

REVIEW OF *TELECOLLABORATION 2.0: LANGUAGE, LITERACIES, AND INTERCULTURAL LEARNING IN THE 21ST CENTURY*

Telecollaboration 2.0: Language, Literacies, and Intercultural Learning in the 21st Century

Sarah Guth & Francesca Helm (Eds.)

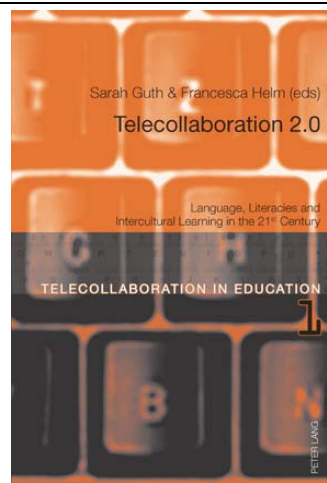
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With the development of a new generation of Web services and applications known as Web 2.0, it is imperative to shift towards new pedagogies and approaches for language and intercultural learning. The edited volume by Guth and Helm (2010), entitled *Telecollaboration 2.0 Language, Literacies and Intercultural Learning in the 21st Century*, discusses the educational shift from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 within the context of telecollaboration and focuses on the development of new online literacies, intercultural communicative competence, and language learning.

The strengths of the book are manifold. The contributors to the book are widely recognized leaders in the field of telecollaboration and language learning who seek to address aspects of telecollaboration that have not yet been dealt with in the Web 2.0 literature (see e.g., Lomicka & Lord, 2009; Thomas, 2009). Mainly, they explore the roles of instructors and students, appropriate forms of assessment and evaluation, successful transfer of Web 2.0 tools from social and leisure lives of students to academic contexts, and task design and monitoring. In the introduction, Guth and Helm argue that telecollaboration 2.0 is especially prominent for developing new online literacies, a goal which is often neglected. This book fills in the gap by articulating clearly the goals of new online literacies. The contributors conceptualize Web 2.0 from the critical language educators' standpoint, focusing not only on linguacultural and technological gains, but also on how teachers and learners may use the concepts and ideologies behind Web 2.0 to promote their learning. In addition, this book focuses on telecollaboration involving people who are not necessarily language learners but also on exchanges that are bilingual or monolingual and both bi-lateral or multi-lateral. Discussions about important pedagogical issues and neglected aspects of Telecollaboration 2.0 and about an extended view of telecollaboration make this book a significant contribution to the field.

The book consists of 4 parts: (a) new trends and environments in telecollaboration, (b) new trends and competences for the language learner 2.0, (c) new skills and competencies for the language teacher 2.0, and (d) case studies of implementation of Telecollaboration 2.0. It is comprised of an introduction, 11 articles, and 8 case studies. Each contribution to the book focuses either on theory, on research, or on practice.

Several chapters provide a strong theoretical focus that presents newly developed or adapted theoretical frameworks and models. First, Helm and Guth provide a critical review of Byram's (1997) intercultural communicative competence (ICC) model. They adapt it to fit in online contexts and provide the framework for the objectives in Telecollaboration 2.0 contexts, using three overlapping dimensions—operational, critical, and cultural—in order for students to develop multimodal communicative competence. They then focus on task-based language learning, which they view as a methodological approach for telecollaboration. Finally, they relate the design of effective tasks for Telecollaboration 2.0 to pedagogy of multiliteracies (New London Group 1996, 2000). Next, Lamy and Goodfellow argue that the field of telecollaboration and language learning suffers from “an under-conceptualization of ‘intercultural’, a misunderstanding over ‘communicative competence’ and a misplaced confidence in the reality of ‘collaborative learning’” (p. 121). They call for deconstruction of *intercultural* practices and creation of an *inter-collective* model with a social conscience. They suggest that it is important to shift away from telecollaboration as purely pedagogical practice to viewing it in a broader sense as an educational culture. Next, Guerin and colleagues outline the skills necessary for the “Learner 2.0” to master in order to use them for cognitively dense learning. Hughes then discusses aspects of a multilingual Internet including multilingual online communication, the adaptation of writing systems to technological constraints, language choice, and code-switching. Finally, Dooly argues that bridging the gap between the use of Web 2.0 telecollaboration tools outside and inside a classroom entails finding effective teaching strategies. She presents useful frameworks of characteristics of the task for Telecollaboration 2.0 and of comparison between collaborative learning and group work. She views tasks as part of “a carefully programmed sequence of tasks, subtasks, products and sub-products which are orchestrated by the teacher and which lead up to a relevant final product” (p. 287). She points at the importance of new teacher competencies that implement language learning activities taking place within “the triangulation of task, context, and the structure of interaction” (p. 293).

Several classical research papers are included as chapters and combine both a strong theoretical background as well as research. First, Thorn explores engagement with multilingual online games and fan fiction remix composition practices in informal settings and the dynamics of language use and learning they afford. He raises an important question of how language educators can “orient themselves toward the challenge of deciding which emerging communicative practices to include in instructed L2 curricula that extend beyond historically sanctioned formal registers” (p. 156). Thorn argues that familiarizing students with Internet specific genres of language use should become an explicit goal of formal instruction. To implement this goal he suggests the “bridging activities” framework (Thorne and Reinhardt, 2008), which builds upon the concept of multiliteracies and promotes linguistic pluralism. Next, drawing on Halliday's (2002) social semiotic framework, Hauck explores the relationship between multimodal and intercultural communicative competence. Her research has implications for task design that should make appropriate use of various channels of communication. Halliday's field-tenor-mode framework, for example, can be used for designing task goals and questions and can help highlight the cultural dimension of technology use in telecollaborative exchanges. Next, O'Dowd argues that assessment of telecollaboration 2.0 should be in line with the goals of Web 2.0, such as development of intercultural awareness, new online literacies, and communicative language competence. He focuses on issues which emerge when educators consider how to evaluate online foreign language activity, including the ethical issues of assessing the attitudes and skills of ICC, the practical issues of calibrating intercultural skills and new online literacies into levels, and the pedagogical issues involved in rewarding certain types of online interaction and behavior over other tasks. He then reviews the main evaluation techniques such as assessment rubrics and portfolios.

Finally, several chapters contribute a strong practical focus with extensive descriptions of Web 2.0 technologies. Guth and Thomas discuss the differences between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 and between institutionally controlled Learning Management Systems and Web 2.0 as platforms for telecollaboration

2.0. They provide practical description of the most commonly used Web 2.0 tools including social networking, wikis, and blogs. Panichi and colleagues introduce the publicly available 3D multi-user virtual world Second Life and explore the nature of the relationship between virtual worlds and foreign language education for learning in general and learning L2 in particular. Furstenberg and Levet describe an intercultural *Cultura* project and provide some suggestions for its evaluation. They focus on the interplay between online and classroom work to form a coherent whole. Finally, eight case studies of practical implementation of new forms of telecollaboration in different sociocultural contexts are presented in the last section. Web 2.0 tools used to implement the described projects include the virtual world of Second Life, wiki, Skype, video-web communication, and social networking. The focus is both on successes and challenges of implementing such projects.

The main theme that runs across most of the chapters is how the more successful practices of the informal setting can usefully be incorporated into formal learning. One author, Thorne suggests a practical solution to this problem by providing his “bridging activities” framework. This area points to a direction of future research: the investigation and development of practical/theoretical models of how to bridge formal and institutionalized use of Web 2.0 tools with more informal and personal uses.

Without reservation, this book is a must-read for practitioners and researchers working in different educational contexts with various Web 2.0 services and applications. Given the depth and breadth of topics discussed as well as the optimal balance of theory and practice of telecollaborative language learning presented in the book, it may serve as an excellent textbook in educational technology and language courses.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

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