

DIVERGENT PERCEPTIONS OF TELECOLLABORATIVE LANGUAGE LEARNING TASKS: TASK-AS-WORKPLAN VS. TASK-AS-PROCESS

Melinda Dooly, [Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona](#)

The use of computer-supported collaborative learning is more and more commonplace in language learning classrooms; this has given rise to the need for more research on roles and processes of telecollaboration in language teaching and learning and how online interactions are integrated with face-to-face classroom activities. Using a data-driven, qualitative approach to provide snapshots of a telecollaborative language learning project, this article examines participants' modes of language use beginning with the task-as-workplan (Breen, 1987, 1989) and then examining episodes (both F2F and online) and outcomes of the task-in-process. By pinpointing specific moments of emerging language knowledge in the telecollaborative process, the article aims to delineate salient factors involved in this type of language learning context.

INTRODUCTION

Despite being a fairly new educational mode, there is a considerable and growing body of research on telecollaboration in language learning, and definitions and uses of telecollaboration have gone through many transformations. Generally, telecollaboration in language learning contexts is seen as an Internet-based exchange aimed at developing both language skills and intercultural communicative competence (Guth & Helm, 2010). In this article the label Telecollaborative Language Learning (henceforth TlcLL)¹ will be employed.

Language educators know well that communicative-based environments do not guarantee that language learning takes place. The task design and its implementation are key elements for efficient language learning to develop—a carefully designed task or activity that requires off- and online co-construction of knowledge not only provides opportunities for target language practice, it also helps integrate language use as the means for shared knowledge-building, thus further enhancing purposeful communication. (For an in-depth overview of “the growing awareness of the centrality of tasks in CMC [computer-mediated communication] learning environments” (p. 19) and subsequent research into task-based language teaching in CMC, see Müller-Hartmann & Schocker-v. Ditfurth, 2008).

Several researchers of TlcLL have called for more focus on what it means to efficiently design a communicative venue for online interaction in the target language (Levy & Stockwell, 2006; Mangenot, 2008). Hermeneutic views of the more common task typology used in telecollaboration can be found in recent literature (see Harris, 2002; O'Dowd & Ware, 2009), however research into what occurs during the learning process in TlcLL is still lagging behind. Arguably, this is even more so in the case of TlcLL in primary education, where there are far fewer studies. Along these lines, this article aims to explore the discourse space between online and F2F language learning talk that takes place in a fifth grade classroom in Catalonia, Spain. The learners in the study participated in a yearlong telecollaborative project with a partner class in the Czech Republic. By considering data from specific episodes during the learning process (both on- and offline), the text outlines the anatomy of the language-in-action in these different modes of communication, all of which were essential, interlocking components to the overall project design. Considering that the use of telecollaboration in language classrooms is becoming more common, a micro-analysis of divergent perceptions of telecollaborative language learning tasks of the participants involved (learners and teachers) may provide useful insight into the learning process, along with understanding of potential gaps between task plans and actions (and final output). The environment is understood as a blended learning environment² therefore data from off- and online contexts are taken into

account.

Contextual and conversational analysis begins with the task-as-workplan (in the classroom) and then examines different episodes (both F2F and online) of the task-in-process (Breen, 1987, 1989) to discern whether student uses of different resources are legitimized by the teacher as part of the emergent language learning in the TlcLL project. The conjunction of different, segmented data, collocated within the “network of activity” (Barab, Hay, & Yamagata-Lynch, 2001) that constitutes the yearlong telecollaborative project provide the foci for the driving questions of this descriptive study:

- Is a relationship between learner repertoires, tasks, and output discernable in the described episodes (snapshots)?
- Are there indicators of language learning in these described episodes (snapshots)?
- Are these indicators recognised and acknowledged in the teaching process?
- Are there divergences between task plans and participant actions?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Lamy and Hampel (2007) provide an overview of the history of computer-supported language acquisition, describing it in three broad phases: behaviouristic CALL, communicative CALL and integrative CALL (p. 9). In the first phase, computers principally were used for individual drill-type exercises. In the communicative phase, targeted language practice included speaking and listening albeit via machine-learner interaction. The integrative phase (beginning in the 1990s) involves multimedia network-based interaction, which usually mediates human-human interaction and is often group-based. Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories have generally guided studies of language learning online (Levy, 1998). Chapelle (2001) provides a comprehensive overview of the connections between SLA and computer-supported learning.

There are two broad paradigms which have been quite influential in SLA (Lamy & Hampel, 2007): cognitive and sociocultural (although these can be further categorised into different theoretical branches and research areas). “Cognitive SLA is an applied psycholinguistic discipline oriented towards the cognitive processes involved in the learning and the use of language” (Lamy & Hampel, 2007, p. 19). (For a very thorough description of the debate between the two fields of inquiry in SLA, see Zuengler & Miller, 2006). Cognitivism focuses principally on the individual, with the notion of the single language learner processing linguistic input and output (based on the metaphor of the brain as a computer). Recently however, SLA research has received criticism for holding an imbalanced focus on the four linguistic competencies (listening, reading, writing and speaking), based on mostly empirical research that mainly considers form and accuracy (with idealised images of native-speaker performance) and with little consideration of language as a process and a communicative means for use in socially and culturally embedded cultural activities (see Firth & Wagner, 1997, 2007).

Sociocultural theories aim to put more emphasis on the importance of interaction for language learning and in turn highlight situated, learner-centred social practices as part of the learning process. In recent years, there have been a number of studies that propose the importance of the sociocultural base of language learning (see Firth & Wagner, 1997, 2007; Lantolf, 2000; Mondada & Pekarek-Doehler, 2004). Roberts (2001), Kanno and Norton (2003), and Norton and Kamal (2003) have even argued that learning linguistic competences is in itself a socialising process in which the individual deploys and negotiates new identities as a member of the target language community. This sociocultural perspective can be found in CMC research as well:

[T]he role of technology in education has increasingly been studied through the lens of learning theories and models that mark a departure from cognitive approaches, by locating knowledge not only

in the mind of individual learners but also in the history, culture and communities that provide the context in which learning is taking place. (Blin, 2005, p. 5)

Applying an even more critical stance to early SLA research, Hall, Cheng, and Carlson (2006) assert that much of the research in SLA relies on three assumptions that have underlying theoretical flaws. These are:

1. The assumption of homogeneity of language knowledge across speakers and contexts;
2. A view of L1 and L2 language knowledge as distinct systems; and
3. The presumption of a qualitative distinction between multi-competence and mono-competence (Hall, Cheng, & Carlson, 2006, p. 220).

These authors contend that speakers' language knowledge should not be considered as homogeneous; they argue that language knowledge is "not composed of a-contextual, stable system components" (Hall et al., 2006, p. 230). This is predicated on the fact that an individual's use of language is not static, even in the case of native speakers; levels of accuracy and fluency will vary, according to everyday contexts. Someone writing an article for an academic journal, for instance, will pay more attention to form and accuracy of language than he or she might when writing an e-mail to a colleague or sending an SMS message (which are often purposefully composed of lexical, syntactical and spelling errors). By acknowledging these "varying shapes and substance of individuals' language use" (Hall et al., 2006, p. 233) we can have better insight into the way in which learners' develop their language knowledge according to the context in which they are interacting and make comparisons of individual use across different episodes and communicative events.

The other two "flawed assumptions" stem from an idea that language learning processes are sequential and monolingual (based on the notion that learners are principally monolingual speakers learning other languages as separate systems). Given that many telecollaborative language learning processes take place within blended-learning environments in which at least one (and often times more than one) other language is available as a communicative resource (apart from the target language), this assumption begs reconsideration. In most cases, the task design does indeed aim to elicit a monolingual product (output) at the end of a learning process. However, the process of generating the product itself, especially among lower level (multilingual) learners, is not always a monolingual process, despite the best intentions of students or the admonitions of teachers to use the target language.

Research indicates that multilingual practices can contribute to the eventual construction of a final monolingual output. It has been put forth that plurilingual-hybrid practices often scaffold cognitive and communicative activities which eventually allow speakers to participate in monolingual activities at the end of the process (Borràs, Canals, Dooly, Moore, & Nussbaum, 2009). Recent research with multilingual language learners working towards monolingual task accomplishment shows that they tend to shift between different types (or stages) of L1 and target language use (Borràs et al., 2009; Masats, Nussbaum, & Unamuno, 2007). Their code-switching allows them to overcome communicative obstacles, facilitating an eventual stage where the learner can maximise use of the target language for task management, task fulfilment, and other communicative events (e.g., side-sequences).

This suggests that research must adopt a learner-centred focus that looks at how learners use their various linguistic resources to acquire communicative expertise in the target language (Kasper, 2004), and in this particular case how this process follows a path that starts with multilingual practices (the simultaneous presence of more than one language) to reach voluntary monolingual practices (the use of only one language at will) through both off- and online interaction. Furthermore, by viewing the multilingual language learner as having an integrated system of different languages that "constitute a repertoire" (Canagarajah, 2009, p. 5), the idea of competences (often based on native versus non-native idealised standards) must be interrogated.

Interrogating the idea of competences inevitably foregrounds the question of what is evidence of language learning. Recent work critiques the dominant view of language assessment, arguing for a more context sensitive model of dynamic assessment (see Rea-Dickins & Gardner, 2000; Poehner & Lantolf, 2005). Gardner and Rea-Dickins (2002) propose using language sampling (recordings of what learners say and do during a task and analysing this later) in order to gain more insight into learners' needs and abilities. According to Rea-Dickins (2006, 2007, December), there are a number of potential clues that can be used as an indication of a child's learning. These include when a learner is able to extend a concept; is able to relate the activity to own experience; use the targeted learning concepts in different contexts and provide evidence of engagement and persistence on a task (among others). This is consistent with language learning research that focuses on the socially constructed nature of learning interaction over time.

This in turn, brings up the question of what constitutes research data for language learning. It is becoming more common to find classroom interaction presented as a means of study for language learning processes, although this type of reduced data has also been critiqued (see Stubbs, 1981) due to the fact that it is the researcher who selects and then interprets the data. Nonetheless, an interactional view sees the language input and output of the classroom as inextricably linked and therefore a micro-perspective of different learning episodes can provide insight into this learning process (see key studies of classroom interaction analysis by Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975; Mondada & Pekarek-Doehler, 2004; Seedhouse, 2004). This type of analysis, in large part based on social research methods, is traditionally grounded in repeated study of collections of examples of human interaction as a means of gaining insight into specific moments of very complex, situated practices, as is the case of language teaching and learning.

Attempting to cover the complexity of interaction in language learning situations implies inherent difficulties in classroom research. The approach adopted here focuses on segmented chunks (referred to here as snapshots) of the language learners' actions as the unit of analysis in order to encapsulate the language learner as a social and cultural participant engaged in linguistic interaction. At the same time, endeavouring to delineate what constitutes interrelated nodes of actions within a classroom is difficult since any one pedagogical activity is inevitably embedded in many other activities and often times the activity itself is intersected by many other factors.

Barab et al. (2001), for example, underscore the highly complex interrelations that make up an activity system in the learning process, suggesting that a methodological approach based on situated cognition must necessarily try to "[track] knowing in the making as the course unfolds" (p. 64). While these episodes do not provide a full picture of learning processes, they do offer chunks (or nodes) of segmented data that provide insight into the relationship between the nodes that represent the "historical development" (Barab et al., p. 69) of the learner. Similarly, finding a way to map the density of a yearlong language learning course in which the activities and outcomes were integrated into both online and face-to-face contexts can be problematic. Therefore, the analysis traces the interaction patterns in both F2F and online activities through these snapshots (interrelated episodes of data segments) in order to discern how varying activities promote or hinder opportunities for learners to use the target language productively and thus gain insight into the effect of specific tasks on students' language production and, over time, on their language development.

The complexity of this blended-learning interaction is further exacerbated by the difficulties of defining task within a SLA or foreign language learning situation. Seedhouse (2005) argues for the need for more clarification of the notions of task from the perspective of task-as-workplan (which deals with intentions and expectations of the task) and task-in-process (or what "actually happens", p. 535) and task-as-outcomes (Seedhouse & Almutairi, 2009, p. 312). This underscores the notion that learners, as active agents in learning processes, can modify activities according to their own intentions—modifications which may or may not be in direct accordance with the initial intentions of that task-as-workplan.

As for the off- and online dimensions of learning processes, Kitade (2008) states that most previous

studies “have examined only online interactions...without addressing the role of offline interactions or the learners’ engagement in combined online and offline interactions” (p. 67). The author posits that “in order to fully understand how learners implement a task...and the potential of this task with regard to L2 learning” it is necessary to integrate a sociocultural perspective that examines and reveals “how each type of interaction—online, offline, or combined interactions—can provide learners with opportunities for collaborative learning” (p. 67).

PARTICIPANTS AND CONTEXT

The data come from a yearlong telecollaborative, cross-disciplinary project that focused on both content and language. While it was not formally labelled as a Content Language and Integrated Learning (CLIL) project, the project was designed and implemented by an English specialist and the social science teacher and dealt with environmental issues. The project was carried out across the full academic year with Year Five students (ten-to-eleven year old students) in a Spanish primary school (in the Barcelona area, thus the principal school language of instruction is Catalan). The partner school was located in the Czech Republic (in the Vychodocesky State); the school language was Czech. There were twenty-six students in the Barcelona group (twelve girls, fourteen boys) and twenty-eight students in the Czech group (fifteen girls and thirteen boys). The focus of this inquiry is on the Catalan students. The project aims were for the students to make initial contact, form work groups to exchange information and opinions about different types of pollution (paying special attention to locally-specific issues), and to form work groups made up of local and national pairs to compile ideas for contributing to a shared wiki about environmental problems. The teachers took charge of posting the negotiated information to the wiki.

The data were compiled by a student teacher working at the Spanish primary school while completing a graduate degree in research in language and literature teaching methods; her research advisor helped record and collect the initial data. The teacher and research advisor were not directly involved in the planning but the student teacher did take part in the implementation and the research advisor was an observer. Class sessions that were related to the telecollaborative work were recorded throughout the year using one recorder per working group. These were transcribed using the language archiving technology called *Transana* (transcription key in [Appendix A](#)).

Permission to audio record the face-to-face exchanges was obtained from the Spanish students’ parents, however due to strict regulations in the school the exchanges could not be videotaped. The teacher also received permission from both the Spanish and the Czech participants for full access to the data online (forums, e-mails, wiki).

MATERIALS

The project activities consisted of face-to-face work (whole class activities, group work activities, pair work and individual work) and online work with international partners in the Czech Republic (primarily pair work and group work). The English specialist was in charge of implementing the exchange, including the preparatory work leading up to the online collaboration. Some of the online activities involved:

- Participating in a forum about environmental issues in which the students explained different topics and concepts related to the environment that were relevant to their countries (e.g., water conservation was important to the students in Spain following a drought in 2008). The pupils were asked to post comments, links, and images.
- Comparing and contrasting different issues that were important to each community and how they were dealt with.
- Based on the previously shared information, preparing a collaborative environment alert wiki.

Overall, the data collected during the year are the teacher’s work plans (handwritten in a notebook; seven

recorded F2F class sessions, screenshots of forum interactions during the year (breakdown of interactions can be found in [Appendix B](#)) and the final wiki. The data presented here consist of:

1. Teachers' workplans (Spanish EFL teacher: Laura)
2. Student-teacher's field notes
3. F2F pair work interaction (one extract)
 - Participants: two female students (Berta, Clara) and one female teacher (Laura)
4. Forum entries
 - Three students (Maria, Berta, and Clara)
 - Two teachers (Laura, Agnieszka)

The names of the participants have been changed.

ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK: DATA SELECTION AND MANAGEMENT

Since task is understood here as something in progress—in a constant state of negotiation and construction (Breen, 1987, 1989)—these data extracts are seen as snapshots of interaction, allowing glimpses into moments of specific language learning events taking place during the overall exchange, and not just as end-products. Taking the position that language learning is dynamic, non-linear, and contingent upon multiple, non-isolatable factors, then language use and learning can be seen to emerge in nested patterns. “These patterns are not predicted but ‘retrodicted’ or described post priori, since interrelationships are so complex that causation in the traditional sense is untenable” (Reinhardt, in press).

Furthermore, within an interactional research framework, data analysis actually begins with the data compilation and segmentation. The analytical approach follows the premise posed by Barab et al. (2001) that methodological approaches aiming to capture learning processes from a situated-cognition perspective must try to describe the rich contexts “of knowing about [knowledge-construction] that are so fundamental to situative or distributed conceptions of cognition” (p. 67). These authors propose a means of representing the learning process “as a network of activity—a network that allows for the inclusion (capturing) of material, conceptual, and social components” (Barab et al., 2001, p. 67). They apply a method of identifying relevant data through three steps. “[E]xperiences are (a) sectioned into action-relevant episodes (AREs), (b) parsed down to codes in a database, and (c) then represented as nodes in a network so that the historical development of the particular phenomenon of interest can be traced” (Barab et al., 2001, p. 63).

A similar approach is taken here, however, rather than using AREs, snapshots (captured data segments) revolving around chosen language use are employed. “It is important to note that the boundaries of what constitutes a chunk are determined by the needs of the study and not some ontological truth” (Barab et al., 2001, p. 66). The snapshots in this study focus principally on one pair (girl-girl) in different stages of the task-as-process. The pair also interacts with others but the focus is on the language use by these two girls. The timeline shown in Figure 1 helps underscore the complexity of describing the interrelatedness of tasks and activities over a long-term period. For instance, snapshot 2, time wise, falls after snapshots 3, 4 and 5, but it is clearly linked to the snapshots that come before and after it. This will be described in more detail in the analysis.

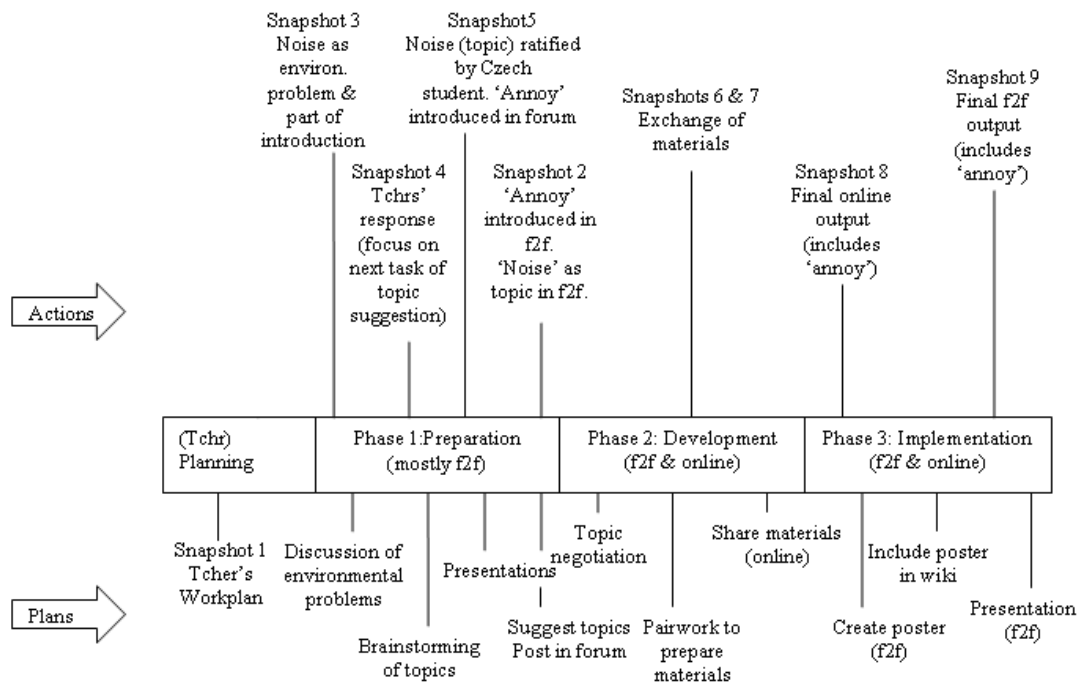


Figure 1. Mapping the network of activities.

Before determining which data segments were of interest, multiple listening sessions were arranged (twice for the transcriptions done by the student teacher and researcher) and once for triangulation by a nonparticipant. Following that, data sessions³ were arranged to (a) select relevant data segments (snapshots) for further analysis, and (b) revise and analyse the selected data. Due to the nature of the telecollaborative situation, these sessions dealt with more than the recorded transcripts; thus written and online data were also included (teachers' workplans; student teacher's field notes; F2F pair work interaction; forum entries).

Taking Rea-Dickins' (2006, 2007, December) indicators of language learning as a preliminary basis for data selection (extension of a concept; relating an activity to own experience; use of targeted learning concepts in different contexts; evidence of engagement and persistence on a task), the data session participants incorporated van Lier's notion of being "on the lookout for patterns and regularities" in the data (1988, p.16). This article focuses on snapshots that showed recurring patterns of use of new lexical items in the students' L2 repertoire: *noise* and *annoy*. (The reasons for this selection are illustrated further on.) Researchers are not unmotivated by the theoretical frames in which they move, thus the way in which the data were selected and managed is considered part of the analysis cycle, as illustrated in Figure 2.

Following the data segmentation related to the chosen features to be analysed (episodic snapshots related to the words *noise* and *annoy*), the interactions—both face-to-face and online—are examined through the parameters applied to the study of talk-in-interaction. The interactions are analysed in terms of "the order/organization/orderliness of social action, particularly, those social actions that are located in everyday interaction, in discursive practices, in the sayings/tellings/doings of members of society" (Psathas, 1995, p. 2).

The snapshots of interaction are then placed in conjunction with the original task-as-workplan (network of activities) to highlight convergences and divergences between the task plans and actions. As Markee (2000) argues, a social-interactionist approach that closely examines the learners' talk can help identify

successful and unsuccessful learning behaviours as well as show how meaning is constructed by the participants (students and teacher) in the learning situation.

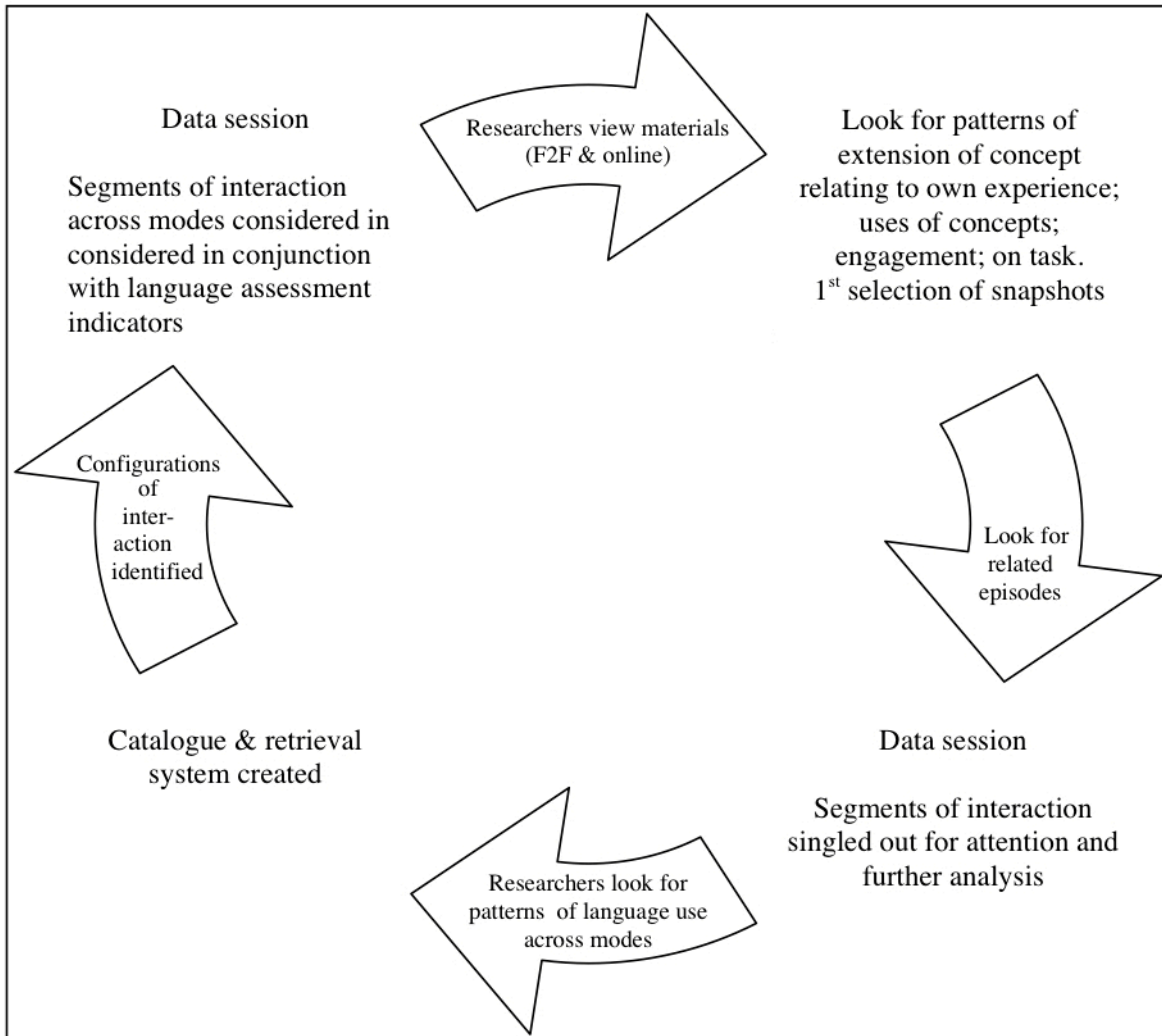


Figure 2. The analysis cycle.

Inevitably, the fact that these exchanges take place within a wider context of the classroom implies that there is a different speech exchange system than other types of talk-in-interaction (McHoul, 1978). As Meskill (2005) puts it, school discourse is made up of “those ways of talking that have become institutionally sanctioned or ‘normal’” (p. 46). In this study, the importance of unequal roles of teacher and student within this school discourse emerges as an important feature determining the talk-in-interaction in both the face-to-face and online interaction.

ANALYSIS

The first data segment consists of written text while the second data segment is a short F2F extract of in-class pair work. However the content of both data segments relate to online interaction that will take place later on in the network of activities. The analysis illustrates a mismatch between the intended task plan (as understood by the teacher) and the learners’ actions. This mismatch carries implications that will be discussed further on.

Snapshots 1 and 2: F2F classroom interaction

The first snapshot deals with the teacher's plans (see network of activity, Figure 1, above). According to the teacher, the underlying plan of the overall exchange was to provide opportunities for the students to use the target language in their F2F and online work (stated intentions were collected in student-teachers' field notes). The workplan focused on the use of F2F work for language planning (metalinguistic focus)—the students first consider carefully about how they should phrase their interaction with their partners. This was intended to lead into their exchange between the online partners. The focus of the workplan is on specific target language that should take place during the online work.

<p>- Brainstorm words associated with environment/contamination in class</p> <p>- Make pairs and match with partners</p> <p>- Pairs suggest topics in the forum for the project (2 wks)</p> <p>- Pairs use forum/chat to negotiate topic (in computer lab)</p> <p>- Pairwork in class: make suggestions of images, words for the online mural (topics already decided) students had already</p>	<p>- <i>Brainstorm words associated with environment/contamination in class</i></p> <p>- <i>Make pairs & match with partner</i></p> <p>- <i>Pairs suggest topics in the forum for the project (2 wks)</i></p> <p>- <i>Pairs use forum/chat to negotiate topic (in computer lab)</i></p> <p>- <i>Pairwork in class: make suggestions of images, words for the online mural (topics already decided) [...]</i></p>
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Figure 3. The teacher's first workplan (transcribed next to the original notes).

The workplan indicates that sub-tasks leading up to the online interaction centred on vocabulary (beginning with the oral elicitation of possible topics in the brainstorming) and structures needed for making introductions and suggestions (about the topics). The first brainstorming produced the following lexical items:

- Ozone layer holes
- Ecology
- Al Gore
- Global heat [warming]
- Factories
- Too much traffic
- Cutting down trees in the Amazon
- Dead fish
- Cow farts
- Golf courses in Almería

- Greenhouse effect (list comes from the student-teachers' field notes)

Following this, the teacher presented short dialogues as models for the online exchange. According to the field notes, the teacher used the F2F sessions as a means of a priori language practice of the modeled structures. At this point in the task plan, the teacher's focus is on presenting, practicing, and producing discrete, previously selected target language (how to introduce themselves and make suggestions for topics). This is to then be transferred to the online exchange.

The next snapshot proceeds from the F2F exchange (audio recording) of a pair of students discussing in Catalan what topic they are interested in working on with their online partners. According to the workplan (Figure 4), the students should first make their introductions online, mention local environmental problems, read the Czech students' posts and *then* make specific project-topic suggestions and wait for a response.

<p> <i>Sts post introductions in forum</i> <i>Read CZ intros</i> <i>Post 1 reply (min)</i> <i>Discuss (class) about partners</i> <i>Forum post on local env. prob. (can b in prs)</i> <i>Find out CZ prob</i> <i>Post topic suggestion</i> </p>	<p> <i>- Sts post introductions in forum</i> <i>- Read CZ intros</i> <i>- Post 1 reply (min)</i> <i>- Discuss (class) about partners</i> <i>- Forum post on local env. prob. (can b in prs)</i> <i>- Find out CZ prob</i> <i>- Post topic suggestion</i> </p>
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Figure 4. The teacher's second workplan (transcribed next to the original notes).

According to the workplan, the students should not decide a topic beforehand. This becomes an issue in the following extract.

Extract 1. Original Version: Teacher (T), Berta (BER), Clara (CLA) (transcription key in [Appendix A](#))

1. BER: teacher/ (.) el podem fer sobre el soroll oi/_
2. T: well: have you talked to the Czech partners yet/
3. BER: no: hem estat pensant molt i volem fer el *noise*\|
4. T: you have to decide with the others\|
5. BER: (2) >yes<
6. (T goes to another group)
7. BER: do:ncs (.) que fem/|
8. CLA: fem *noise* (.) vaig veure unes paraules que molen al fòrum (.) a veure\ ehm:: *ainoi* o alguna cosa =similar=
9. BER: =si si= *noi-ing* com que els nois sempre parlen tant_
10. (Both Berta & Clara laugh)

Extract 1. Translation (participants' words that were originally in English are marked in bold; words created by the students are in cursive and underlined)

1. BER: **teacher** we can work on noise right
2. T: **well have you talked to the Czech partners yet**
3. BER: no we've been thinking a lot and we want to work on **noise**
4. T: **you have to decide with the others**
5. BER: (2) >yes<
6. (T goes to another group)
7. BER: so what do we do
8. CLA: let's do **noise** I saw some cool words in the forum. let's see hm ainoi or something =like that=
9. BER: =yeah yeah= noi-ing since it's boys that are always talking so much
10. (Both Berta & Clara laugh)

In the last two lines, the students appear to be making up a word based on *annoy* in English and *noi* in Catalan (which means 'boy'). Both words have similar pronunciations.

Following Seedhouse's (2004, 2005) description of how interactional organisation can transform the pedagogical focus, it is interesting to start by looking at the case of preference organisation in this short extract. In the first two turns, we can see a dispreferred response by the teacher (turn two), in response to the students' request to work on noise as a topic. The teacher does not answer the question directly; rather she delays the response and answers their question with another question. Looking at the indexicality of the teacher's response, it can be seen that she is referencing the assignment as it was spelled out in the workplan (Figure 4): the students should decide on the topic after contacting their online partners.

This adjacency pair is followed by the students' own dispreferred response. Despite their direct answer to the teacher ("no"), Berta immediately uses a pre-positioned alignment "we've been thinking a lot" to prevent the teacher from reacting negatively to her additional information and insistence on working with the topic of noise (even though they have not discussed it with their Czech partners).

The teacher continues her focus on the task in line four and, again, the indexicality of what the teacher is referencing highlights the importance she places on the plans she has in mind. She emphasizes the need to follow the steps of the task and dismisses the students' apparent engagement and interest in the overall activity, signalled by the fact that they have already found a topic. The teacher's orientation in the interaction underscores her relevancy on the assignment itself, rather than on the way in which the students are negotiating and interpreting the task (task-as-process).

After the teacher leaves the pair to go to another group, the students discuss what they should do about the topic, as seen in turns 7 and 8.

7. BER: so what do we do
8. CLA: let's do **noise** I saw some cool words in the forum. let's see hm ainoi or something =like that=
9. BERT:=yeah yeah= noi-ing since it's boys that are always talking so much
10. (Both Berta & Clara laugh)

Significantly, in turn eight, Clara references the forum; this indexicality foregrounds the fact that the students are aware of the task, however, their referencing indicates that they are interpreting it in their own way: going online and browsing through the Czech students' posts and then using this information to decide on a topic. This was done before posting their general comments about environmental problems and before discussing possible topics in the F2F classroom.

As can be seen in Figure 4, in the network of activities a student named Maria posts her introduction and mentions noise as an environmental problem. This topic is then discussed more in the following threads (these entries are considered in more detail further on). However, the F2F interaction transcribed in extract one took place before Clara or Berta made an entry in the forum (thus there was no physical evidence of their online participation, see Figure 5). However, the fact that they have clearly referenced the forum implies that there may be a need to reconsider what membership participation online means.

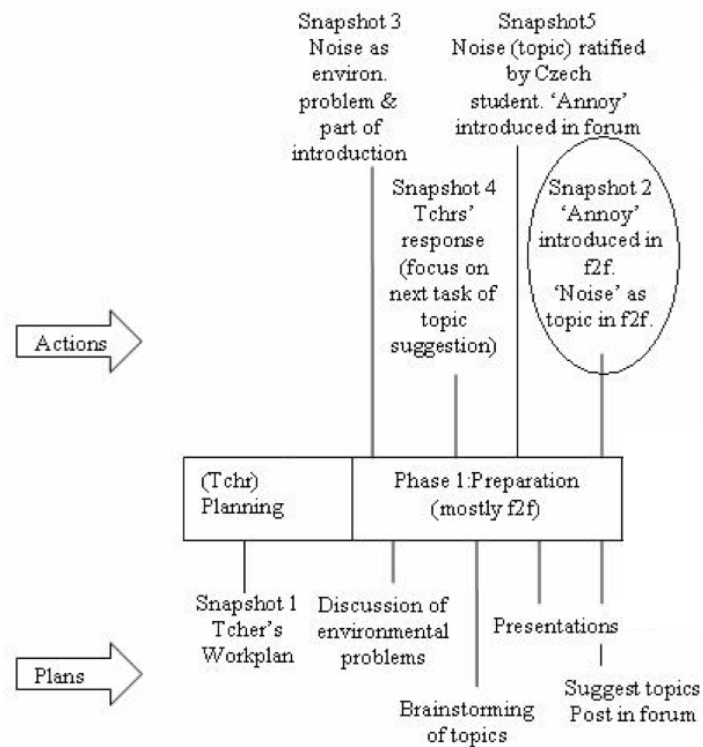


Figure 5. F2F use of noise in network of activities.

Furthermore, in their referencing of the forum, Berta and Clara make jokes—creating a new word based on what they had read in an entry. Belz (2002a, 2002b) shows how language learners may use their L1 as a mediation tool while playing or breaking rules in the target (foreign) language. As Vandergriff and Fuchs (2009) point out, playing with language is an authentic and legitimate way to use it and therefore should be considered as an element of competency.

Returning to the original driving questions, the two snapshots reveal some indicators of language learning beginning to emerge for the two young students. Taking Rea-Dickins' parameters (2006, 2007, December), it can be seen that the two students are able to relate a new concept (new lexicon noticed in their forum reading) to their own experience (making a multilingual joke); both actions indicate some level of metalinguistic knowledge, although these dimensions are not always acknowledged by the teacher. She appears to be more concerned with following the workplan (see Figures 1 and 4) than potentialising the students' exploration with the target language and their obvious engagement with the

overall project. Still, it remains to be seen if the students then use the new learning concepts in different contexts (and modes) and whether they appear to be engaged in the overall task of language learning.

Snapshots 3, 4, and 5: Forum interaction

The following data segments come from the project's forum. The entries are not only the source for new lexical items for Berta and Clara (they clearly referenced the forum and the word in the F2F interaction); the forums also display relevant student-teacher interaction.

In her post (Figure 6 below), Maria starts a new discussion. In the subject, she announces an environmental topic (noise); however, in the main body of her message, she does not formally nominate this topic for the environmental project. Instead, she provides an explanation for why she is taking part in the forum; the post indicates that she is taking part in the introduction. The opening used ("Teacher say we") makes it clear that she is doing what she has been told to do (explaining something about where she lives) and that she is engaged in the negotiation and completion of the task.

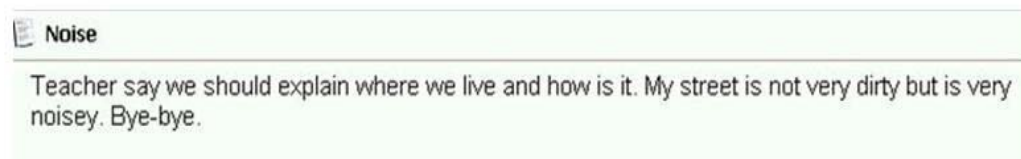


Figure 6. Screenshot of task-in-action.

Similar to the F2F interaction, the roles of teacher and students are marked. Maria calls attention to the fact that she is engaged in the task at hand—just as the students in the F2F interaction did. Moreover, like the teacher in the F2F interaction, the respondent to the post (who is a teacher, Figure 7), gives a dispreferred response by ignoring the main focus of the content of Maria's intervention (which we could call a turn) and instead brings attention to the task-as-workplan.



Figure 7. Screenshot of an interruption.

Interestingly Maria's forum entry is actually closer to a conversational turn because she provides an opening for her intervention (naming a new topic) and plainly signals the end of her turn ("Bye") whereas the teacher's turn is rather abrupt and arguably an interruption because the teacher does not align with the content of the message nor does she continue the conversational information-exchange tone established by Maria in her entry. It is recognised, of course, that an asynchronous interruption is different from a synchronous one and may take place for quite different reasons. Still, at this point, it appears that Maria is following the workplan more closely than the teacher since she is introducing herself (as was practiced orally in a previous class) and explaining an environmental problem (see Figure 8).

The teacher, on the other hand, is focusing on the next task: proposing a topic. In order to ensure the successful completion of task plans, Van den Branden (2006) suggests that teachers' interventions must be carefully balanced between the teachers' initiative and that of their learners. The teachers' mediating role can help bring the task to its full potential or it can just as easily stifle the learners' involvement with the task. Arguably the teachers' reply, which indicates a clear focus on the next phase in the workplan (and subsequent interruption) rather than responding to Maria's conversational tone, suppresses other opportunities for Maria to continue exploring the online mode of target language use.

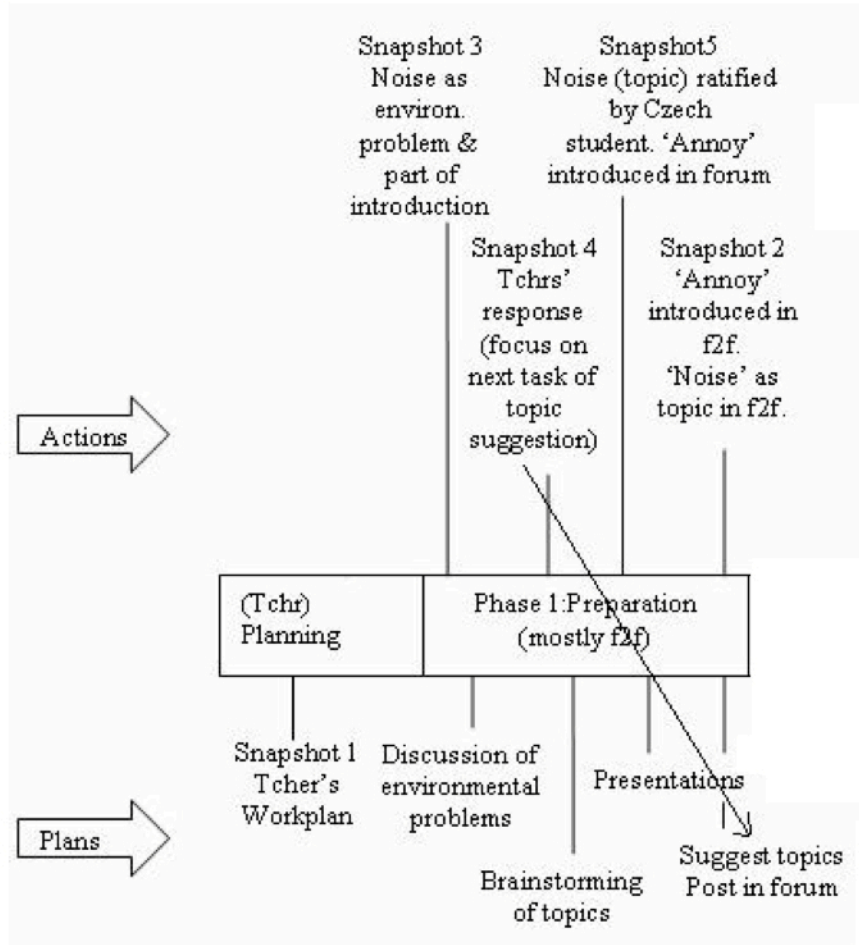


Figure 8. Student-teacher online interaction in network of activities.

These entries are followed by several contributions by different students discussing whether noise is a type of pollution (not shown here) and then the Spanish teacher, Laura, asks if this should be included in the topic discussion. In response to this, the Czech teacher (Agnieska) answers this question affirmatively ("I definitely think it should be"), thereby ratifying the topic of Maria's first intervention and guiding the task as plan.

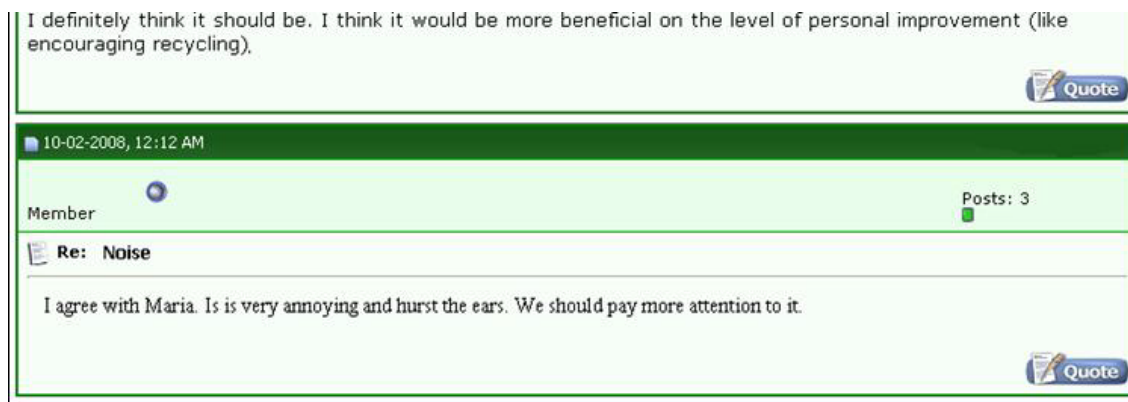


Figure 9. Screenshot of appearance of lexical feature *annoy*.

Moreover, there is further endorsement of Maria's discussion about noise pollution—this time contributed by another student (“I agree with Maria”). This is another important node in the network of activity since it is the message containing the word *annoying* which was referenced in the F2F interaction already analysed above and which is eventually integrated into the two Spanish students' communicative repertoire. A relationship between learner repertoires (new concepts) and tasks-as-workplan as well as task-as-process begins to emerge in the network of activities including the interaction with other students (F2F and online) as a potential source for learning. At the same time, there is evidence in both modes of interaction that there are divergent perceptions of the TlcLL tasks in regard to the students and teachers.

Snapshots 6, 7 and 8: Extension of Concepts

Additional snapshots of the network of activities illustrate how the participants begin to extend the targeted concepts (noise and annoy) and integrate them into their own learning process, albeit in a different sequence than anticipated in the task-as-workplan. Moreover, looking at Rea-Dickins' (2006, 2007, December) indicators of language learning, it appears that the students are quite engaged with the task.

Figure 10 shows a forum intervention by Berta and Clara. This entry was posted by Berta but implicitly included her partner, Clara.

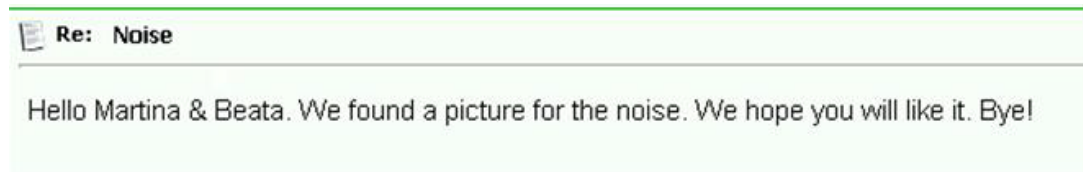


Figure 10. Screenshot of students making a suggestion.

At this point, Maria had joined the pair and the students had been assigned to work with Martina and Beata (Czech students). Through negotiation of the teachers (via e-mails, not shown here), the group was given permission to work on noise as an environmental topic. It is important to remember, however, that it was the students themselves who first highlighted this topic. At the stage shown here, the students were supposed to exchange ideas (including images and slogans) that they felt would be interesting to contribute to the final environmental wiki page. (The students did not have to invent their own images; they were allowed to look for images in the Internet.) Figure 11 shows the image that the girls sent in a file to their partners and how it appeared as part of the final output.

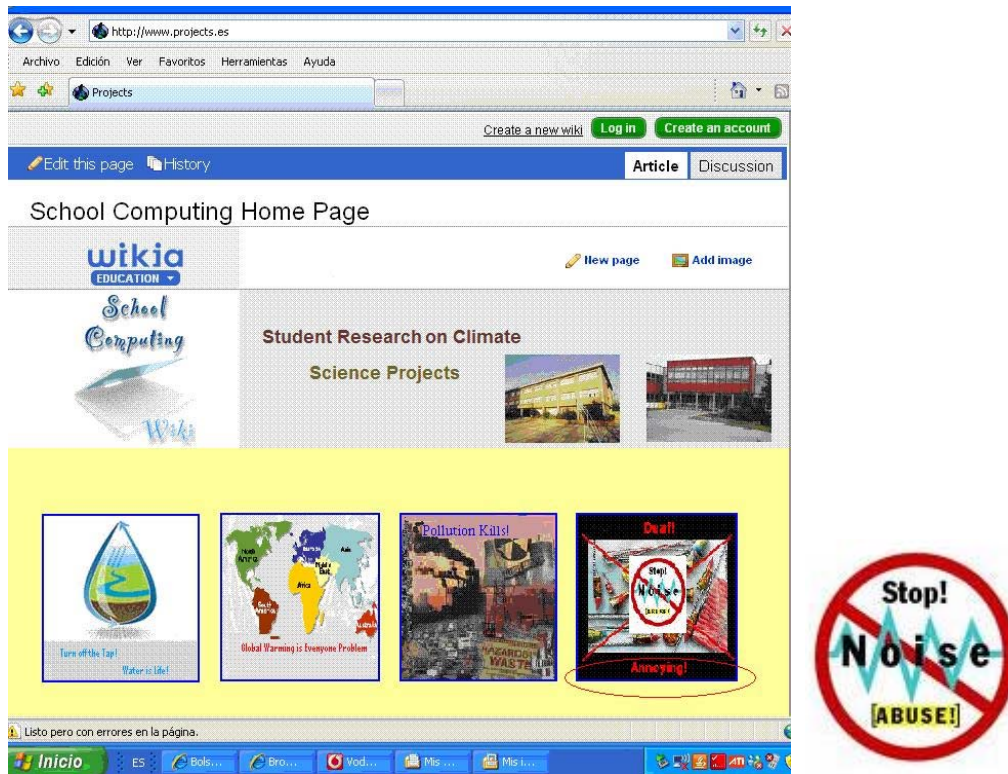


Figure 11. Screenshots of the use of *annoying* and *noise*.

It is worth noting that the image the students sent appears in the final product in the wiki, alongside the word that had first caught their attention (*annoying*). Furthermore, according to the field notes taken by the student-teacher/researcher, the students included the same image in their final PowerPoint presentation and in their oral explanation of “what they had learnt” at the end of the year (unfortunately these presentations were not recorded).

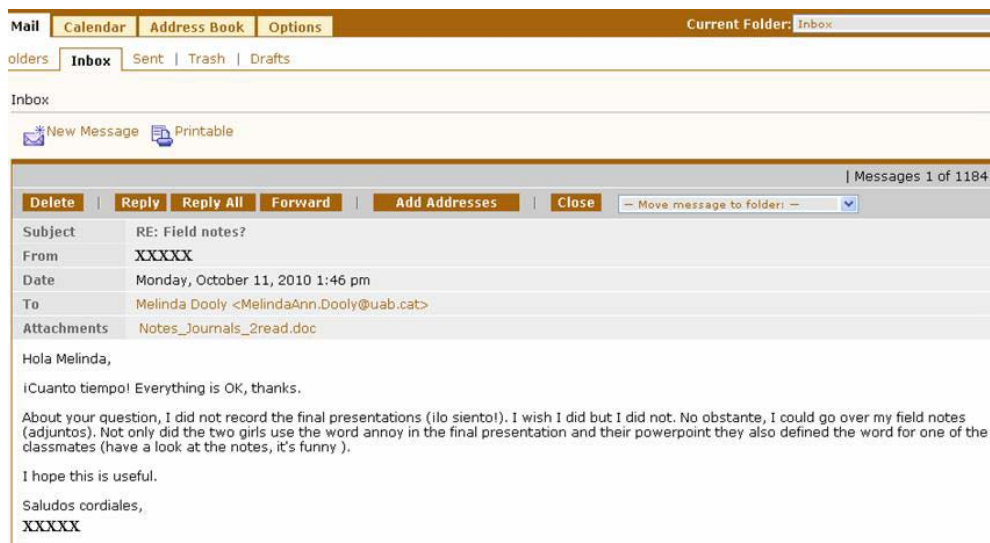


Figure 12. Field notes explanation (e-mail).

According to the field notes, the students not only used the words *noise* and *annoying* in their presentation, but when asked by a classmate about the word *annoy* Clara responded (perhaps jokingly) that *annoy* “es cuando algo te toca las narices” (“is when something gets up your nose”).

The students have re-organized, expanded and transformed elements of the target language as they “move[d] into different contexts” (Hall et al., 2006, p. 10). They appropriated different linguistic and non-linguistic resources to communicate during different phases of the telecollaboration, combined with previous knowledge of the target language. At the same time, the two students first noticed new lexical items through their online reading and then use.

DISCUSSION

The driving questions of the inquiry were: Is a relationship between learner repertoires, tasks and output discernable in the snapshots? Are there indicators of language learning processes in these snapshots? It is difficult to verify what learning actually takes place in real teaching contexts especially considering that interaction largely depends on the type of task and activity taking place as well as the possibility of match or mismatch between task-as-workplan and task-in-process:

Any framework which attempts to portray task-based interaction in a holistic way will need to track the relationship between these phases as they unfold during the implementation of a task. The relationship may be a linear one, but this is not necessarily the case. In practice, there is sometimes a difference between what is supposed to happen (task-as-workplan) and what actually happens (task-in-process). (Seedhouse & Almutairi, 2009, p. 312)

In this particular case, the individuals’ language use indicates the different ways in which these students have employed their language knowledge (as well as their limitations), according to the context in which they are interacting. This can be seen, for instance, in the initial attention given to a specific lexeme (*annoy*) while reading (in the forum) in the target language; this lexical knowledge is later developed into contextualised use in monolingual output (wiki and oral presentation).

These episodes are directly related to the next driving questions: Are these indicators recognised and acknowledged in the teaching process? Are there divergences between task plans and participant actions? These questions underscore the significance of connect/disconnect between task plans and actions in the learning process, and more importantly, how the learners in this study appear to have acquired some language outside of the parameters of the task-as-workplan.

Perhaps what most calls one’s attention is the fact that these students were originally evaluated by their teacher as being mostly off-task (recorded in the graduate student’s field notes). The snapshots of the entire process indicate differently, however. The snapshots indicate that the learners are engaged throughout the process and that they display persistence (Rea-Dickins, 2006, 2007, December). These episodes highlight the differences between the task-as-workplan, as conceived by the teacher and the task-as-process, as interpreted and put into play by the students.

The fact that the activities involved in creating the monolingual product entailed a multilingual process does not necessarily imply that the students were off-task and not engaged in the language learning process. The snapshots demonstrate that the multilingual language learners accomplished the monolingual task while passing through various stages of target language use. They use their L1 to manage most of the activity in the F2F interaction but also generate some utterances in the target language (the topic word; one-word responses to the teacher; the use of the target language to get the teacher’s attention and to start a turn, etc.). They also use a hybrid form of the target language to make a joke related to their chosen topic. In their online, asynchronous interaction, the students use the target language, although there is no recorded data concerning the process leading to this use.

Different from the initial words elicited in the initial brainstorming, the students in this case did not use

the focal language that emerged in that session. They are first exposed to and pick up on the lexical item that will become their topic through the online activities independent of F2F brainstorming activity. The “focal vocabulary needed for [the] successful task processes” (Meskill & Anthony, 2010, p. 73) was made available by their online partners, not the teacher. At the same time, there are a number of episodes in which learner talk is directly related to the performance of the tasks, indicating that they are, generally, engaged in the task-as-process while at times moving outside the bounds of the workplan. Furthermore, the task-as-outcomes do converge with the initial overall planning.

While the various comparisons of the different actions of the teachers and students during the whole process highlight the divergences between intentions and expectations of the task (task-as-workplan) and what actually happens (task-as-process), it is interesting to note that the task-as-outcomes coincide. The students, as active agents in learning processes, clearly modify the activities according to their own intentions—modifications which do not appear to be in direct accordance with the teacher’s initial intentions, in particular when the students were dealing with language input from the online activities. It appears that the students are making use of dialogic opportunities provided by “digital learning objects” (Meskill & Anthony, 2007, p. 81). Different from the way it is planned by the teacher, the “public; malleable; unstable and anarchic” (p. 81) dimensions of technologies provided the students with possibilities that the teacher was not (at least at first) able to integrate into the task-as-process.

LIMITATIONS

This is a study that endeavours to take a micro-analytical, cross-sectional examination of several events that make up a whole—in this case, the design and implementation of a telecollaborative language learning project in a blended environment. Inevitably, micro-analysis implies the use of quite limited data samples; however, at the same time this analysis yields rich description of the complexity of behaviour, including the typology and intensity of the actions of the participants involved. Qualitative observation is generally limited to descriptions of what happens in small groups of people, thus limiting the ability to generalize the results and in this case, the article only draws on the data samples that are specifically linked to the chosen learning features. It is not the intention of this paper to imply any cause-and-effect relationships, but rather provide a detailed contextual view of an increasingly common language learning situation.

FINAL WORDS

It can be posited that much research into TlcLL has largely been focused on a-contextual, discreet moments of online interaction, whereas most TlcLL episodes are actually carried out in blended learning classroom environments and are embedded in much longer, multiple learning episodes. It is almost a truism to point out the increasing pressure for language teachers to use new technologies in order to teach students diverse knowledge (e.g., languages and intercultural competence) associated with the 21st century. Inevitably, requiring educators to change long-held concepts of language teaching and learning—which are often influenced by language and teaching concepts developed in the 1980s and 1990s—in order to accommodate the 21st century literacy practices and context of their students is no walk in the park. In 1996, Warschauer warned that technology is not a panacea for challenges facing language teachers. “New technologies will not revolutionize, or even improve, language learning unless they are well understood and intelligently implemented. The Internet itself is only a tool, albeit a powerful one, in the hands of good or bad pedagogy” (Warschauer, 1996, p. ix).

Meskill and Anthony (2010) propose that the “key to viewing learning as a dynamic, developmental process is the notion of guided participation” (p. 13). Investigating the way in which both learners and teachers interpret and engage with tasks (as plans and as outcomes) may reveal new learning opportunities in these processes, especially as new opportunities such as telecollaboration are introduced into language teaching.

Considering the difficulties already inherent to teaching, moving from more common (classroom-bound) teacher-centred strategies into open learner-centred, peer-to-peer strategies such as those facilitated by telecollaboration requires a closer look into the blueprints teachers use for designing these exchanges. The transferral of a language teaching approach (no matter how time-tested and validated in the classroom) into a telecollaborative approach is not foolproof nor is it always easy to carry out. This article underscores the need for further research into the discourse space between online and F2F language learning within these learning parameters.

APPENDIX A. Transcription key

The first version of the transcripts were done by the student teacher, who codified the participants' speech, using the standard spelling and a broad key to show some aspects of the actual speech. The second version of the transcripts was carried out by the researcher advisor/author in order to ensure the fidelity of the transcripts. The transcript key is based on the symbology regularly used by the research group Grup de Recerca en Ensenyament i Interacció Plurilingües (GREIP) of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Spain).

Capitals at the beginnings of lines indicate the participant's pseudonyms

??? = speaker cannot be identified

Intonation:

 descendent \

 ascendent /

wh question ?

maintenance -

| tiny gap

|| longer gap

<seconds> elapsed time

<0> = no gap

· elongation of the immediately previous sound

Overlaps:

 =text speaker 1=

 =text speaker 2=

-_ interruptions in text_

[text] transcriber's comments

XXX unable to discern what is said

APPENDIX B. Types of interactions in forum

Topics	Header	No. Threads	Teacher Intervention
Introductions	12	38	4
Personal questions	3	5	0
Topic Suggestion	18	17	14
Request for clarification	5	5	2
New Topic Suggested	2	2	0
Content	34	15	8
Work procedure	4	6	3
Finalising	11	23	4

NOTES

1. The author is following the terminology and abbreviation used by Lamy and Goodfellow (2010).
2. Blended learning refers to the use of F2F and online teaching and learning processes in formal classroom settings.
3. Data sessions are described by the American Sociological Association Section on Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis (EMCA News, 2007, Summer) as a recognised method of data management in ethnographic/CA studies. Data sharing is an important element of networks of researchers in which audio and/or video data is presented for observation to a group of researchers several times for observation and discussion. Segments of interaction may then be singled out for attention and analysis. Observations about the data are shared, followed by discussion.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Melinda Dooly specialises in teacher training in EFL at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Spain) at the Department of Language Teaching Methodology. She is a member of the research group GREIP (Research Group on Plurilingual Interaction and Teaching) at the same department.

E-mail: melindaann.dooly@uab.cat

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