lessons.					
Pay attention in class (teacher and peers).					
Shows initiative.					
Shows willingness to collaborate and help classmates.					
Shows respect and is friendly with the partners.					
Learning and communication skills	1	2	3	4	5
Respect the classroom materials.					
Shows willingness to make guesses.					
Tries harder when encounters difficulties.					
Use communication strategies and gestures to enhance his/her communicative ability.					
Asks for help from teacher and/or classmates when facing difficulties.					
Listening	1	2	3	4	5
Understands spoke text even if it includes a few unknown words and structures.					
Understand the main idea of a short spoken text.					
Speaking	1	2	3	4	5
Speaks with acceptable pronunciation and intonation.					
Volunteers contributions to class.					
Initiates communication with teacher/classmates.					
Speaks with acceptable accuracy.					
Participates in pair and group work.					

Figure 14. Final Assessment Grid

Some final thoughts: challenges and tips

This chapter's main purpose has been to provide readers with a general overview of how we have implemented a small telecollaborative project. We have also tried to show that, even though these projects seem to be

really difficult to implement, not only is it possible, they have a significant impact on students' L2/L3 acquisition, making it a worthwhile endeavour. However, admittedly, setting up and implementing a telecollaborative project presents several challenges, which we outline below, followed by possible advice for facing them. We finish with some final conclusions about our experience.

Even though this project has been a great experience, during its implementation some challenges or difficulties had to be faced. First of all, it has to be highlighted once more that at the moment of implementing this project, we were future teachers and implementing a teaching sequence during our internship was in itself a great challenge. In addition, our decision to create a teaching sequence that integrated virtual exchange applying a new teaching approach (for us and also for the schools), so, the challenge was even bigger. Fortunately, both schools gave us a lot of support during the design and implementation of the project and as a consequence we can assert that both we and the teachers at the respective schools learned a lot during the project's implementation.

Another challenge lies in the fact that's sometimes it is difficult for teachers to create a project that is appropriate for the National Curriculum, the school's general teaching approach and the students' needs. So, it is an even greater challenge suiting the National Curriculum, two schools' approaches to teaching and learning (fortunately both were quite innovative and their methods were similar) and the students' needs. While this might seem formidable, we have to recognize that we learnt a lot about understanding and selecting criteria from different sources of impact on the teaching while designing teaching activities.

Implementing the same project at the same time in two different schools presented its own difficulties. It is really important that the two groups have almost the same work pace in order to finish the activities at the same time so the project could advance through the different stages. In addition, the project had to be finished within a stipulated period of time, adding even more pressure.

In the Catalunya region, the majority of the schools have more than one group in each grade and this was also our case. All the groups were supposed to learn the same content at the same time. Due to issues of time, an adaptation of this project had to be planned in order to be accommodate the other groups in the same grade (carrying out telecollaboration with more than one group in the same school would have been too complex.

This is not an ideal solution, but we did not have enough time to try to carry out the project across the board for all the groups.

As it could be seen during this chapter, this project involved two different language subjects, L1 and L2/L3. Because the target language for each school was different this brought a new layer of difficulty to the planning and implementation and it was also difficult to coordinate the use of each language because each school had different amount of hours dedicated to a language per week (one school allocated more hours to L2/L3 than the other).

Moreover, the project was implemented during the last term and we were a little bit limited by the teachers, as they also had to finish their teaching sequences already planned into the school curriculum. Added to the time limitations, it is important to note that both schools had very different timetables so the two groups were never doing the language lessons at the same time. This meant that the telecollaborative element had to be implemented asynchronously.

Finally, the last challenge to face was the language policy that each school had. One school did not mind if one teacher taught two different languages to the same group but the other school preferred to have a different teacher for each language. Our solution to that was to include our 'magical' tools (hat or tie), because, in our project, the teachers in each school developed 'mixed' sessions, sometimes in students' L1 and other times in their L2/L3.

Despite the challenges, we acquired many strategies and gained a lot of confidence as teachers, enough to feel that we can provide some advice for implementing telecollaborative projects to other teachers. They are based on our teaching experiences and also try to give some ways to overcome the challenges explained above.

First of all, the importance of the planning process should be highlighted. These planning of these projects has to be wide, flexible and must afford some space for change as students (their difficulties, needs, interests...) and timing can, at times, require teachers to change their plans. The planning presented in this chapter is the final one and includes all the changes done during the teaching process. To achieve the ideal project, it is really important that teachers dedicate a lot of time to the project's preparation. Telecollaborative projects are so complex they need to be revised several times before applying them in a school context and even then, changes will probably have to be made during the project implementation.

So, do not be bothered if every time you revise it you make some changes. Also, you should let other professionals give you their opinion about the project before you start.

Related to what it has been said in the previous tip, it is also very important to look ahead to try to prevent obstacles that may take place. As a consequence, a key point for your project is to have a Plan B for each session because many problems could take place during its development: one group may work slower than the other, technology may not work. It is imperative to know what to do in these cases and not transmit feelings of anxiety to students in such moments.

Coordination with the partner is really fundamental. You have to do 'the same thing' in two different schools, so it is essential to ensure that both know what to do in each session. We strongly recommend meeting (in person or telecollaboratively) before and after each session in order to revise what you have to do, share your impressions and discuss what is coming up next and any changes that need to be done due to the results of the last session.

You need to be aware that you are working in a school that has its own culture. So it is important that the projects are adapted to both schools' contexts and also to the class and students' learning rhythms (L2/L3 level, attention to diversity, fast-fininishers ...). At the same time, each partner teacher has to realize that he or she is also the teacher from the other group and should assume that responsibility. You really need to care about the results of the other group because you are developing the project together.

The kids have to be really motivated; it is a really complex project and also a challenge for them. They have to be engaged so teachers have to be careful that the activities and the materials are motivating, engaging and adapted to their characteristics. The activities have to be challenging enough for them to help them learn, motivating them take a step forward, but at the same time avoiding frustration. For this, the feedback that we can receive from them is really vital for adapting the project to their needs and interests.

Related to the motivation and avoiding students' frustration, it is essential to set solid, meaningful, attainable and realistic goals and contents. When starting a project, you might feel motivated and want to do many things with them. This is positive, but you have to keep in mind that our main goal as teachers is that they learn and doing a lot of activities with no or no coherence does not help their learning process. So, keep

in mind that less may be more and be sure that your project content and activities are appropriate to your contexts' requirement.

Another issue we consider that should not be left aside is that the project should be constantly shared with the students; they need to have an active role and they need to know what are they doing in each activity and why. Goals and contents should be explained and discussed with them. We believe that this can ensure that the project is much more meaningful for them and help avoid the frustration that has already been mentioned.

Games and role play are really good strategies for acquiring and practicing new vocabulary as preliminary tasks for the telecollaborative activities. These require planning but as said before, you should not plan too many activities. You do not want to be too ambitious. Students need their time to process new concepts, so we recommend that you let them play with the language and experience "freely" before moving on to the more complex activities that involve the telecollaborative interaction (e.g. producing or listening to a video).

Doing a synchronous telecollaborative project (e.g. using videoconferencing) is really attractive and, for sure, could seem more motivating for our students as they can maintain direct interaction with their partners. But we have to be aware that circumstances do not always let us do what we want or what we think would be 'better' for our students. So we recommend that you do not feel frustrated and do not try to make strange 'timetable puzzles'. The asynchronous option also provides good and meaningful learning for our students and it motivates them in a 'different' learning process; creating output that is aimed at an audience outside of the classroom is a very motivating way to 'break' routines in more traditionally focused language classrooms.

Finally, we have insisted a lot on the students' motivation and the importance that they enjoy themselves and have fun during these projects. We want to add and strongly emphasize that the teachers' motivation and enjoyment is also an important feature to keep in mind. You will have to work a lot and sometimes you may feel overwhelmed but remember that if one session is a mess, it opens up new doors to continue learning and to improve your project even more. Be brave, take risks and enjoy this incredible adventure with your students. For sure, at the end, you will be pleasantly and gratefully surprised with the results.

Final Considerations

As it can be deduced from this chapter, implementing this project was a wonderful experience. It allowed us to experiment with an innovative approach and gain new teaching knowledge as well as to present a new teaching method to two schools that have the desire to evolve and include new approaches to their teaching practices.

First of all, we have to assert that one of our most important motivations towards this project was also one of our biggest challenges. That is, we aimed to bring ‘true and real interactive’ opportunities to our lessons in order to let our students improve their L2/L3 level. Although it may seem that we did not achieve this since they were never in direct contact (for example via videoconference) but we consider that we interaction was accomplished through the video recording. This is supported by the results from the project results and also our students seemed to have had a great experience. We have no way of knowing if doing this project in a synchronous way would have been better, but we are pleased and proud of the results given that it was our first professional experience in this field. Despite that, we do not discard the future possibility of applying this same project, or a new one, using synchronous communication, as it would give us new perspectives about telecollaboration.

We also have learnt quite a lot about the use of technology in the classroom. For us, this aspect was quite new; we did not use technological resources in our lessons very often. After that experience, we feel we can declare that this methodology is a good way to get in contact with those resources and we even began to enjoy them (we were self-declared Ludites before our TEBPLL class) and now use them quite a lot in our daily lives. We also are thankful with our university mentors who helped us quite a lot in this particular field.

Another challenge was providing suitable attention to the diversity of our classrooms. We feel that we have managed to cope with different student profiles and learner needs quite well through the use of collaborative groups, with assigned roles. We highly recommend new teachers use this kind of activities in order to teach their students to collaborate. The students in our project enjoyed this approach and by the end of the project managed quite well when working in teams.

Of course it is not necessary to do a tandem language exchange to do a telecollaborative project. Some projects could be designed for groups

that share a target goal (e.g. French as a foreign language). However, we consider the bilingual essence of our project as one of its main strengths. Sharing two languages, despite their acquisition level, helped our students to find and integrate communicative strategies for making themselves understood by both L1 and L2 speakers.

We have to state that the best part of doing this project was the possibility to work in tandem. At the beginning, it might seem complicated that two teachers work collaboratively in the same project at the same time, but, for sure it was the best part of this experience. Working as a team is so rewarding because you can help each other in bad moments, you have more ideas to share and, for sure, the project is qualitatively enriched. Another great aspect about teamwork, and one of the most positive ones, is meeting new people and contexts. That aspect will expand your educative and social knowledge and, also, break so many stereotypes.

To sum up, we want to highlight, again, that we are really proud of our project and implementing it has been a wonderful experience. This feeling of joy was also shared with the teachers, schools and also the students who, at the end of the project, felt fortunate to have been given the opportunity to take part in this adventure. Finally, we do not want to close this chapter without encouraging our readers to take risks, be brave and take part in this kind of projects bearing in mind that sometimes, the most unbelievable experiences can become the best opportunities in your professional life.

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