Language Learning & Technology
ISSN 1094-3501 CC BY-NC-ND
2026, Volume 30, Issue 1
pp. 1–5

BOOK REVIEW

Review of Telecollaboration Applications in Foreign Language Classrooms

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Telecollaboration Applications in Foreign Language Classrooms

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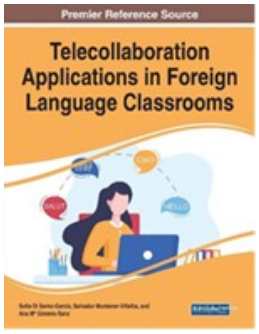
2023

ISBN: 9781668470800

US $ 198.00

374 pp.

IGI Global



Tellecollaboration gives learners the opportunity to interact with individuals in a different geographic location, and as such, it is often incorporated in foreign language education (O'Dowd, 2021). Because a great deal of research on telecollaboration has focused on learning goals and learning outcomes, Colpaert (2020) has called for more research on the affordances of telecollaboration and on the telecollaborative learning process. With the aim of examining underexplored domains of telecollaboration, the book, *Telecollaboration Applications in Foreign Language Classrooms,* edited by Di Sarno-García et al. (2023) is a timely and essential contribution to the field. The authors of the 14 chapters in this volume have adopted innovative pedagogical and methodological approaches in their investigations.

In Chapter 1, Toscu describes a systematic review of 56 telecollaboration studies published between 2003 and 2021, which explored a variety of applications of telecollaboration in diverse foreign language (FL) contexts. According to Toscu, the results reveal the bicultural nature of telecollaboration partnerships and contexts, the primary use of asynchronous communication modes (44% of studies adopted the asynchronous mode, 28% adopted the synchronous mode, and 28% utilized both modes), several positive learning outcomes, and the prevalent adoption of qualitative research methods. Following this overview of telecollaboration use in FL contexts in Chapter 2, Tsubota et al. report on a telecollaboration project conducted in Japan. The authors examine how the use of a pre-telecollaboration training framework and a reflection task affected the development of Japanese students' English speaking skills. According to the authors, analyses of multiple data sources (e.g., Versant speaking tests, Willingness to Communicate questionnaires, and a Shyness questionnaire) indicated that telecollaboration led to reduced shyness, increased willingness to communicate, and enhanced speaking abilities among the participants.

The second section of the book consists of three chapters on how telecollaboration can support students' pragmatic development (their ability to use language appropriately in various contexts). In Chapter 3, Espejel et al. recounted the ways in which they engaged learners in applying WhatsApp, a mobile instant messaging app, in a telecollaboration project. The authors focused their analysis on multimodal aspects of learners' interactions, reporting that diverse multimodal elements (e.g., audio, video, pictures, and emojis) were used by the participants during WhatsApp interactions. Particularly the use of emojis seemed to promote a sense of closeness among learners, to generate topics for instant-messaging conversations, and

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to offer opportunities for language learning. The authors conclude that WhatsApp can be an effective tool for fostering learners' online communication skills and that the applications of multimodal elements play a critical role in developing learners' pragmatic competence.

In Chapter 4, Nuzzo and Donato engaged L1 English speakers to use a newly developed questionnaire for rating the pragmatic appropriateness of three Italian learners' English, who participated in a telecollaboration project involving feedback-providing and discussion activities with their peers. The researchers analyzed the learners' pragmatic competence and compared these findings to a previous study that examined pragmatic strategies, but found no evidence of incidental pragmatic learning in the current data. Despite this, both studies confirmed that peer feedback can be effective in supporting L2 learners' pragmatic development, particularly in applying criticism and suggestion strategies within telecollaborative contexts. The key findings reveal that, although both raters and researchers identified similar features related to politeness, directness, and mitigation, the raters' assessments did not clearly reflect subtle pragmatic growth over time. This underscores the ongoing challenge of accurately evaluating pragmatic competence and suggests that more nuanced or explicit instructional approaches may be necessary to effectively measure and foster pragmatic development in L2 learners.

In Chapter 5, Di Sarno-García investigates the extent to which 37 Spanish-speaking students transfer L1 norms to their L2 when apologizing to English-speaking peers during telecollaboration. First, the scholar engaged the participants in a pre-project survey to collect information on their demographics and prior knowledge of apologies. Next, the participants received training in pragmatics and apologies before engaging in six role-playing tasks via Zoom videoconferencing. Di Sarno-Garcia analyzed the transcripts of the synchronous Zoom interactions based on a taxonomy of apology strategies used by L1 English speakers and calculated the frequency of occurrence of each strategy. The author identified an apology strategies used by the Spanish-speaking participants: 'I hope you understand.' This strategy was used by the Spanish-speaking participants during the role-playing tasks but not by the L1 English speakers, perhaps indicating a transfer from Spanish. According to the author, the findings underscore L1 influence on L2 pragmatic performance and expand our understanding of apology strategies used in cross-cultural communication.

Section three of the volume includes two chapters whose authors examine the promotion of L2 learners' willingness to communicate (WTC) through telecollaboration. In Chapter 6, Rezaeyan and Gimeno-Sanz report on a telecollaboration study in which 64 EFL students were randomly assigned to an experiential condition or a control condition for 8 weeks. The intervention condition involved teacher-mentored, collaborative, pre-task planning, which involved structured guidance from teachers, while the control condition involved student-led, collaborative, pre-task planning. Structured guidance from teachers consisted of presentations on effective pragmatic strategies, scenario-based role playing tasks, and teacher feedback. After the experiment, the authors asked participants to complete an acceptability judgement test, an output-based pragmatics competence test, and a WTC survey after the project. The findings showed that the intervention group outperformed the control group on the pragmatic competence measures and reported a higher WTC. Rezaeyan and Gimeno-Sanz emphasize the importance of pre-task teacher mentoring for effective intercultural communication during telecollaboration.

In Chapter 7, Canto et al. use a mixed-methods design to investigate the use of virtual reality (VR) in telecollaboration, in the hope that it would improve students' WTC and engagement. For the study, the authors designed tasks in which 26 undergraduate language learners (17 from Germany and nine from the Netherlands) had to negotiate for meaning in Spanish. The tasks provided to participants were immersive virtual city tours using the VR tools Oculus Quest and Oculus Go. According to Canto et al., analyses of survey responses, participant reflection diaries, video recordings of participants during the task, and focus group interviews indicated that the participants experienced less anxiety when communicating in the VR-based telecollaboration environment. The authors attributed this lower anxiety to the anonymity offered by avatars. This study contributes to a growing body of knowledge on the intersection of immersive technologies, telecollaboration, and language education.

The theme of Section four is intercultural communication and global citizenship. In Chapter 8, Clouet measures 18 students' empathy, open-mindedness, and intercultural communicative competence (ICC) through questionnaires and evaluations of their oral presentations. Participants from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds in Spain engaged in both asynchronous and synchronous language and intercultural activities during the COVID-19 pandemic, exploring topics related to Spanish and Latin American cultures, discussing their opinions, and completing tasks that promoted intercultural dialogue and awareness throughout a three-week online language program. According to the author, the participants were able to engage in meaningful online interactions with peers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and the interactions enabled students to recognize their cultural biases. Readers may be inspired by Clouet's implementation of structured learning activities, oral presentations, and cultural reflections to develop learners' ICC and global citizenship through telecollaboration.

In Chapter 9, Salomão and Viana da Silva highlight how emotional intelligence (EI) supports intercultural learning and addressing global challenges. In a telecollaboration involving 48 Brazilian and 44 U.S. students, participants interacted via Zoom, completed pre-surveys on their knowledge, watched videos about climate change, and collaboratively discussed solutions. Using Goleman's EI model and the global competence matrix, the authors found that the virtual exchange fostered emotional and global competence by eliciting emotions like sadness and anger, which motivated empathy and agency. The collaborative tasks also enhanced students' communication skills, teamwork capacities, and willingness to act, demonstrating increased social awareness, ethical responsibility, and active global citizenship.

Section five consists of three chapters that explore learner and teacher perceptions of telecollaboration. In Chapter 10, Bellot analyzes pre- and post-project surveys to unpack the perceptions of Spanish university students of participating in a telecollaborative task that required them to analyze English literature with American partners. In the surveys, the participants reported satisfaction with the telecollaboration. The analysis of participants' survey responses and reflections showed that most participants reported greater understanding of cultural differences and demonstrated improved cross-cultural communication skills after engaging in the virtual exchange. The author highlights the potential of virtual exchanges for developing transferable skills, such as intercultural communicative competence and digital competence.

In Chapter 11, Rámila Díaz and Vinagre examine the potential of 7-week telecollaboration for developing students' transversal competences—such as digital literacy, critical thinking, and intercultural skills—by engaging 105 undergraduate students from Spain and the U.S. in a series of progressively complex, interrelated tasks, including information exchange, contrast and comparison, and collaborative activities designed to foster intercultural understanding and skill development. To gain a multi-faceted perspective of participants' perceptions, the authors employed both quantitative methods (descriptive statistics and word counts) and qualitative approaches, such as Grounded Theory. The participants reported on their perceived growth in transversal competences, particularly their foreign language communication skills, social skills in teamwork tasks, and appreciation of diversity, after participating in telecollaboration.

Building on student perceptions, Chapter 12 by Vinanda examines a teacher's reflective journal to explore pedagogical strategies for effective telecollaboration. The study highlights how observation, reflection, and flexibility—facilitated through an action research approach—were crucial in designing and implementing tasks that met the needs of Indonesian and Russian students, ultimately enhancing their intercultural awareness and transversal skills such as digital literacy and critical thinking. The findings underscore the vital roles of teachers as designers, facilitators, and mentors, whose active engagement and adaptive strategies were essential for the program's success and pedagogical impact.

The theme of Section six is task-based language teaching in telecollaboration and the ways in which task design can contribute to students' learning experiences. In Chapter 13, Pomposo and Martínez investigate the development of 49 undergraduate engineering students' civic and entrepreneurial competences through telecollaborative learning. Civic competences refer to an individual's capacity to communicate effectively in public, and entrepreneurial competencies refer to the essential skills required for professional readiness and career development. For the study, the participants were involved in co-

designing a sustainable business start-up. According to the authors, the analyses of pre- and post-telecollaboration questionnaires as well as video recordings of the participants' online interactions revealed that the start-up task supported the development of students' civic and entrepreneurial competences. Specifically, Pomposo and Martínez conclude that telecollaborative tasks that challenge students to think creatively and critically about real-world sustainability problems can improve their linguistic, digital, and collaborative skills.

In Chapter 14, Loizidou and Savlovska explore the tasks developed by future French language teachers who tutored language learners in an asymmetrical telecollaboration project. The future language teachers co-designed pedagogical scenarios for the students, and they provided support for the completion of the online tasks. The authors found that most pedagogical scenarios aimed to produce information gap or opinion expression outcomes, with a majority focusing on independent, open-ended tasks supported mainly by multimodal, socio-cultural resources like videos and texts. Further, the interaction analysis revealed that tasks designed for tutor-learner exchanges were predominantly unidirectional, with limited peer-to-peer engagement, especially in more prescriptive and rigid scenarios; however, scenarios encouraging decision-making and opinion exchange fostered greater learner autonomy and interaction, which highlighted the importance of task flexibility and the tutor's role in facilitating meaningful peer engagement.

As a whole, the volume covers research on telecollaboration involving participants from 12 countries (Brazil, France, Germany, Latvia, Japan, Iceland, Iran, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, the U.K., and the United States), demonstrating an increase in the internationalization of telecollaboration. This edited volume contributes to knowledge of best practices in telecollaboration by exploring under-examined domains, drawing attention to task design and learning processes, and describing a variety of innovative pedagogical and methodological approaches. Some of the underexplored dimensions covered in this volume include L1 influences on pragmatic appropriateness in the L2 as well as the role of willingness to communicate, transversal competencies, and emotional intelligence in telecollaboration. In addition, many contributors to this volume adopted innovative pedagogical approaches (e.g., action-oriented pedagogical scenarios and rigorous methodologies (e.g., the use of a cyberpragmatic lens to analyze WhatsApp interactions), which are helpful for accounting for the complexities of telecollaborative learning. Finally, the book is reader-friendly due to its clear structure and carefully edited prose. Many authors in this volume effectively used tables and figures to display results, and they provided sufficient explanations of theories and concepts without presuppositions of the reader's prior knowledge of a topic.

Overall, this volume makes a timely and important contribution to the knowledge base of telecollaborative learning. It can serve as a resource for foreign language teachers, international scholars, and school administrators who are interested in using telecollaboration within their foreign language programs. In particular, foreign language teachers may refer to the volume for practical and innovative ideas on the design and implementation of telecollaboration projects. International scholars may get inspired by the innovative pedagogical and methodological approaches that appear in the volume, and school administrators who aim to promote the innovative practices of teachers and the internationalization of education programs may find the volume a helpful resource. To conclude, this volume is a valuable resource that deepens our understanding of the complexities and possibilities of telecollaboration while expanding knowledge of innovative pedagogical strategies and best practices—making it highly recommended for educators, scholars, and administrators committed to advancing international and technology-mediated language education.

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Acknowledgements

This work was supported by two grants, including a grant from the Teacher Professional Development Funds for Beijing Normal University, China [grant number 311325215402], and the Natural Science Foundation of Guandong Province, China [grant number 2024A0505050025]

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