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## About *Language Learning & Technology*

*Language Learning & Technology* is a refereed journal which began publication in July 1997. The journal seeks to disseminate research to foreign and second language educators in the US and around the world on issues related to technology and language education.

- *Language Learning & Technology* is sponsored and funded by the University of Hawai'i National Foreign Language Resource Center (NFLRC) and the Michigan State University Center for Language Education And Research (CLEAR), and is co-sponsored by Apprentissage des Langues et Systèmes d'Information et de Communication (ALSIIC), the Australian Technology Enhanced Language Learning Consortium (ATELL), the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), the Computer Assisted Language Instruction Consortium (CALICO), the European Association for Computer Assisted Language Learning (EUROCALL), the International Association for Language Learning Technology (IALLT), and the University of Minnesota Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA).
- *Language Learning & Technology* is a fully-refereed journal with an editorial board of scholars in the fields of second language acquisition and computer-assisted language learning. The focus of the publication is not technology per se, but rather issues related to language learning and language teaching, and how they are affected or enhanced by the use of technologies.
- *Language Learning & Technology* is published exclusively on the World Wide Web. In this way, the journal seeks to (a) reach a broad audience in a timely manner, (b) provide a multimedia format which can more fully illustrate the technologies under discussion, and (c) provide hypermedia links to related background information.
- *Language Learning & Technology* is currently published three times per year (January, May, September).





## Information for Contributors

*Language Learning & Technology* is seeking submissions of previously unpublished manuscripts on any topic related to the area of language learning and technology. Articles should be written so that they are accessible to a broad audience of language educators, including those individuals who may not be familiar with the particular subject matter addressed in the article. General [guidelines](#) are available for reporting on both quantitative and qualitative research.

Manuscripts are being solicited in the following categories:

[Articles](#) | [Commentaries](#) | [Reviews](#)

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### Articles

Articles should report on original research or present an original framework that links previous research, educational theory, and teaching practices. Full-length articles should be no more than 8,500 words in length and should include an abstract of no more than 200 words. We encourage articles that take advantage of the electronic format by including hypermedia links to multimedia material both within and outside the article.

All article manuscripts submitted to *Language Learning & Technology* go through a two-step review process.

**Step 1: Internal Review.** The editors of the journal first review each manuscript to see if it meets the basic requirements for articles published in the journal (i.e., that it reports on original research or presents an original framework linking previous research, educational theory, and teaching practices), and that it is of sufficient quality to merit external review. Manuscripts which do not meet these requirements or are principally descriptions of classroom practices or software are not sent out for further review, and authors of these manuscripts are encouraged to submit their work elsewhere. This internal review takes about 1-2 weeks. Following the internal review, authors are notified by e-mail as to whether their manuscript has been sent out for external review or, if not, why.

**Step 2: External Review.** Submissions which meet the basic requirements are then sent out for blind peer review from 2-3 experts in the field, either from the journal's editorial board or from our larger list of reviewers. This second review process takes 2-3 months. Following the external review, the authors are sent copies of the external reviewers' comments and are notified as to the decision (accept as is, accept pending changes, revise and resubmit, or reject).

Titles should be concise (preferably fewer than 10 words) and adequately descriptive of the content of the article. Some good examples are

- Social Dimensions of Telecollaborative Foreign Language Study
- "Reflective Conversation" in the Virtual Language Classroom
- Teaching German Modal Particles: A Corpus-Based Approach

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### Commentaries

Commentaries are short articles, usually no more than 2,000 words, discussing material previously published in *Language Learning & Technology* or otherwise offering interesting opinions on theoretical

## **FROM THE EDITORS**

Welcome to Volume 7, Number 2 of *Language Learning and Technology*.

Julie A. Belz has done an outstanding job guest editing this special issue on telecollaboration in conjunction with Associate Editor Rick Kern. We hope you find it interesting and useful.

At this time, we would like to recognize three Editorial Board members who have been with the journal since the first issue back in 1997 and whose terms of service have now come to an end. We extend our deepest gratitude to Anna Uhl Chamot, Martha Crosby, and Joan Jannison for their many years of assistance. And, as we rotate members off, we also are pleased to bring new members on. We welcome Lourdes Ortega and Susana Sotillo to the Board. Both Dr. Ortega and Dr. Sotillo have been active supporters of the journal for years and are well known for their research in applied linguistics.

Sincerely,

Mark Warschauer & Dorothy Chun  
Editors

Pamela DaGrossa  
Managing Editor



and research issues related to language learning and technology. Commentaries which comment on previous articles should do so in a constructive fashion. Hypermedia links to additional information may be included. Commentaries go through the same two-step review process as for articles described above.

#### **Submission Guidelines for Articles and Commentaries**

Please list the names, institutions, e-mail addresses, and if applicable, World Wide Web addresses (URLs), of all authors. Also include a brief biographical statement (maximum 50 words, in sentence format) for each author. (This information will be temporarily removed when the articles are distributed for blind review.)

Articles and commentaries can be transmitted in either of the following ways:

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Please check the [General Policies](#) below for additional guidelines.

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#### **Reviews**

*Language Learning & Technology* publishes reviews of professional books, classroom texts, and technological resources related to the use of technology in language learning, teaching, and testing. Reviews should normally include references to published theory and research in SLA, CALL, pedagogy, or other relevant disciplines. Reviewers are encouraged to incorporate images (e.g., screen shots or book covers) and hypermedia links that provide additional information, as well as specific ideas for classroom or research-oriented implementations.

Reviews of individual books or software are generally 1,200-1,600 words long, while comparative reviews of multiple products may be 2,000 words or longer. They can be submitted in ASCII, Rich Text Format, Word, or HTML. Accompanying images should be sent separately as jpeg or gif files. Reviews should include the name, institutional affiliation, e-mail address, URL (if applicable), and a short biographical statement (maximum 50 words) of the reviewer(s). In addition, the following information should be included in a table at the beginning of the review:

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Title	Platform
Series (if applicable)	Minimum hardware requirements
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LLT does not accept unsolicited reviews. Contact Rafael Salaberry if you are interested in having material reviewed or in serving as a reviewer ([salaberry@rice.edu](mailto:salaberry@rice.edu)).

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### **General Policies**

The following policies apply to all articles, reviews, and commentaries:

All submissions should conform to the requirements of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (4th edition). Authors are responsible for the accuracy of references and citations, which must be in APA format.

Manuscripts that have already been published elsewhere or are being considered for publication elsewhere are not eligible to be considered for publication in *Language Learning & Technology*. It is the responsibility of the author to inform the editor of any similar work that is already published or under consideration for publication elsewhere.

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Authors of published articles, commentaries, and reviews will receive 10 free hard-copy offprints of their articles upon publication.

Articles and reviews may be submitted in the following formats:

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RTF documents  
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If a different format is required in order to better handle foreign language fonts, please consult with the editors.

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## FROM THE SPECIAL ISSUE EDITOR

It is a genuine pleasure to introduce this special issue of *Language Learning & Technology* on telecollaborative foreign language study. *Telecollaboration* involves the application of global computer networks to foreign (and second) language learning and teaching in institutionalized settings. In telecollaborative partnerships, internationally-dispersed learners in parallel language classes use Internet communication tools such as e-mail, synchronous chat, threaded discussion, and MOOs (as well as other forms of electronically mediated communication), in order to support social interaction, dialogue, debate, and intercultural exchange. The underlying rationale for this learning configuration is to provide the participants with cost-effective access to and engagement with representatives of the respective "languaculture" (Agar, 1994) under study. Telecollaboration might be of particular value for those students who may otherwise not have the opportunity for meaningful (teacher-guided) interaction with persons from other cultures. In sum, telecollaboration is characterized by institutionalized, electronically mediated intercultural communication under the guidance of a languacultural expert (i.e., a teacher) for the purposes of foreign language learning and the development of intercultural competence.

In this issue, we bring you four articles which report telecollaborative exchanges between groups of students at institutions located in England, France, Germany, Spain, and the United States. While the reported partnerships span the globe in terms of the geographical locations of the participating students, the scholarly interpretations of their outcomes similarly run the gamut in terms of theoretical approaches to foreign language learning and teaching.

In the first contribution, "**Artifacts and Cultures-of-Use in Intercultural Communication**," Steven L. Thorne examines the impact of culturally embedded uses of particular Internet communication tools on the outcome of telecollaboration from a *cultural-historical perspective* (e.g., Bruner, 1995; Rommetveit, 1974). Thorne argues that Internet communication tools are not mere conduits for the facilitation of telecollaborative exchanges; instead, they and their corresponding cultures-of-use co-evolve over time in response to cultural, individual, and collective historical factors. By examining three French-American partnerships over a period of 5 years, Thorne demonstrates how e-mail and Instant Messenger co-evolve with respect to their users and, most importantly, how these developments influence intercultural communication and personal relationship building in the exchanges under study.

In the next article, "**Linguistic Perspectives on the Development of Intercultural Competence in Telecollaboration**," Julie A. Belz presents one of the first linguistically grounded interpretations of the development of intercultural competence in telecollaboration. Drawing on the relatively unsuccessful experiences of two Germans and one American in a Perm State-GieBen exchange, Belz examines the "attitudes" component of Byram's (1997) model of intercultural competence from the theoretical perspective of *systemic functional linguistics* (Halliday, 1994; Martin, 2000; White, 1998). In such an investigation, the analytical emphasis shifts from *what* learners say in telecollaboration to *how* they say it, since linguistic form is thought to be semiotic of attitudinal positioning. Belz concludes her study by suggesting that the importance of the teacher increases rather than diminishes in telecollaborative language learning



because, in the text-only media of email and chat, he or she must be educated to discern, identify, explain, and model culturally-contingent patterns of interaction in the absence of paralinguistic meaning signals.

Robert O'Dowd also examines the development of intercultural competence (Byram, 1997) in his contribution to the special issue, "[Understanding the Other Side: Intercultural Learning in a Spanish-English E-Mail Exchange](#)"; however, he explores the degree of intercultural learning in a range of intercultural dyads, rather than focusing on one relatively unsuccessful set of keypals. Based on his experiences as a telecollaborative teacher in an exchange between King's College in London and León University in Spain, O'Dowd engages in *ethnographic action research* (Wallace, 1998) in order to characterize qualitatively those electronic dyads in which intercultural learning appears to have occurred.

In the final contribution to this special issue, "[Negotiation of Meaning and Code-Switching in Online Tandems](#)," Markus Kötter examines a telecollaborative exchange between Vassar College in the United States and Münster University in Germany from the perspective of *interactionist second language acquisition*. Kötter posits that the MOO, an under-explored synchronous form of electronic communication, "works" as a facilitator of second language acquisition in telecollaboration despite the fact that learners in his study engaged in conversational repairs that were markedly different from those seen in research on face-to-face exchanges. In addition, Kötter notes that the bilingual format of the electronic interactions in his study served to scaffold the participating students in the completion of required tasks.

In addition to these four feature articles, we present two regular columns and three reviews. In [On the Net](#), Jean W. Leloup and Robert Ponterio report on several telecollaborative projects at the elementary and secondary levels. The first is *Dessinez-moi un Monster!* (Draw me a Monster!), an Internet-mediated collaborative project in which pupils merge competencies in language, art, and technology for the purposes of social interaction and linguistic development. The 2002-2003 cycle of *Proyectos educativos* of the RedEscalar of ILCE (Instituto Latinoamericano de la Comunicación Educativa) in Mexico offers opportunities for telecollaborative projects in a variety of content areas, while KidLink maintains an extensive archive of projects in 18 different languages. Teachers who would like to participate in a telecollaborative project can register at FLTEACH in order to locate a foreign-based partner with similar interests.

In [Emerging Technologies](#), Bob Godwin-Jones introduces us to blogs, RSS feeds, and wikis, a sampling of second-generation Internet communication tools that have far-reaching implications for Web-based educational practices. Wikis, in particular, appear to hold great potential for telecollaborative projects. Using a simple set of formatting commands, users can post a set of loosely structured Web pages (without knowledge of html) that can be multiply linked to each other as well as to other Internet resources.

Any user can edit any page by simply clicking a button, provided that he or she follows group-established conventions for participation and editing. Such norms, in addition to technological features of the program, can increase the collaborative nature of the wiki community. For example, page changes can be logged with author identification or it may be required that any suggested page change be seconded by another wiki participant.



In our first review, Steven L. Thorne evaluates *Language and the Internet*, David Crystal's (2001) book-length exploration of the effect of the Internet on language. Next, Marisol Fernández-García reviews *Network-based Language Teaching: Concepts and Practice* (2000), a co-edited volume in which Mark Warschauer and Richard Kern present a collection of timely studies on the networked use of computers in foreign language teaching. Finally, Phillip Elliott reviews Patricia V. Lunn's *Pronunciación y Fonética* (version 2.1), a software package that contains a series of 10 Spanish-language lessons on Spanish pronunciation and phonetics.

Despite the recent flurry of telecollaborative teaching and research on telecollaborative language study, many aspects of this learning configuration remain under-explored. For example, there is little research on telecollaborative partnerships involving one of the so-called less commonly taught languages such as Chinese, Russian, or Yoruba, and even fewer reports on telecollaborative partnerships in which English is *not* one of the targeted languages (e.g. an Arabic-Hebrew exchange). Similarly, fine-grained, microgenetic analyses of the use of specific components of the foreign language grammar in telecollaboration are sorely lacking. Such analyses could provide insight into the ways in which telecollaborative interaction may impact linguistic development (e.g., Belz & Kinginger, in press; Kinginger, 2000).

While a fair amount of research has been published on the use of telecollaboration in general intermediate foreign language classes, little has been published on telecollaborative partnerships that focus on specific content areas such as business German or Spanish for medical purposes. If telecollaborative partnerships become standard components of foreign language programs in institutional settings, as some have conjectured, then the gap in research on the multi-section management and articulation of telecollaborative courses will need to be filled. Furthermore, there is a growing array of Internet communication tools that is not well researched both in general terms and with respect to their usefulness in telecollaboration. These include blogs, Internet telephony, instant messaging, video chat, and wikis. It may be the case that some of these technologies will ease the communicative burden placed on text-only intercultural telecollaboration (e.g., e-mail and text-based chat) through the display of additional paralinguistic meaning carriers.

Finally, little emphasis has been placed on the role of telecollaboration in Peace Education. In the most recent telecollaborative course that I have taught in the Fall of 2002, 10 of my 11 American undergraduate students related in post-semester focus group interviews that the telecollaborative course in question represented either the first or the most prolonged interaction that they have ever had with a person from another culture. It is vital to our growth as citizens of a peaceful world that we engage with individuals from other cultures at early junctures in our primary socialization. Telecollaboration may facilitate this process, with beneficial outcomes, particularly for those students located in culturally and ethnically homogenous as well as economically disadvantaged regions. *Language Learning & Technology* welcomes your comments on the research presented in this issue and looks forward to your contributions to these under-explored areas of telecollaborative languacultural study.



On a final note, I would like to offer my sincere thanks to Associate Editor Rick Kern and Managing Editor Pam DaGrossa who provided invaluable assistance in the production of this special issue.

**Julie A. Belz**  
**Penn State University**

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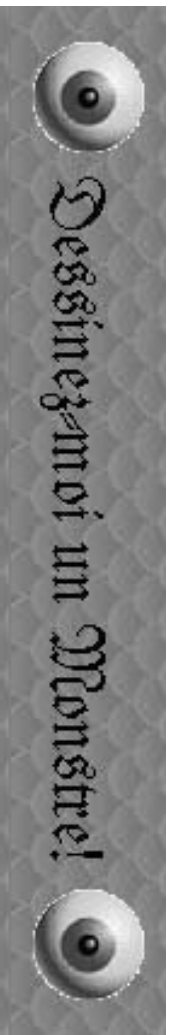
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## ON THE NET Tele-Collaborative Projects: Monsters.com?

**Jean W. LeLoup**  
SUNY Cortland  
**Robert Ponterio**  
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Collaborative projects are a natural for the language class because all language is fundamentally communicative and collaboration requires real communication to work. By creating an environment in which students want to communicate in a creative manner about something that is personally interesting to them, we can encourage writing in which the students' true goal is to get an idea across rather than just to complete the assignment (Hadley, 2001; Shrum & Gilsan, 2000). In this column we examine a project that brought together elementary and middle school students in France and Canada as well as a Basque school to communicate about a topic of concern to any child who has heard a fairy tale or watched a Disney movie, MONSTERS! It is hoped that other teachers may use this project as a model for similar collaborative efforts, and to this end we mention several other useful tools as well.



*Dessine-moi un Monstre!* (Draw me a Monster!) is a collaborative project coordinated by Jane Scaplen of Sacred Heart Elementary School, Marystown, Terre-Neuve, Canada. Students of French in grades 3 to 8 from over 20 different schools participated in writing about their invented monsters, sharing their descriptions, and drawing each other's creations. An innovative aspect of this project is the use of the Internet as the medium for interaction, allowing more students to participate and so reap the benefits of the communication while at the same time motivating the participants by providing a larger audience with whom to share their work. Students thus have the excitement of knowing that their descriptions will come alive at the hands of someone who has carefully read their work for its content and in order to actually do something with it. In addition, this person may live in a different part of the world. In this way, the activity brings together the interdisciplinary components of language, art, and technology.

The site for the project is divided into three sections:



These include a detailed explanation of the project and instructions for teachers and students, a listing of the participating schools, and the children's work, both descriptions and drawings.

## The Project

The project is set up to take place over a period of a little more than 3 months with specific dates for registering as a participant, sending in the texts and drawings, and comparing the descriptions and one's own work with the original concept of the monster's creator and receiving a certificate of participation.

The description of the project clearly sets forth the activities of the participants so that the children and teachers know exactly what is expected of them and what will happen throughout the course of the activity:

*Les participants écrivent des descriptions et font des dessins de monstres. Ils nous envoient ensuite les descriptions pour être préparées et affichées sur une page Web. Les descriptions seront aussi envoyées à chaque participant. Personnel ne va voir les vrais dessins jusqu'à la fin du projet. Pendant la période du 7 avril au 25 avril, les participants seront invités à essayer à dessiner des monstres d'autres participants selon les descriptions fournies. A la fin, les dessins originaux seront affichés.*

Each participating student writes a description and provides a drawing of a monster. The coordinator re-sends these descriptions to all participants via e-mail and also places them on the Web where everyone can read them and try his or her hand at drawing the monster to fit the description. At the end of the project, the original drawing by the monster's creator is distributed to all and also placed on the page so that all of the students can compare their drawings to the original. To accommodate individual needs, there is also flexibility in the level of participation for a class that might not have time to devote to the entire range of project activities:

*Une classe peut décider de participer à plusieurs niveaux:*

- 1.) lire les descriptions et faire des dessins de monstres,*
- 2.) écrire des descriptions des monstres ou,*
- 3.) écrire ses propres monstres et dessiner aussi les monstres des autres.*

A participating class can create original descriptions and drawings, they can read and draw the monsters of others, or they can do both. If preparing the descriptions, it is the students' writing skills that are practiced. When producing drawings to fit the descriptions, it is primarily the reading skills. And for those who participate in all activities, of course, it is both. Descriptions include information about the monster's appearance, habitat, food, and pastimes, thus touching on key topics in the typical foreign language class syllabus.

### Participants

As a first step in the process of joining this project, each class provides information about the school, the class, and their community. This information is displayed on the project site and introduces each group to the students from other participating classes.



Sharing information in this way helps to establish a sense of community with the other schools, and responses to queries such as "Describe what you see out your window" help strengthen the children's awareness that the others are real people, like themselves. This clearer idea of the audience can only help make students better writers.

## Monsters

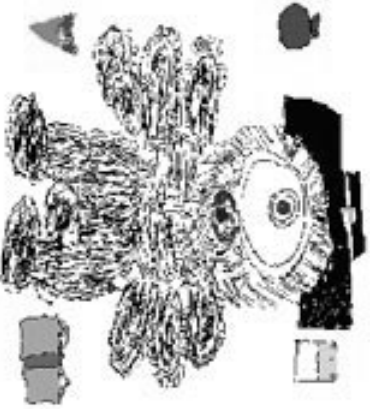
The Monsters on the project page are arranged by school, for example, under Sacred Heart, 6th grade, we find the description and drawing of Fruzzzy par Meghan (<http://www.k12.nf.ca/she/jscaplen/monstres/textes/fruzzy.html>):

*Mon monstre a un oeil hideux, trois nez et une grande bouche. Sa tête est plus grande que son corps. Des poils couvrent presque tout son corps. Fruzzzy a trois jambes mais une jambe est plus petite que les autres. Il a six bras mais juste quatre mains. Chaque main a dix-sept doigts et trois pouces. Il porte une lunette presque douze fois plus grande que son oeil. Fruzzzy porte un chapeau très grand mais il ne porte pas de vêtements.*

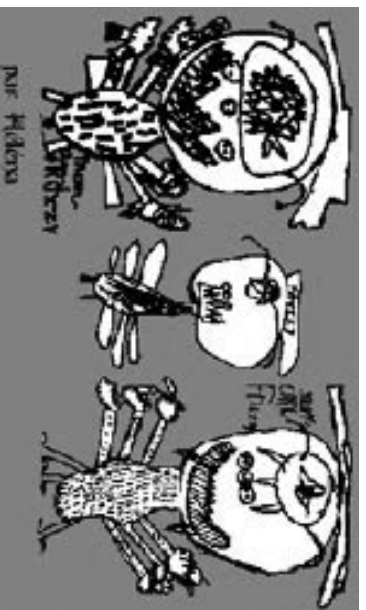
*Fruzzzy aime manger des fruits et des carottes et il aime boire du lait. Il aime lire des livres à propos de l'amour et des livres drôles. Fruzzzy habite dans mon armoire. Fruzzzy et moi jouons toujours ensemble. On joue au ballon-volant chaque fois qu'il fait soleil dehors. Il est mon ami.*

[My monster has a hideous eye, three noses, and a big mouth. His head is bigger than his body. Fur covers almost all of his body. Fruzzzy has three legs, but one leg is shorter than the others. He has six arms but only four hands. Each hand has seventeen fingers and three thumbs. He wears an eyeglass that is nearly twelve times bigger than his eye. Fruzzzy wears a very big hat, but he doesn't wear any clothes.

Fruzzzy likes to eat fruit and carrots, and he likes to drink milk. He likes to read books about love and funny books. Fruzzzy lives in a closet. Fruzzzy and I always play together. We play volleyball whenever the sun is shining outside. He's my friend.]



Along with this image, we also find drawings by students from another school:



Throughout the site, the presentation is clear and consistent, making it an easy site for children to navigate.

### Doing Similar Projects

Improved compatibility among software for images and word-processing makes this project much more manageable that it might have been even 10 years ago. The students' art work can be created either on a computer or by hand and then scanned to provide an image that may be easily sent through e-mail. Word-processing provides somewhat similar facility of exchange. Though proprietary formats are different, most programs are able to read the formats generated by other software. By having each participating student or teacher produce the electronic texts and images, the coordinator's role is not as overwhelming as it would be if she also had to manipulate and scan all these hard copy documents herself or send and receive materials through the regular mail, especially to other countries. In addition, students who do the word processing, digital drawing or scanning themselves are also learning useful technical skills that will serve them later.

As described, the *Dessinez-moi un Monstre!* project needs a coordinator who is at ease handling e-mail attachments and setting up an e-mail distribution list, who can create and maintain a simple Web site, and who knows how to provide clear instructions to another teacher for using e-mail attachments on the other end. These other participating teachers do not need technology skills beyond basic e-mail, managing files and e-mail attachments, word processing, and image scanning.

Other teachers wishing to use this project as a model could certainly follow its guidelines to the letter as they are very clear and well thought out. Depending on the skills of the teachers involved, it would likely be possible to run a similar project without the step of email redistribution of the text and images so that all teachers and/or their students access these documents through the Web rather than through e-mail.

This would require that participating teachers have or develop minimal skills in using a Web browser in addition to using e-mail, but it would simplify this stage of the project for the coordinator. Teachers would only need to be notified by the coordinator that the Web documents were available online.

Participating students do not necessarily need access to the computer for reading descriptions, drawing their own version of the monsters, and comparing them to the originals as this can be done using printed copies created by the teacher from the web or email attachment on a color printer. This means that having a computer in the classroom is not even a necessity for this aspect of the activity.

At the other end of the spectrum of technological acumen, it is also interesting to share the readers' versions of the monster's image through the Internet so the creator, and perhaps other children, would see how others have interpreted his or her monster. Depending on how it is done, this could require a higher level of technical skill on the part of a participating teacher who might wish to create a Web page for that class as well in order to share all of the drawings. In the *Dessinez-moi un Monstre!* site we often see one such "response" drawing with a description, but it could also be possible to place all of these images on the same site, linked to the description. This, of course, would involve additional work for the coordinator. A third option could be to e-mail all of these images directly to the original creator of each monster. As always, the possibilities are limited only by our imaginations. Of course, along these lines, the descriptions and drawings could represent any topic that might be of interest to the students. Monsters are not the only way to go :-)







### Inspirations: Finding Other Examples

The "Monsters" project serves as a wonderful example of a telecollaborative project, and there are other sites on the net that can serve as inspirations for the foreign language (FL) educator who wishes to undertake such a task. To find such projects on the net, try using your preferred search engine (for example, [Google.com](http://www.google.com)) and entering the words "collaborative projects" or "collaborative educational projects" in whatever target language (TL) you teach. Then explore the search results to locate a myriad of telecollaborative projects that are ongoing all around the world.



Some of these will be country-specific and may address national curricular goals. As such, they preclude inscription by participants other than those in the particular educational system, but these projects still serve as valuable examples of what is possible. They can also be an excellent resource for authentic materials that you can incorporate into your own activities. In addition, these educational projects typically cross content areas and thus are quite useful for addressing the Connections goal area of the national Standards for Foreign Language Learning (Standards, 1996).

The 2002-2003 cycle of [Proyectos educativos](#) of the [RedEscalar](#) of [ILCE](#) (Instituto Latinoamericano de la Comunicacion Educativa) in Mexico demonstrates this attention to connections as its projects cover at least eight different content areas:

	Lectura		Ciencias naturales		Geografía		Historia
	Formación cívica y ética		Educación artística		Educación física		Curriculos de aprendizaje

Each content area contains several projects that are outlined with rationale, objectives, instructor's guidelines, inscription procedures, and calendar of activities. The grade levels for these projects and concomitant activities range from second grade through high school. Obviously, the language level of the TL learners must be taken into consideration when constructing tasks using authentic materials. Because the projects here represent a wide range of native speaker educational levels, teachers have a good variety of texts and resources from which to choose when developing activities for their own TL students.



A final example is provided by the [KIDLINK](#) site, which states its goal as Preparing Kids for Life: to give youth better control over their lives, help them mature, get friends, create social networks, and collaborate with peers around the world individually or through their classrooms.

Kidlink has an archive of projects in eleven different [content areas](#) and [18 different languages](#). Many of the projects undertaken through the Kidlink site truly exemplify all the FL Standards goals of *Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons*, and *Communities*. The site is very user-friendly and has directions for use, projects and activities, and instructions for registration. There are even suggestions for finding another class to share in a joint project.

When setting up your own tele-collaborative project, you can also find potential participating teachers through email discussion lists for FL teachers such as [FLTEACH](#). With thousands of subscribers from around the world, the list is likely to put you in touch with some teachers with whom your own project strikes a chord, and a number of teachers report having found long-term, dependable partners in this way. Subscribers are invited to fill out a request for biographical information that includes interests and projects. This information is then incorporated into a searchable [biography database](#) so that FL teachers can make professional connections to plan joint projects.

Collaborative projects are, indeed, a natural segue from regular FL class activities that are designed to foment language learning. Communicating with others is the basic goal of language, and doing so in a real-life context underscores the reality and usefulness of the subject we teach. The projects delineated

above are excellent examples of this endeavor and offer an interesting alternative to FL teachers searching for additional ways to bring the world into the classroom.

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## EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES Blogs and Wikis: Environments for On-line Collaboration

**Robert Godwin-Jones**  
Virginia Commonwealth University

Language professionals have embraced the world of collaborative opportunities the Internet has introduced. Many tools -- e-mail, discussion forums, chat -- are by now familiar to many language teachers. Recent innovations -- blogs, wikis, and RSS feeds -- may be less familiar but offer powerful opportunities for online collaboration for both language professionals and learners. The underlying technology of the new tools is **XML** ("extensible markup language") which separates content from formatting; encourages use of meta-data, and enables machine processing of Internet documents. The latter is key in the ability to link automatically disparate documents of interest to individuals or groups. The new collaborative opportunities this enables have led some to consider the growing importance of XML as the signal of the arrival of the **second-generation Web**.

### FIRST-GENERATION WEB

#### Asynchronous Tools

First-generation tools are far from disappearing from the Internet landscape. E-mail continues to be a viable tool for **tandem learning** and classroom exchanges. Now that most e-mail programs support formatted text and graphics, e-mail is more attractive and versatile than in the days of plain ASCII. Multimedia can now be embedded directly in messages and non-Roman characters are more easily supported. However, many instructors have increasingly turned to discussion forums as the principal tool for written exchanges among class members. Compared to e-mail, discussion forums facilitate group exchanges, and they maintain automatically a log of all messages in a threaded, hierarchical structure. Some instructors find that students consider language structure somewhat more in contributing to discussion forums (as a form of semi-public display) than in writing e-mail (a quick and easy private and informal system). Discussion forums are often seen as an equalizing tool, which encourage universal participation in discussion compared to face-to-face dialogue. It will be interesting to see whether new voice-based forums such as **Wimba** change that dynamic.

Of course, it is the encouragement of peer-to-peer networking and buddy learning, so central to a constructivist learning approach, which has made discussion forums the mainstay of Web courses in most disciplines. Language teachers have found that students at many different levels benefit from the extra writing done in discussion forums and from its use to communicate meaningfully in real contexts. While dedicated software for creating discussion forums exists (such as **WWWBoard**), many instructors have access to built-in forum creation in a learning management system (LMS) such as **WebCT** or **Blackboard**. Features across the different systems are very similar, although the look and feel may differ significantly. Some dedicated products, such as **WebCrossing**, offer additional add-ons such as polls, live messaging, and enhanced monitoring. Although most commonly used as part of a class, there are certainly uses of forums outside that setting as well, as in learner participation in native speaker forums. For commonly studied languages, there are on-line forums available on a wide variety of topics, often organized by media outlets or interest groups. As one recent **study** of their use by language learners points out, students need to approach such forums with a good understanding of the conventions used and of the cultural dynamics at work.

#### Synchronous Tools

Language learners face even more the issue of knowing rules and conventions when entering chat rooms, whether they be a variation of a **MOO** or just a generic, text-based chat. Often there are shortcuts and

etiquette, which can prove confusing and frustrating to new users. Nevertheless, some language teachers have **embraced** the use of chat as an effective communication tool. The speed of chat exchanges forces short, spontaneous messages, which more closely mimic spoken exchanges than is the case in discussion forums. Transcripts of chat sessions may be available for some chat systems but are not normally possible in the variety of chat currently most widely used, instant messaging. Systems such as **AOL Instant Messenger** (AIM) or **MSN Messenger** allow creation of "buddy lists," searching for message partners through interest groups or by home country, and on-line/off-line status alerts. Students in some countries make frequent use of instant messaging but probably less commonly for educational purposes. Quick, informal discussions with native speakers, however, might well prove a useful adjunct in tandem or classroom exchanges.

The attractiveness of instant messaging for language learners resides particularly in the addition of voice and video options for communication. The different tools currently available are discussed and evaluated in a recent **LLT review**. While the various tools such as **iVisit**, or **PaITalk** differ in the audio quality, the number of simultaneous users, and the support for different operating systems, all offer an incredible communicative power for the cost of an Internet connection. This is a far cry from the pricey and proprietary audio/video systems of the recent past. Of course, the use of multimedia can change significantly the group dynamics of discussions, bringing into play as they do personal appearance and individual/local language variations. **Webcams** can bring immediacy and a direct personal connection, which may or may not be welcome. Webcams have become both less expensive and more efficient in terms of picture size and transmission quality, with the best quality being achieved through use of Firewire or USB2 cameras.

## **SECOND-GENERATION WEB**

### **Blogs**

The collaborative environment which has sparked the most intense interest in recent years are blogs or Web logs. If one thinks of blogs as being essentially on-line journals, it may not be evident how they could be used in collaborative ways. But actually looking at a few blogs (such as **InstatPundit** by Glenn Reynolds or **Scripting News** by Dave Winter) demonstrates how interactive they can be. Writers typically make rich use of hypertext to connect to what others have written on a topic or to resources on the Web. Blog entries are normally followed by a comment button, allowing readers to write a reaction, which is then logged and linked, along with all other comments, into the original text. While most blogs are created and managed by individuals, group blogs are also possible. Blogs are easily linked and cross-linked, to create larger on-line communities. That is now the case with technology-related blogs, which form what is essentially one, large, loosely interwoven net of information, as blog entries are linked, referenced, and debated.

While blogs of all kinds abound today on the Internet, most are personal or journalistic. However, there has been increasing interest in using **blogs in education**. Blogs are well suited to serve as on-line personal journals for students, particularly since they normally enable uploading and linking of files. Language learners could use a personal blog, linked to a course, as an electronic portfolio, showing development over time. By publishing the blog on the Internet, the student has the possibility of writing for readers beyond classmates, not usually possible in discussion forums. Readers in turn can comment on what they've read, although blogs can be placed in secured environments as well. Self-publishing encourages ownership and responsibility on the part of students, who may be more thoughtful (in content and structure) if they know they are writing for a real audience. This same degree of personal responsibility is lacking in discussion forums.

No knowledge of HTML (or of Web authoring in general) is needed for blogging. Typically a student creating a Web site using a tool such as Blogger registers as a user, and sets up a page using one of

several available templates (or creating a new look). The writing interface in **Blogger** shown below is typical.



Jim Duber has created a **blog for CALL**, while Aaron Campbell has put together a helpful set of pages for using **Web logs in ESL classes**. Campbell also runs his own blog, the **New Tanuki**, as a resource for his EFL students and others. As is typical of many blogs, Campbell posts his entries in a column in the center of the page, with two narrower columns on either side with links in the categories of English resources, class information, and daily news. Some of his postings are links to stories on other sites, others are written by him, still others are photos. Will Richardson has created a good example of a **course blog** for his journalism class at an American high school. As is common in blogs, Richardson combines personal messages with world events, along with class notes and assignments. There are extensive links to news services and journalism sites. Individual student blogs are linked to the course blog. The mix is eclectic and results in a course site very different from the rigid hierarchy to be found in the typical LMS class. Blackboard and WebCT use a top-down approach; blogs tend to go the other direction. They offer a great deal of flexibility and the potential for creativity in the construction of the site, yet still feature the ease of use of a template-based system.

### **RSS and Wiki**

Blogs can serve as environments for project-based learning. However, a limitation in the structure of blogs is the fact that they are chronologically organized, rather than by content. There are however, **indices of blogs** as well as search mechanisms on the blogs themselves. There has also been interest in "**structured blogging**" to enhance the ability to find blog-based information. An example of such an initiative is **blam!**, a template tool for writing and collecting reviews (of books, CDs, etc.). It uses **Amazon's** Web services to gather the meta-data for an item, translates it into HTML, including any images and reference links. This is automatically placed into the editing environment, to be added to the writer's review. The review is then posted to a blog. One could envision such a tool for language lessons posted on the Web. The FLEX (Foreign Language Lesson Exchange) **lesson typography** at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) is a step in that direction.

One of the technologies used by blogs to alert users to new postings, as well as to help sort information coming from multiple blogs and other Internet sources, are **RSS feeds**. RSS stands for "really simple syndication" and is an implementation of XML first developed by Netscape as a way for users to add "channels" to My **Netscape** pages. Subsequently, it has been further refined and developed, principally by

Dave Winer, familiar to Mac developers as the creator of the [Frontier](#) scripting language. RSS supplies rich meta-data about Web-based resources, which can then be automatically retrieved and cataloged by RSS software, such as [alphaDesk](#) or [NetNewsWire](#), usually described as news readers or news aggregators. RSS feeds can also be read with the sidebar of [Netscape 7](#). An RSS document contains at a minimum three elements: the title, the link (to the URL of the Web site containing the channel), and a brief description. RSS files are most commonly created with a text editor, but can also be written in an XML or HTML editor.

While RSS feeds can help keep track of changes to blogs used as project centers, there is another collaborative environment which is more naturally suited for collaborative on-line projects, [WikiWikiWeb](#) (*wiki wiki* is Hawaiian for "quick") or wikis. Like blogs, wikis have been around for some time and are popular among technology buffs. The original [WikiWikiWeb project](#) is dedicated to software programming and is quite extensive. Blogs can be highly personal, wikis are intensely collaborative. They feature a loosely structured set of pages, linked in multiple ways to each other and to Internet resources and an open-editing system in which anyone can edit any page (by clicking on the "edit this page" button). No knowledge of HTML is needed, but whereas blogs tend to use a modified WYSIWYG editing environment, Wikis use a simple set of [formatting commands](#).

Such a system only works with users serious about collaborating and willing to follow the group conventions and practices. Of course, Wiki sites, like any pages on the Web, can be secured with password protection or other means, but wikis have built-in safeguards against malicious behavior (page changes are logged, page deletions must be seconded to take effect). The goal of Wiki sites is to become a shared repository of knowledge, with the knowledge base growing over time. Unlike chat rooms, wiki content is expected to have some degree of seriousness and permanence. There are wiki encyclopedia projects, including a number in [languages other than English](#). The [21st-century Teaching and Learning project](#) at Texas A&M University is built around a wiki, as is the [conference planning process](#) of the TESOL CALL interest section. A [sample wiki](#) site was set up by Awaji Yoshimura for the JALTCALL 2002 conference.

Wiki sites can be created for specific projects with a set group of allowable users and provide an excellent collaborative environment, since changes are logged along with identification of the author. In fact, a wiki-type site could be ideal for a "community of practice" (COP), such as the ESL/EFL "[Webheads in Action](#)". A COP is a way of achieving collective applied learning with the expectation that over time expertise in a given subject area is developed and solutions to common issues and shared problems are found, posted and discussed. A COP might use a variety of collaborative tools, but its goal is to expand knowledge and improve practice in a specific area. As our access to information has grown exponentially in recent years, efforts like COPs provide a welcome means to share in knowledge management, one of the great challenges of our time.

### Resource List

#### Computer-Mediated Communication

- [Relationships On the Line](#) by Joan Cashion
- [What is Computer-Mediated Communication?](#) by Gerry Santoro
- [Online/Virtual Learning Environments](#) from Teresa d'Ea
- [Digital Divide Network](#)
- [Using a Web-Based Course Management Tool to Support Face-to-Face Instruction](#)

#### Chat and Discussion Forums

- [Adjusting to MOOs](#) by Nick Carbone
- [Rationale for Chat in Language Learning](#) from Vance Stevens
- [Some CMC Clients Promoting Language Learning Through Chatting Online](#) from Vance Stevens

- [To Chat or Not to Chat in the ESL Classroom](#) from Teresa Almeida d'Ea
- [Introducing EFL Students to Chat Rooms](#) by Jo Mynard
- [Internet Audio Communication For Second Language Learning: A Comparative Review of Six Programs](#) from LLT, by Gary A. Cziko and Sujung Park

## Blogs

- [InstaPundit.com](#) well-known blog by Glenn Reynolds
- [Seb's Open Research](#) on how to make weblogs work, from Sbastien Paquet
- [Peter Murphy's Panoramic VR Weblog](#) weblog with panorama pictures
- [Publishing a Project Weblog](#) article describing creation and use of a weblog
- [Towards structured Blogging](#) about using blogs to provide more structured content (from Sbastien Paquet)
- [Weblog Diffusion Index](#) shows popularity of specific Weblog pages (from MIT)
- [Jim Duber on CALL](#) blog dealing with language learning
- [BLOGGER](#) tool for creating blogs
- [Audio blogger](#) creation tool for voice-based blogs
- [Pitas](#) blog creation tool
- [Asia Pacific Information Systems](#) example of blog
- [Weblogging: Another Kind of Website](#) two-part series on blogs, includes educational uses, from Chris Ashley
- [Weblogs-ed](#) using weblogs in education
- [Educational Technology blog](#)
- [Weblogs for Use with ESL Classes](#) by Aaron Patric Campbell
- [The New Tanuki EFL blog](#) from Aaron Patric Campbell
- [Writing with Web logs](#) by Kristen Kennedy
- [What is Manila](#) popular blog creation tool
- [Courses Using Weblogs](#)

## RSS

- [RSS](#) explanation of "Really Simple Syndication"
- [What is RSS](#) from XML News
- [syndic8](#) directory of 10,000 publicly available RSS feeds
- [News Readers in the Open Directory](#) client-side and server-side programs for reading RSS feeds
- [News that Comes to You](#) on RSS and Weblogs, from the Online Journalism Review
- [News feeds from Germany](#) from Syndic8

## Wikis

- [PmWiki](#) tool for developing wiki sites
- [PmWiki](#)Philosophy rationale and theory behind wikis
- [Wiki Sandbox](#) demo site for trying out how a wiki works
- [WikiWikiWeb](#) information about wikis
- [One Minute Wiki](#) French quick introduction in French
- [PhpWiki: a PHP WikiWikiWeb](#) a wiki clone written in PHP
- [Wanna Wiki Wiki?](#) an Introduction to Wiki Wiki Web and Comparison of Wiki Clones, by Awaji Yoshimasa
- [Journalism 1](#) at HCRHS example of blog used in a secondary school
- [Literacy Writing Project](#) example of wiki for educational use

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## University of Hawai'i National Foreign Language Resource Center (NFLRC)



The University of Hawai'i National Foreign Language Resource Center engages in research and materials development projects and conducts Summer Institutes for language professionals among its many activities.

### Available Online from the NFLRC

**Reading in a Foreign Language: A refereed international online journal of issues in foreign language reading and literacy.** Reading in a Foreign Language has established itself as an excellent source for the latest developments in the field, both theoretical and pedagogic, including improving standards for foreign language reading. The journal is published twice a year (in April and October) and is jointly sponsored by the National Foreign Language Resource Center and the Department of Second Language Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. Visit [nflrc.hawaii.edu/rfl/](http://nflrc.hawaii.edu/rfl/) to see the latest issue and sign up for a free subscription.

**Study online -- Advanced Web-based Chinese, Japanese, and Korean courses.** Through the NFLRC, the University of Hawai'i offers distance learning opportunities in advanced Chinese, Japanese, and Korean language via the World Wide Web. The courses are available to students and individuals as well as to institutions and businesses. For more information, visit [nflrc.hawaii.edu](http://nflrc.hawaii.edu).

### Summer Professional Development Opportunities

Apart from our 2003 NFLRC Summer Institutes, the NFLRC is pleased to co-sponsor the 2003 Society for Pidgin and Creole Linguistics Summer Conference (August 14-17, 2003). Highlights will include invited plenary speakers Derek Bickerton (University of Hawai'i at Manoa), Barbara Lalla (University of the West Indies at St. Augustine), and Kenneth Sumbuk (University of Papua New Guinea), sessions on creole literature and Hawai'i Creole English ("pidgin"), cultural and sight-seeing tours, and much more!

### NFLRC Publications

NFLRC Hawai'i has recently added two new technical reports to their publications catalog. The first, *An Investigation of Second Language Task-Based Performance Assessments* (Brown, Hudson, Norris, & Bonk), describes the creation and validation of performance assessment instruments. The second, *New Technologies and Language Learning: Cases in the Less Commonly Taught Languages* (Spreen, Ed.), is a collection of case studies presenting technology-based options for language programming that will help universities make more informed decisions about teaching less commonly taught languages. Three of our



more popular titles -- *Language Learning Strategies Around the World: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*; *Second Language Development in Writing: Measures of Fluency, Accuracy, and Complexity*; and *Motivation and Second Language Acquisition* -- have gone into second or third printings. All technical reports can be purchased online through University of Hawai'i Press. (<http://www.uhpress.hawaii.edu>)

The third video in a series of language teaching demo tapes from Tim Murphy is now available. *NPRM (Near Peer Role Modeling)* demonstrates ways in which teachers might use students in their own classes to motivate and inspire other students, to offer them alternative strategies and beliefs, and to allow them to learn more quickly and deeply. Check out other NFLRC publications, including CD-ROMs, videos, free online downloadable publications, and more at [nflrc.hawaii.edu](http://nflrc.hawaii.edu).

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## Michigan State University Center for Language Education and Research (CLEAR)



CLEAR's mission is to promote the teaching and learning of foreign languages in the United States. To meet its goals, projects focus on foreign language research, materials development, and professional development training.

### FOREIGN LANGUAGE RESEARCH

- Feedback to Learners: The Case of Heritage Language Learners

### MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT

#### Products

- Business Chinese (CD-ROM)
- Modules for Assessing Socio-Cultural Competence for German (CD-ROM)
- Modules for Assessing Socio-Cultural Competence: Russian (CD-ROM)
- Pronunciación y fonética (CD-ROM)
- African Language Tutorial Guide (guide and video)
- Thai Tutorial Guide (guide)
- Foreign Languages: Doors to Opportunity (video and discussion guide)
- Task-based Communicative Grammar Activities for Japanese and Thai (workbook)
- Test Development (workbook and video)
- The Internet Sourcebook for Business French (Web links)
- The Internet Sourcebook for Business German (Web links)
- The Internet Sourcebook for Business Spanish (Web links)
- Business Language Packets for High School Classrooms (French, German, & Spanish; PDF files)

#### Coming Soon!

- Portuguese Pronunciation and Phonetics (CD-ROM)
- French Pronunciation and Phonetics (CD-ROM)
- Elementary Business German (CD-ROM)

#### Game-O-Matic

The Game-O-Matic is a suite of wizards that create Web-based activities for language learning and practice. Teachers can make original Game-O-Matic games by visiting <http://clear.msu.edu/dennie/matic/>.

#### Newsletter

CLEAR News is a biyearly publication covering FL teaching techniques, research, and materials. Contact the CLEAR office to join the mailing list or see it on the Web at <http://clear.msu.edu/newsletter/>.

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Each summer, CLEAR offers professional development workshops for foreign language teachers on the campus of Michigan State University. For more information on the Summer Workshops, go to <http://clear.msu.edu/training/03institutes/>.

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**Australian Technology Enhanced Language Learning Consortium (ATELL)**

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ATELL is pleased to announce the availability of the CALL Catalogue:

<http://www.callcatalogue.com.au/>

The **CALL Catalogue** has been designed as a resource for researchers, designers, and teachers interested in Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL).

The **CALL Catalogue** is essentially a searchable bibliographic database. It consists of a large set of abstracted articles on CALL and an index of specially designed keywords. The **CALL Catalogue** is an ongoing research venture that began with the construction of a large corpus of CALL publications for 1999. As such the **CALL Catalogue** (1999) included all the chapters in four books (Cameron, 1999a, 1999b; Debski & Levy, 1999; Egbert & Hanson-Smith, 1999) and all the articles in four major CALL journals: *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, *CALLICO*, *ReCALL*, and the online journal, *Language Learning and Technology*. This amounted to 177 journal articles and book chapters for the year. Each item was then abstracted and indexed to form the original **CALL Catalogue** (1999). So far the **CALL Catalogue** has been completed for 1999 and 2000.

The **CALL Catalogue** is an ongoing project and we are keen to have your contributions (see Abstracting & Indexing Guidelines on the Web site). Our immediate goal is to add abstracted and indexed articles on CALL for 2001, and then, subsequently, to work forward to the year prior to the current year of publication. The **CALL Catalogue** directly relates to published works by Levy (2000, 2002) where more detail about the overarching framework and methods of production are given.

The **CALL Catalogue** is the first resource to be made available by ATELL, the Australasian Technology Enhanced Language Learning network. ATELL is an informal grouping of CALL researchers and practitioners in Australia and New Zealand. More resources for researchers and practitioners are to follow.

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## Apprentissage des Langues et Systèmes d'Information et de Communication (ALSIC)



ALSIC (Language Learning and Information and Communication Systems, <http://alsic.org/>) is an electronic journal in French for researchers and practitioners in fields related to applied linguistics, didactics, psycholinguistics, educational sciences, computational linguistics, and computer science. The journal gives priority to papers from the French-speaking community and/or in French, but it also regularly invites papers in other languages so as to strengthen scientific and technical exchanges between linguistic communities that too often remain separate. The editorial board of ALSIC invites you to contact them for any prospective contributions at the following electronic address: [infos@alsic.org](mailto:infos@alsic.org).

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## Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, University of Minnesota (CARLA)



CARLA is one of several National Language Resource Centers whose role is to improve the nation's capacity to teach and learn foreign languages effectively. Launched in 1993 with funding from the national Title VI Language Resource Center program of the U.S. Department of Education, CARLA's mission is to study multilingualism and multiculturalism, develop knowledge of second language acquisition, and advance the quality of second language teaching, learning, and assessment by conducting research and action projects sharing research-based and other forms of knowledge across disciplines and education systems extending, exchanging, and applying this knowledge in the wider society.

CARLA's research and action initiatives include a focus on the articulation of language instruction, content-based language teaching through technology, culture and language studies, less commonly taught languages, language immersion education, second language assessment, second language learning strategies, research on pragmatics and speech acts, support for study abroad, and technology and second language learning.

To share its latest research and program opportunities with language teachers around the country, CARLA offers the following resources: an internationally acclaimed summer institute program for teachers; a database which lists where less commonly taught languages are taught throughout the country; listservs for teachers of less commonly taught languages and immersion educators; a working paper series; conferences and workshops; and a battery of instruments in French, German, and Spanish for assessing learners' proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening at two levels on the ACTFL scale. Check out these and other CARLA resources on the CARLA Web site at <http://carla.acad.umn.edu>.

## The Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL)



The [Center for Applied Linguistics](#) is a private, nonprofit organization that promotes and improves the teaching and learning of languages, identifies and solves problems related to language and culture, and serves as a resource for information about language and culture. CAL carries out a wide range of activities in the fields of English as a second language, foreign languages, cultural education, and linguistics. These activities include research, teacher education, information dissemination, instructional design, conference planning, technical assistance, program evaluation, and policy analysis. Publications include books on language education, online databases of language programs and assessments, curricula, research reports, teacher training materials, and print and online newsletters.

Major CAL projects include the following:

- [ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics](#)
- [National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education](#)
- [The Cultural Orientation Resource Center](#)
- [Pre-K-12 School Services](#)

CAL collaborates with other language education organizations on the following projects:

- [Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence](#)
- [Improving Foreign Languages in the Schools Project of the Northeast and Island Regional Laboratory at Brown University](#)
- [The National Capital Language Resource Center](#)
- [National K-12 Foreign Language Resource Center](#)
- [National Network for Early Language Learning](#)

News from the [ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics](#)

- [ERIC/CLL Resource Guides Online](#) provide links to relevant resources on various topics in second language teaching and learning. Two new Resource Guides Online have recently been added to the [ERIC/CLL Web site: American Sign Language and TESOL Certification](#).
- [ERIC/CLL Digests](#) cover a range of topics in ESL, foreign language, and bilingual education. Our most recent Digests include [Using Call-and-Response to Facilitate Language Mastery and Literacy Acquisition Among African American Students, Using Cognitive Strategies to Develop English Language and Literacy, Heritage Spanish Speakers' Language Learning Strategies, English Language Learners and High-Stakes Tests: An Overview of the Issues, Thematic Literature and Curriculum for English Language Learners in Early Childhood Education, Nonnative-English-Speaking Teachers in the English Teaching Profession, Textbook Selection for the ESL Classroom, Interactive Language Learning on the Web, and Model Early Foreign Language Programs: Key Elements](#).
- The newest book in ERIC/CLL's Professional Practice series is [English Language Learners With Special Education Needs: Identification, Placement, and Instruction](#), edited by [Alfredo J. Artiles](#) and [Alba Ortiz](#). This book describes the challenges involved in identifying and placing English language learners with special needs and describes model programs and instructional methods that have been successful in helping English language learners with special needs meet their full potential.
- [What Teachers Need to Know About Language](#), edited by [Carolyn Temple Adger](#), [Catherine E. Snow](#), and [Donna Christian](#) is the latest in ERIC/CLL's [Language in Education](#) series. Intended primarily for those involved in teacher education and professional development, this book addresses a crucial but heretofore undiscussed issue: the knowledge about language that teachers need in order to be effective educators in a linguistically and culturally diverse society.

### News from the [National Center for ESL Literacy Education](#)

- New NCLE publications on reading and adult English language learners are now available. [Reading and Adult English Language Learners: The Role of the First Language](#) is an ERIC Q&A that looks at the relevant research and discusses how literacy in the first language can affect the acquisition of reading skills in English and the ways that instruction should be delivered. The book, [Reading and Adult English Language Learners: A Review of the Research](#), addresses factors influencing adult literacy development in English and the process of learning to read in a second language as well as implications for practice and research.
- New NCLE publications on adult English language learners in the workforce and community include: [Preparing for Success: A Guide for Teaching Adult English Language Learners](#), a book that addresses employment issues and related languages skills; and, [English that Works: Preparing Adult English Language Learners for Success in the Workforce and Community](#), an ERIC Q&A that discusses how adult ESL educators can integrate workforce and civic life skills into their curricula and then convey these skills to their students through learner-centered instructional strategies and classroom management techniques.
- The current edition of NCLE's newsletter, [NCLENotes](#), focuses on assisting adults learning English for the workplace and community.
- Also now available is the NCLE publication [Adult English Language Instruction in the 21st Century](#), which describes trend and issues in program design and instructional practices, assessment, and integration of research and practice.
- NCLE has created an [annotated list of online resources](#) that teachers can use as they work to promote cultural understanding in the adult ESL classroom. Resources include NCLE publications, lesson plans and instructional materials, background on specific cultures and cultural groups, and information on topics such as intercultural communication, tolerance, and trauma.

### Computer Assisted Language Instruction Consortium (CALICO)



Since its inception in 1983, CALICO has served as an international forum for language teachers who want to develop and utilize the potential of advanced technology to support their teaching and research needs. Through its Annual Symposia, Special Interest Groups (SIGs), CALICO Journal, CALICO Monograph Series, CALICO Resource Guide, and numerous other publications, CALICO provides both leadership and perspective in the ever-changing field of computer-assisted instruction. The strength of CALICO derives from the enthusiasm, creativity, and diversity of its members. It comprises language teachers and researchers from universities, military academies, community colleges, K-12 schools, government agencies, and commercial enterprises.

CALICO '03: Collaborative CALL will take place from May 20-24 at the University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

To learn more about CALICO activities and how to participate in them, visit the CALICO homepage at <http://www.calico.org>.

## European Association for Computer Assisted Language Learning (**EUROCALL**)



EUROCALL is an association of language teaching professionals from Europe and worldwide aiming to

- Promote the use of foreign languages within Europe
- Provide a European focus for all aspects of the use of technology for language learning
- Enhance the quality, dissemination, and efficiency of CALL materials

EUROCALL's journal, *ReCALL*, published by Cambridge University Press, is one of the leading academic journals covering research into computer-assisted and technology-enhanced language learning. The association organises special interest meetings and annual conferences and works towards the exploitation of electronic communications systems for language learning. For those involved in education and training, EUROCALL provides information and advice on all aspects of the use of technology for language learning.

EUROCALL 2003 will be at the University of Limerick, Ireland, 3-6 September 2003.

EUROCALL 2004 will be at the University of Vienna, Austria, 1-4 September 2004.

For full details, contact us at <http://www.eurocall-languages.org/>

## International Association for Language Learning Technology (**IALLT**)



Established in 1965, IALLT (formerly IALL) is a professional organization whose members provide leadership in the development, integration, evaluation, and management of instructional technology for the teaching and learning of language, literature, and culture. Its strong sense of community promotes the sharing of expertise in a variety of educational contexts. Members include directors and staff of language labs, resource or media centers, language teachers at all levels, developers and vendors of hardware and software, grant project developers, and others. IALLT offers biennial conferences, regional groups and meetings, the LLTI listserv (Language Learning Technology International), and key publications such as the IALLT Journal, the IALLT Language Center Design Kit, and the IALLT Lab Management Manual. It also offers guidance on defining career goals and expectations through the new "IALLT Statement of Professional Responsibilities" (see under "About IALLT" > "Important Documents" on the Web site). The 2003 IALLT conference will be held at the University of Michigan, June 17 - 21, 2003. For information, visit the IALLT Web site at [www.iallt.org/](http://www.iallt.org/).

**REVIEW OF LANGUAGE AND THE INTERNET**  
**The Biggest Language Revolution Ever Meets Applied Linguistics in the 21st Century**

*Language and the Internet*

David Crystal

2001

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272 pp.

Cambridge University Press

110 Midland Avenue

Port Chester, NY 10573-4930

<http://uk.cambridge.org/>



**Reviewed by Steven L. Thorne, Penn State**

That the Internet invokes profound opportunities for language educators and students has been long discussed (with some of the better examples published in this very journal). In his 2001 book, *Language and the Internet*, David Crystal only sporadically mentions educational issues or contexts, but this does not diminish the importance or relevance of this book for applied linguists. Crystal, a prolific linguist who has authored numerous scholarly and reference texts on a variety of language related topics, turns his attention in this volume to the language practices visibly mediated by the Internet. In a personal preface to the volume, he mentions that as a prominent linguist, he has often been asked about what effect the Internet has had on language, a question for which he did not have a clear answer. This prompted him to explore a variety of what he terms "Internet situations," each of which comes to form a chapter in this 272-page volume.

Crystal's linguist-eye perspective is just what language educators need in order to understand the broader implications of the complex relations governing language-based communication and the Internet as a set of distinctive modalities. Regrettably, Crystal selects the awkward and overly cute term "Netspeak" to describe the many forms of language visible on the Internet. His selection of this term clearly arises from the ephemeral neologisms common to digital culture in the mid and late 1990s, evidence for which resides in the list of alternatives he considered -- "netlish," "weblish," and "cyberspeak." Though it is a small critique, this text would be improved should he have selected a less quaint term such as simply "computer-mediated communication" (CMC) or "electronic discourse." This small problem aside, Crystal convincingly describes language use and language change within "Internet situations" such as e-mail, synchronous and asynchronous "chat groups" (his term), virtual worlds (MUDs and MOOs), and the World Wide Web. Within each Internet situation, he discusses and, where possible, explicates the development of new graphic conventions such as emoticons and abbreviations, the emergence of novel genres, Internet-derived neologisms, and features of communicative activity that could only have emerged through electronic media (e.g., forms of interaction in synchronous chat, pp. 151-167, and "message intercalation" in e-mail, p. 120.) Below, I review select chapters of this text in greater detail.

Crystal's treatment of e-mail (chapter 3) describes this modality's history, including its fixed discourse elements (the header structure) and various epistolary conventions which were borrowed from earlier textual modalities (notes, letters, memos, postcards). Despite its unglamorous everyday quality for regular users, Crystal reminds the reader that e-mail use emphasizes "clarity of the message on the screen" (p. 110) and has precipitated the now common use of numbered and bulleted lists, a feature rare in earlier written communication. Unlike the memo that preceded it, e-mail is often used as a tool for dialogue and

can include a string of anterior messages. In this sense, a new document is created as each interaction builds upon prior messages. Crystal predicts that over time, e-mail will exhibit a "much wider stylistic range than it does at present, as the medium is adapted to suit a broader range of communicative purposes" (p. 107). Does this "much wider stylistic range," potentially outside of the norms of prescriptivist grammatical and orthographic conventions, present a problem rather than an opportunity for language educators? Crystal responds that e-mail is not a "medium to be feared for its linguistic irresponsibility (because it allows for radical graphological deviance) but as one which offers a further domain within which children can develop their ability to consolidate their stylistic intuitions and make responsible linguistic choices." Addressing language education directly, Crystal argues that "Email has extended the language's stylistic range in interesting and innovative ways. In my view, it is an opportunity, not a threat, for language education" (p. 128). I agree with Crystal's optimism and acknowledge that the Internet has unquestionably expanded the average range and diversity of specifically graphical (written) communication. I would also extend this line of reasoning to mention that Internet situations are no longer optional communicative modalities, nor is the use of Internet communication tools some sort of proxy or practice environment for subsequent communication in face-to-face or formal writing contexts. Ever increasingly, everyday communication in work, school, and interpersonal domains is Internet mediated. Understanding and acquiring new genres of communication (at the level of style as well as lexicon and register) are critical dimensions of the process of becoming a competent late-modern communicator.

In chapter 5, Crystal addresses group uses of CMC tools of both the synchronous and asynchronous varieties. To help substantiate Crystal's assertion that the Internet has kindled the wide-spread use of bulleted lists, here are the descriptive features Crystal attributes to group CMC use (what he subsumes under the label synchronous and asynchronous "group chats"):

- These modalities encourage an "I" language variety where personal reference and perspective dominate.
- "It" is used to introduce personal comments ("it seems to me...").
- Participants frequently use private verbs such as "think," "feel," "know" (describing activity that cannot be publicly observed).
- Tag or rhetorical questions are used to express personal attitude, views, and to encourage responses from interlocutors.
- Synchronous and asynchronous tools lack (or differentially render) the face-to-face conventions of turn-taking, floor-taking, and adjacency pairing, with implications for rate of topic decay, coherence and cohesion, and simultaneity and overlap of messages.

In reference to the final point and quoting Herring, Crystal acknowledges that CMC environments are "both dysfunctionally and advantageously incoherent" (p. 169). Though numerous features of Internet communication have the propensity to drive language prescriptivists mad with rage, and certainly most everyone has been the producer of an utterance that upon rereading makes us cringe, people adapt language to meet new needs, new situations, and new modalities. This is the heart of language evolution. As new digital communication tools become available, genres of communicative practice will develop that are difficult to predict or possibly even to imagine.

Chapter seven describes language use on the World Wide Web which is "graphically more eclectic than any domain of written language in the real world" (p. 197) and one that "holds a mirror up to our linguistic nature, it is a mirror that both distorts and enhances, providing new constraints and opportunities" (p. 198). In assessing this situation, Crystal suggests that this is because the language of the Web is under no central control, does not respect national boundaries, and thus spawns new communicative genres. Due to the Web's dual function of reception (finding texts) and production (relative ease of producing HTML texts), "people have more power to influence the language of the Web than in any other medium" (p. 208).



In this chapter Crystal also includes an interesting discussion on word processing. In contrast to the flexible orthography and syntax in many CMC contexts, Crystal rightly points out that word processors and some e-mail clients "must surely influence our intuitions about the nature of our language" through the prescriptivist grammar and spell-checkers they include (p. 212). Though certainly useful as indicators of typos or inadvertent grammar errors, Crystal is of the opinion that

a large number of valuable stylistic distinctions are being endangered by this repeated encounter with the programmer's prescriptive usage preferences. Online dictionaries and grammars are likely to influence usage much more than their traditional Fowlerian counterparts ever did. It would be good to see a greater descriptive realism emerge, paying attention to the sociolinguistic and stylistic complexity which exists in a language, but at present the recommendations are arbitrary, oversimplified, and depressingly purist in spirit. (p. 212)

A few pages later, Crystal concludes that "[grammar and spelling] software designers underestimate the amount of variation there is in the orthographic system, the pervasive nature of language change, and the influence context has in deciding whether an orthographic feature is obligatory or optional" (p. 214). His passion to affirm the many language varieties visible over the Internet, and his well-supported arguments against grammatical and stylistic essentialism, provide language educators with the challenge to be balanced in their assessment strategies of communication that occurs in digital environments. For language educators, the Internet provokes the following tension -- to be accepting of creative innovation while also corrective of language use that may fall too far outside of expert speaker norms.

Crystal also tackles the issue of language diversity and notes that roughly one quarter of the world's languages have some Internet presence. For languages with few speakers or little telecommunications infrastructure, he reasonably hypothesizes that "until a critical mass of Internet penetration in a country builds up, and a corresponding mass of content exists in the local language, the motivation to switch from English-language sites will be limited to those for whom issues of identity outweigh issues of information" (p. 220). However, we need not fear total domination by English as the primary medium of digital communication. Especially through wireless networks that bypass the infrastructural problems associated with wires and cables, an increasing proportion of the world's population will participate in the use and production of the Internet. This, Crystal notes, will afford a glimpse at "language presence in a real sense ... sites which allow us to see languages as they are" (pp. 220-221).

In the eighth and final chapter, "The Linguistic Future of the Internet," Crystal surmises that computer mediated communication may become an obsolete notion as Internet information and communication functionality migrates to other tools, notably mobile phones and personal digital assistants at the moment, but also hand held units that will combine Internet access with digital photography and video, fax, and traditional media like radio and television. He suggests that technology developments will have two broad impacts: (a) new modalities and their effects on the nature of language and speech community and (b) new modalities bringing languages and speech communities into contact with one another. As speakers of distinct language varieties come together for an increasing number of purposes, automated speech transcription and translation tools will likely improve and become ubiquitous. As noted above, however, the more commonly spoken languages will likely remain far better served by the private sector services that will support such development.

Crystal does discuss language education issues in this final chapter and remarks that second language education and applied linguistics have been leaders in the use of the Internet for specific purposes. Examples include asynchronous projects at intra- and interclass levels and "key-pal" international partnerships (the topic of this LIT special issue). Synchronous tools and what Crystal terms "virtual world" environments (MUDs and MOOs) facilitate real-time communication which may assist with "the promotion of rapid responses," but cautions that the truncated forms of language found in chat environments may "represent only a small part of the grammatical repertoire of a language" (p. 235). As

mentioned. Crystal also emphasizes the "authentic materials" and "genuine written data" that is available via the Web. With all Internet technologies, Crystal warns that it is the teachers who must be aware of the diversity of Internet speech communities, to know the relation between modalities and expected genres of communication, and to be familiar with the nomenclature of the Internet itself. Well in line with the language ideology he reiterates throughout the book, Crystal does not take a prescriptivist approach and suggests that we embrace language change, including the flexible orthography, grammar, and style common to the many varieties of "netspeak." However, he also points out that language educators should be aware of the complex pragmatic competence L2 learners will need to evaluate the appropriateness of language used on e-mail and chat groups. "The bending and breaking of rules," which form the heart of ludic behavior, present "a problem to those who have not yet developed a confident command of the rules per se" (pp. 236-237).

Certain omissions are apparent in the book, but anyone writing about contemporary uses of technology knows that it presents a moving target. In other words, it is not possible to predict even near-future technology use with much accuracy. Crystal's book was published in 2001, however, and includes references from 2000. It is mildly surprising that he does not address what can only be described as the "Instant Messenger phenomenon." Instant Messenger (IM) has become the leading synchronous CMC tool for undergraduate populations (see [Thorne, 2003](#)) and was tremendously popular even in the late 1990s. Per my experience using this text in applied linguistics courses, non-linguistically focused or trained individuals have found his prose, linguistic descriptions, and argumentation to be clear and inspiring. Very usefully, Crystal discusses and takes examples from widely referenced linguistic, CMC, and Internet Studies research. This aspect of the book should prove useful to foreign and second language educators who wish to glean a synoptic overview of the vast research on CMC and Internet Studies.

In the final analysis, *Language and the Internet* is a review text providing a useful and well-referenced overview of Internet-related research. Commensurate with other books written for such purposes, this volume provides few new or striking insights to Internet Studies enthusiasts. This said, Crystal has written an engaging volume that language educators will find practical as they grapple with questions of how Internet-mediated language may, and perhaps ought to be, different from language use in other modalities. As such, this book is important for applied linguists who wish to understand the broader background of language use and language change via the Internet, which he describes as "a linguistic singularity -- a genuine new medium" (p. 238). Invoking Berners-Lee, the acknowledged developer of the Internet, Crystal reminds us that the Internet is less a technological fact than a social fact, and "its chief stock-in-trade is language" (p. 236). Brace yourself, for as Crystal notes, and I concur, "we are on the brink of the biggest language revolution ever" (p. 241).

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#### ABOUT THE REVIEWER

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#### REFERENCE

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## REVIEW OF *NETWORK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING: CONCEPTS AND PRACTICE*

Network-Based Language Teaching: Concepts and Practice

Mark Warschauer & Richard Kern, Editors

Cambridge Applied Linguistics Series

Michael H. Long & Jack C. Richards, Series Editors

2000

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Reviewed by **Marisol Fernández-García**, Northeastern University

*Network-Based Language Teaching: Theory and Practice* is an edited volume that collects a group of descriptive and empirical studies on network-based language teaching (NBLT) in a variety of second and foreign language learning contexts. As the editors, Warschauer and Kern, point out in the preface, these studies document and illustrate the type of processes and outcomes that take place when language learners use computer networks in particular circumstances. Those interested in designing and implementing NBLT will undoubtedly find helpful the implications that the results of these studies may have for their own teaching context.

In chapter 1 ("Introduction: Theory and Practice of Network-Based Language Teaching"), Richard Kern and Mark Warschauer define NBLT as "language teaching that involves the use of computers connected to one another in either local or global networks" (p. 1). As such, NBLT represents a new and different form of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). On the one hand, communication is at the core of NBLT; on the other, NBLT breaks with the time and space constraints imposed by face-to-face communication and by traditional language learning tools, thus allowing for multiple forms of learning, communicative practice, and collaboration. Despite the apparent new possibilities that this new medium affords, Kern and Warschauer caution that the specific advantages of NBLT can only be unveiled by research that examines "particular *practices of use* in particular contexts" (p. 2).

Kern and Warschauer devote part of this chapter to situating the emergence of NBLT in a historical context by first considering the shift in theoretical perspectives in the recent history of language teaching, and then, how those perspectives have influenced the use of computer technology in language teaching. The last section of the chapter outlines the research implications for various CALL approaches and identifies the areas of NBLT research that have been neglected to date and that are addressed by the contributions of the volume.

Chapter 2 ("Sociocollaborative Language Learning in Bulgaria"), by Carla Meskill and Krassimira Ranglova, offers a detailed account of the redesign of an English as a foreign language curriculum (EFL) at the University of Sofia, Bulgaria. The authors argue that the redesign of the curriculum was based on current sociocognitive theory and practice and involved a major shift away from a curriculum that emphasized teacher-centered and language appreciation activities to one that is student- and meaning-centered. The authors provide a discussion of the rationale for the adoption of a response-based approach

to the teaching of literature and explain and illustrate how technology was integrated into the social context of learning and the literature-based curriculum. Finally, they discuss the formative and summative assessment based on data collected during the yearlong period of implementation. Among the many positive aspects the data revealed, Meskill and Ranglova highlight the role of technologies "in bringing about new ways of using and thinking about language, especially in terms of student autonomy, student-student collaboration, and teacher participation" (p. 35).

In chapter 3 ("On-Line Learning in Second Language Classrooms: An Ethnographic Study"), Mark Warschauer reports on a two-year study of the implementation of on-line learning in four college language and writing classes in Hawaii. Following an ethnographic approach, Warschauer shows how the particular sociocultural context affects the implementation and contributes to the relative success of NBLT. In particular, his findings indicate that the general institutional context and the beliefs of individual teachers influenced the implementation of new technologies. Students, on the other hand, experienced the use of technologies as a medium to develop new literacy skills of great importance in their lives. Warschauer's careful analysis suggests that, in the context of his study, for electronic learning activities to be most purposeful and effective, they should be learner-centered, authentic, and rhetorically appropriate; have goals that are relevant for students' lives; and allow students to explore and express their social and cultural identity.

In the fourth chapter ("Negotiation in Cyberspace: The Role of Chatting in the Development of Grammatical Competence"), Jill Pelletieri reports on a study that investigated the potential of network-based communication "to foster the negotiation of meaning and form-focused interaction" (p. 64). Using Yaronis and Gass' (1985) model for nonnative-nonnative speaker negotiation, Pelletieri presents a descriptive analysis of the discourse generated by second language learners of Spanish while carrying tasks through network-based synchronous written interaction. In line with studies that examined oral interactions, Pelletieri found that lexical and content negotiations predominated over morphosyntactic ones. Only those tasks that included a more form-focused subcomponent (e.g., the composition of an on-line note or narrative) tended to generate higher percentages of morphosyntactic negotiations. Her study also indicated that learners' output modifications in response to negotiations and corrective feedback resulted in more target-like forms and in high rates of incorporation of feedback into subsequent turns. The study points to a number of interesting venues for future research relating to how specific features of task design may have an impact on the amount of negotiation or on learners' focus on grammatical form.

The fifth contribution to the volume ("Writing into Change: Style Shifting in Asynchronous Electronic Discourse"), by Boyd Davis and Ralf Thiede, examines style-shifting patterns in the texts generated by English as foreign language (EFL) students in two asynchronous conferences during a semester-long course. An analysis of the discourse and of the syntactic and lexical profiles in two of the EFL students' postings suggested "consciously motivated choices of style, of lexicosyntactic accommodation, and of linguistic awareness" (p. 112), particularly in response to native-speaker texts. The authors also identified signals of social practice that reflected status and distance and that seemed to support Wolfson's (1989) "bulge hypothesis," that is, "that minimum or ... maximum, degrees of status and social distance ... foster very similar patterns as opposed to the greater variation in the middle section" (p. 113). Davis and Thiede base most of their claims on qualitative analyses of some EFL students' texts, as well as self-reports, and a series of quantitative measures. The rationale for the use of the latter is not specifically addressed, and the reader could benefit from a brief account of its appropriateness for their particular research design.

In chapter 6 ("Computers and Collaborative Writing in the Foreign Language Curriculum"), Jean Marie Schultz reports on an experimental study that compared the effects of computer-based and face-to-face oral peer editing feedback on intermediate-level French students' compositions. Schultz's analyses yielded a positive effect for oral feedback on the revisions of compositions of third-semester students in terms of number and length of content changes. Similar results were obtained in the case of fourth-semester students; however, the compositions of students that had participated in an alternate mode of feedback

(computer and oral) were superior to either pure mode in terms of stylistic and interpretative-level content changes made. The results of Schultz's study challenge previous claims about the efficiency of computer use to foster improvement in certain areas of writing. On the other hand, her results suggest the need for research that looks into the different cognitive processes involved in oral and computer-mediated feedback and how they may interact to facilitate improvements in writing development.

In chapter 7 ("Networked Multimedia Environments for Second Language Acquisition"), Dorothy M. Chun and Jan L. Plass discuss key issues involved in the design of networked multimedia environments that are based on principles of second language acquisition. Consonant with current constructivist approaches to learning, Chun and Plass conceive multimedia programs as environments that can enhance the "learning-as-knowledge-construction process" (p. 161) and engage learners in higher-level cognitive processes. The authors present a description of a prototype project under development for second-year German students that illustrates how the tools incorporated were implemented in a constructivist environment. Among the factors that the authors underscore as in need of investigation, is the potential cognitive overload of navigating in a hypermedia environment. The chapter concludes with specific suggestions for future research on the cognitive processes involved in learning with hypermedia materials. The authors point out that this type of research is crucial to determine which and how features of hypermedia environments can aid in the process of language acquisition.

In chapter 8 ("An Electronic Literacy Approach to Network-Based Language Teaching"), Heidi Shetzer and Mark Warschauer present a theoretical framework for the development of electronic literacy. Shetzer and Warschauer argue that, in an ever increasing technological society, an electronic literacy approach to NBLT implies two pedagogical objectives: "how to use information technology in order to teach language" and "how to teach language so that learners can make effective use of information technology" (p. 172). Shetzer and Warschauer examine first the three main areas that the development of electronic literacy skills encompasses (i.e., communication, construction, and research) and discuss how they differ from earlier approaches to language and literacy instruction. They then suggest skills and activities that allow for flexibility depending on the technologies available in a particular context. Finally, they propose action research, which involves collaboration among teachers, students, and researchers, as well as the use of the electronic medium, to investigate and reflect critically on specific electronic literacy practices.

In chapter 9 ("Task-Based Language Learning Via Audiovisual Networks: The LEVERAGE Project"), Christoph Zähler, Agnès Fauverge, and Jan Wong describe a pilot study on the use of broadband audio and audiovisual conferencing with college-level learners of French and of English. Drawing on the theoretical work of authors such as Frawley (1997), Neisser (1992), and Vygotsky (1978), the authors evaluate the system in an attempt to determine whether it was able to support intensive collaborative learning and effective zones of proximal development. They present data samples that reveal learners' use of metaconscious processing and intersubjectivity, as well as close collaboration in carrying out the tasks of the study. The analysis of the data also indicated the importance of shared work space in collaborative learning. Thus, in the case of network-based environments, the availability of a shared writing tool seemed to be essential to facilitate the externalization of ideas and to make them the subject for reflection and negotiation. Likewise, the authors found that the role of an adviser was crucial to help with language-related, task-related, and technical issues, and therefore, to maximize the potential benefits of audiovisual networking. In contrast with on-line written communication (Bump, 1990; Kern, 1995), this study suggests that particular limitations of audiovisual conferencing (e.g., restricted visual channel) forced learners to rely on oral feedback and seemed to have an inhibitory effect in learners' participation. This study indicates the potential of audiovisual networking as a promising tool for long-distance task-based learning. Nevertheless, clarification of how particular terms (e.g., "peer tutoring," "corrections," "negotiation of meaning," "misunderstandings") are used in the results section of the chapter is needed to properly interpret the implications of this type of learner-learner collaboration for language acquisition.

In chapter 10 ("Is Network-Based Learning CALL?"), Carol A. Chapelle argues that support for a distinction between CALL and NBLT must come from an empirically based definition of network and non-network CALL activities, including a description of learners' use of language and of the activity features that contribute to the significant aspects of learners' language use. Chapelle examines six recurrent themes in the history of CALL, and whether and how NBLT ties to and offers new perspectives on each theme: the need for CALL evaluation, the myth of "CALL method," significant features of activities, the need to link to SLA research, the classroom context of CALL, and sociocultural issues of CALL. She also addresses the critical role of NBLT in CALL's evolution and identifies some of the complexities of network learning activities that raise new challenges but also "push forward the scope of CALL use and evaluation" (p. 219). Chapelle concludes with a tentative answer to the title question: "NBLT represents an expansion rather than a reconceptualization of CALL" (p. 222).

This volume offers a very readable group of studies that not only clarify the nature of NBLT but also address, from a variety of perspectives, many of the complexities involved in its design and implementation. Most contributions present particular instances of use of NBLT, which illustrate the wide range of potential applications. In addition, significant venues for future research are identified throughout the book. The editors note that the book was "written for researchers, graduate students, and teachers who are interested in the theory and practice of network-based language teaching" (p. 2), and it certainly is an essential source for that type of readers. Nevertheless, the book may appeal as well to readers with a general interest in the use of computer-mediated communication in education.

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#### ABOUT THE REVIEWER

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## REVIEW OF *PRONUNCIACIÓN Y FONÉTICA, VERSION 2.1*

<b>Name of Product</b>	Pronunciación y Fonética, version 2.1
<b>Creators</b>	Patricia V. Lunn, Michigan State University (program author) Claire Bradin and Dennie Hoopingarner (software designers) Daniel Park and Madhu Sridharan (software developers)
<b>Distributor</b>	Instructional Media Center Michigan State University
<b>Contact Information</b>	P. O. Box 710 East Lansing, MI 48826-0710 Tel: (517) 353-9229 Fax: (517) 432-2650 <a href="http://msuvmall.msu.edu/imc">http://msuvmall.msu.edu/imc</a>
<b>System Requirements</b>	Macintosh PowerPC or Windows95/98/NT no installation required
<b>Support Offered</b>	Support available from CLEAR staff at (517)-432-2286 or <a href="mailto:clear@msu.edu">clear@msu.edu</a>
<b>Target Language</b>	Spanish
<b>Target Audience</b>	Majors or minors with at least a high-intermediate level of Spanish proficiency; teachers of Spanish phonology and phonetics
<b>Price</b>	\$25 + s/h

### Reviewed by Phillip Elliott, Southern University

The program contains 10 lessons, written in Spanish, on Spanish pronunciation and phonetics. As mentioned in the program, the student learns how Spanish sounds differ among themselves and how such differences may serve to distinguish one word from another. She also learns to recognize Spanish sounds and produce them (the program allows the student the opportunity to record her voice during certain exercises). The student studies some of the dialects of Spanish and learns how the study of phonetics can facilitate the comprehension and the classification of Spanish dialects. The 10 lessons are as follows, their length indicated by the number of screens they entail:

Syllable (25 screens)	Consonants: description (15 screens)
Stress (20 screens)	Consonants: pronunciation (27 screens)
Phoneme (13 screens)	Orthography (13 screens)
Vowels: description (9 screens)	Dialects (23 screens)
Vowels: pronunciation (10 screens)	Review (18 screens)

The lessons are organized on a menu screen with color-coded buttons. For example, *la sílaba* (syllable) is written on a red button. Clicking on the button takes one to the lesson on the syllable, which entails 25 screens of explanation and practice. Navigation arrows on the right of each screen allow the student to move from one screen to another. Also on the right of the screen are a *menu* button and an *exit* button.

### DETAILED LESSON: THE SYLLABLE

The first lesson on the Menu screen, *la sílaba*, is reviewed in detail, to give the reader a sense of what a student or teacher sees and does when completing an entire lesson. Summaries for the other nine lessons appear [below](#). The description of this lesson's content and procedures is organized screen by screen.

#### Screen 1

Rhythm is said to be the basis for pronunciation. Each language has its own rhythm. When an English speaker speaks Spanish with English rhythm, she has a foreign accent. Spanish rhythm is examined.

**Screen 2**

Spanish rhythm is based on the syllable. Each syllable has a vowel nucleus. A vowel constitutes a syllable, and it may also constitute a word. Sentences with the five vowels used as words are given in bold, indicating they have a sound file (e.g., *No voy a clase*).

**Screen 3**

A vowel may be accompanied by another vowel in the syllable or by a preceding or following consonant. Monosyllabic words exemplifying this fact are given in bold for the student to click on and listen to (e.g., *rey, tres, ay, lo*).

**Screen 4**

A distinction between a letter (orthography) and a sound (phonetics) is made. Three words in bold exemplify the difference between spelling and sound representation: *casa* [kása], *hora* [óra], *voy* [boj].

**Screen 5**

Consonants and vowels may combine in several ways to form a syllable. The prototypical combination in Spanish is consonant-vowel (CV), which may be repeated productively to create more lengthy words. Examples of this process are given in bold for students to listen to (*la, bebé, mañana, mejorado, miológico, delicadísimo*, etc.).

**Screen 6**

The prototypical CV in Spanish determines Spanish syllabification at both the word and phrase level. Three example words are listed for students to hear: *a-ma-re-mos, la-va-do, and a-ma-rí-lló*.

**Screen 7**

Consonants generally appear in syllable final position only if not followed by a vowel: *con, mal, mes*. In longer words, this CVC combination will be divided as CV-C: *co-no-ce, ma-le-ta, me-se-ro*. All of these words are in bold and have sound files.

**Screen 8**

One of the main differences between Spanish and English pronunciation is that in English a consonant need not accompany the next vowel to form part of the following syllable. Six Spanish proper names and their English cognates are given in bold to illustrate this: *Ana, Julio, Laura, Paula, Roberto, and Tere*.

**Screen 9**

The six Spanish proper names of screen 8 are repeated in bold for students to listen to. Next to each word are two buttons: one for the student to record herself saying the word, the other to play back the recording.

**Screen 10**

The consonant groups *ll, qu, rr,* and *ch* all represent one sound and therefore belong in the same syllable.

**Screen 11**

Eight words in bold are presented for the student to hear. The student is asked to write in a text bar each word's syllable division. The student may then click on a check mark to check her answer. Example words include *saque, finito, and jamón*, among others.

**Screen 12**

Because consonants tend to form the initial position of a syllable, consonant groups also tend to form the same syllable-initial position, with the proviso that only consonant groups that may begin a word in



Spanish are allowed to form the initial part of a syllable. Otherwise, they will be divided into separate syllables (e.g., *a-pren-der*).

### Screen 13

Eight bold-faced words are listed and the student is asked to listen to the words then choose, among three options, the correct syllable division of each word.

### Screen 14

There are two kinds of vowels in Spanish. The first is the strong vowel, which always forms the vowel nucleus of a syllable. They are *a*, *e*, and *o*. In general, when two strong vowels are juxtaposed, each will require its own syllable. The word *teatro* is bold-faced and the student can hear how the *e* and *a* are in hiatus (*hiato*); there is a syllabic boundary between them: *te-a-tro*. Example words are *caos*, *feo*, *maestro*, *boa*, and *Noé*.

### Screen 15

The vowels *i* and *u* usually lose their syllabic quality when they combine with an adjacent vowel. They are called *weak vowels*. Six words illustrate various vowel combinations containing *i* and *u*, including *Juan*, *fuego*, and *traición*.

### Screen 16

When two vowels combine and one is a weak vowel, they form a diphthong (*diptongo*). When three vowels that are combined contain weak vowels, they form a triphthong (*triptongo*). The word *Uruguay* is bold-faced and given as an example of a triphthong.

### Screen 17

In Spanish, all syllables are pronounced more or less with the same duration, giving the language its characteristic repetitive rhythm. Two columns of seven words, written in bold and paired off as minimal pairs, illustrate the fact that the weak vowel of a diphthong, though brief, is still audible. Among the minimal pairs the student listens to are *dio/ido* and *fue/fe*.

### Screen 18

Eight bold-faced words are listed. Students listen to the words then choose from three choices the correct syllable division of each word. Words in the list include *ciencia*, *cuidado*, *reaccionar*, and *traición*.

### Screen 19

Because syllable-initial position tends to be occupied by consonants and syllable-final position by vowels, glides can be divided into two groups: semi-vowels that end a syllable (e.g., *a-fei-tar*), and semi-consonants that begin a syllable (e.g., *pa-tio*). Four bold-faced words exemplify each type of glide.

### Screen 20

The student listens to eight bold-faced words containing diphthongs. Then she is asked to write in the text box next to each word whether the glide is a semi-vowel (semi-V) or a semi-consonant (semi-C).

### Screen 21

Syllabification in Spanish occurs the same way in a phrase as it does in a word: a consonant will combine with a following vowel to form a syllable. There are no phonetic boundaries between words in a sentence. This is known as *linking* (*enlace* or *encadenamiento*). The bold-faced sentence "El inglés es un idioma" is given as an example: *e-lín-glé-se-su-ni-dio-ma*.

**Screen 22**

A Spanish couplet is bold-faced and serves as an example of *linking*. Linking between words in the couplet is indicated by the ^ symbol. The student is then given each line of the couplet separately to listen to. She next records herself saying the verse and then plays back the recording.

**Screen 23**

The student listens to six bold-faced sentences, then divides each sentence into syllables in the text box that appears below each sentence.

**Screen 24**

The same six sentences of screen 23 are listed and the student is asked to read them aloud, attempting to repeat each sentence with the correct syllable divisions.

**Screen 25**

This is a summary screen of the lesson.

**LESSON SUMMARIES**

**Table 1** summarizes many of the points discussed in the other nine lessons of the program. These lessons utilize a variety of exercises similar to those found in the Syllable Lesson.

Table 1. Lesson Summaries for Nine Lessons

<b>Stress</b>	<b>Phoneme</b>	<b>Vowels: Description</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*It is contrastive.</li> <li>*Most words do not have a written accent mark.</li> <li>*A written accent mark identifies the stressed syllable.</li> <li>*Words ending in a vowel or -n, -s have stress on next-to-last syllable.</li> <li>*Words ending in a consonant (except -n, -s) have stress on the last syllable.</li> <li>*4 word stress categories.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Phonemes are a class of sounds that have a contrastive function.</li> <li>*One must learn a different system of contrasts when learning a second language.</li> <li>*Minimal pairs help identify phonemes.</li> <li>*Allophones are realizations of phonemes.</li> <li>*Differences between phoneme, allophone and letter.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Mouth, lips, and tongue produce the characteristic sound of a vowel.</li> <li>*Vowel identity based on tongue movement and position (high, mid, low/front, central, back); degree of mouth aperture (open, closed) and position of lips (tensed, rounded).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Vowels: Pronunciation</b></li> <li>*English vowels may vary from syllable to syllable but Spanish vowels retain their basic characteristic, whether in stressed or unstressed syllable.</li> <li>*Some allophonic variation with unstressed vowels in Spanish.</li> <li>*Care needed to maintain the speech organs in correct position when producing vowels.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Consonants: Description</b></li> <li>*Consonants may be divided into 2 types, depending on whether airflow is constricted.</li> <li>*Obstruent consonants may be voiced or unvoiced.</li> <li>*Non-obstruent consonants are all voiced.</li> <li>*Consonants identified by three features: point and mode of articulation, and voicing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Consonants: Pronunciation</b></li> <li>*/p/, /t/, and /k/ have only one allophone that is unaspirated.</li> <li>*The distinction between nasal sounds is sometimes neutralized before consonants.</li> <li>*/l/ is not velarized as in English.</li> <li>*/b/, /d/, and /g/ have fricative and occlusive allophones.</li> <li>*Distinction between /r/, /r̄/ occurs in intervocalic position.</li> </ul>

<b>Orthography</b>	<b>Dialects</b>	<b>Review</b>
<p>*<i>u</i> not pronounced between <i>g_e</i> or <i>g_i</i>.</p> <p>*<i>i</i> indicates pronunciation of <i>u</i> between <i>g_e</i> or <i>g_i</i>.</p> <p>*[x] corresponds to <i>g, j</i>, and <i>x</i>.</p> <p>*[y] corresponds to <i>ll</i> and <i>y</i>.</p> <p>*[s] corresponds to <i>c, s</i>, and <i>z</i>.</p> <p>*[r] corresponds to <i>r</i> and <i>rr</i>.</p> <p>*[k] corresponds to <i>k, c</i>, and <i>qu</i>.</p> <p>*<i>h</i> is silent but may indicate hiatus.</p> <p>*<i>b</i> and <i>v</i> have the same allophones.</p>	<p>*Three universal generalizations are that some dialects have more phonemes than others; pronunciation of consonants will vary according to their syllabic position; stressed vowels are more stable than unstressed vowels.</p> <p>*Consonants may be altered or lost in syllable-final position.</p> <p>*Unstressed vowels may be reduced, especially before [s].</p> <p>*Dialects reviewed are Mexican, Castilian, Argentinian, and Dominican.</p>	<p>*Division of words and phrases into syllables</p> <p>*Stressed and unstressed syllables</p> <p>*Word stress categories</p> <p>*The phoneme and minimal pairs</p> <p>*Allophones and phonetic contrasts</p> <p>*Vowels</p> <p>*Consonants</p> <p>*Voicing, point, and mode of articulation</p> <p>*Orthography</p>

## DISCUSSION

This program is valuable for both advanced students of Spanish and Spanish teachers. It introduces the user to important concepts in phonetics, allows her to practice pronunciation, clarifies significant differences between Spanish and English pronunciation, and presents the user with interesting features of several regional dialects. I have used the program when teaching Spanish phonetics and it has been a great supplement to our course textbook.

The program was updated in 2002, which helped rid the program of some of its procedural problems (debugging issues). For instance, with the 1999 version 2.0, on a frequent basis it was hard to find the right spot to click to hear a word or sentence, or to check a response. This has been improved with version 2.1. Still, some minor distractions were missed in the update. For example, not all bold-faced words have audio files as is suggested. There are also still some spelling mistakes, such as *los consonantes* for *las consonantes*. On occasion, an activity is misleading. For instance, in the Syllable lesson, English and Spanish cognates are given to show a difference in syllable division. The names *Robert* and *Roberto* are used to show this difference, among others. However, although *Robert* may be divided in the dictionary as *Rob-ert*, in actual practice most people say *Ro-ber-t*, which is similar to the syllable division of its Spanish cognate *Ro-ber-to*. Thus, some of the examples chosen to illustrate a difference between English and Spanish syllabification may actually confuse the students.

Having a dictionary with entries for its capitalized phonetic terms would have also aided the program's user. An activity testing the student on the meanings of such terms would have also been useful. In addition, I would suggest that audio files to accompany portions of the main text of each lesson would benefit students. On many occasions, my students have asked me how to pronounce particular words in the main texts of the program's lessons!

Although out-dated in some respects, the program remains a useful tool for introducing Spanish phonetics to majors and minors. If future updates are considered, I hope careful attention will be given to the content issues outlined here.

### **ABOUT THE REVIEWER**

Phillip Elliott is an Associate Professor in the Department of Foreign Languages at Southern University-Baton Rouge, where he teaches Spanish and Mandarin Chinese. He holds a PhD in Second Language Acquisition and Teaching from the University of Arizona (SLAT Program).

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## ARTIFACTS AND CULTURES-OF-USE IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

**Steven L. Thorne**

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### ABSTRACT

This article develops a conceptual framework for understanding how intercultural communication, mediated by cultural artifacts (i.e., Internet communication tools), creates compelling, problematic, and surprising conditions for additional language learning. Three case studies of computer-mediated intercultural engagement draw together correlations between discursive orientation, communicative modality, communicative activity, and emergent interpersonal dynamics. These factors contribute to varying qualities and quantities of participation in the intercultural partnerships. Case one, "Clashing Frames of Expectation -- Differing Cultures-of-Use," suggests that the cultures-of-use of Internet communication tools, their perceived existence and on-going construction as distinctive cultural artifacts, differs interculturally just as communicative genre, pragmatics, and institutional context would be expected to differ interculturally. Case two, "Intercultural Communication as Hyperpersonal Engagement," illustrates pragmatic and linguistic development as an outcome of intercultural relationship building. The final case study, "The Wrong Tool for the Right Job?," describes a recent generational shift in communication tool preference wherein an ostensibly ubiquitous tool, e-mail, is shown to be unsuitable for mediating age peer relationships. Taken together, these case studies demonstrate that Internet communication tools are not neutral media. Rather, individual and collective experience is shown to influence the ways students engage in Internet-mediated communication with consequential outcomes for both the processes and products of language development.

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For some social classes and in highly privileged geographical regions, we have entered into a period of rapid and efficient global communication practices mediating an array of interpersonal, discursive-material, and cultural activities. Despite the robust connections between the increasing digitization of everyday communicative practice and issues such as globalization and homogenization, Internet-mediated intercultural educational activities remain demonstrably polymorphous. Reasons for this are many. Educational cultures and objectives vary across nation state boundaries (Belz, 2002) as well as across educational institutions within the US. Moreover, within the same university but across courses or time periods, student populations shift, pedagogical goals are reassessed, and micro-interactional phenomena illustrate their own "acculturality" (Volosinov, 1973), even when the task, as it were, is supposed to remain consistent across participants and time (Coughlan & Duff, 1994). The focus of this article is yet another dimension of human heterogeneity -- the cultural embeddedness of Internet communication tools and the consequences of this embedding for communicative activity.

Three case studies will be presented which illustrate some of the possibilities and problems associated with foreign language intercultural interaction mediated by Internet communication tools. I argue that Internet communication tools, like all human artifacts, are cultural tools (for an extension of this argument to the natural environment and the social construction of nature, see Braun & Castree, 1998; Harvey, 1996; Williams, 1980). Specifically, I show that e-mail, instant messenger, and forms of synchronous chat, are deeply affected by the cultures-of-use, or to borrow a biological term -- phenotypic characteristics, evolving from the manner in which these tools mediate everyday communicative practice. To unpack this somewhat, most of the American students in the case studies have extensive Internet experience that catalyzes specific forms (and expectations) of communication. In turn, the resulting

communicative dynamics are consequential for both the processes and products of language learning. Importantly, these case studies span a 5-year period and in so doing demonstrate that the cultures-of-use of Internet communication tools are rapidly evolving, if in geographically non-uniform directions, and play a critical role in the manner in which intercultural communication plays out in formal educational contexts.

Of particular relevance to foreign language uses of "telecollaboration" (implying interaction mediated by Internet communication tools), I will include a critical discussion of recent Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) research (Walther, 1994, 1996, 1997) and will build on a theoretical framework that can broadly be termed a cultural-historical perspective of human communication and cognition (e.g., Bruner, 1995; Cole, 1996; Hanks, 1996; Levinson, 1995; Rommeweit, 1974; van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991). This approach emphasizes the process whereby individuals modify, transform, and comprehend artifacts and environments (e.g., Bødker, 1997; Cole & Engeström, 1993; Kapetinin, 1996), including mediational artifacts such as Internet communication tools (Erickson, 2000; Herring, 1999; Kramsch & Thorne, 2002; Thorne, 1999, 2000a). Application of a cultural-historical approach will focus on the concept of mediation specifically as it pertains to Internet communication tools and their use to facilitate intercultural foreign language communication.

Research in computer-mediated communication and technology-oriented second language acquisition (SLA) has begun to illuminate many of the linguistic, interactional, and interpersonal dimensions to language-based interaction as they pertain to learning and development (e.g., Blake, 2000; Chun, 1994; Herring, 1996; Kern, 1995; Ortega, 1997; Pelletieri, 2000; Thorne, 2000a; Warshawer & Kern, 2000). To this day, however, there remains considerable debate, and some mystery, about the mediational affordances (e.g., the possibilities created by the relationships linking actor and object; see van Lier, 2000, in press) of Internet communication tools and their correlation to linguistic and interpersonal dimensions of foreign language learning. Below, I outline a cultural-historical framework for addressing development and artifact mediation and review significant hypotheses from CMC research as necessary background for interpreting the case studies to follow.

#### **A CULTURAL-HISTORICAL APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT AND ARTIFACT CONSTRUCTION**

Cultural-historical approaches to language education attempt to make explicit linkages between an individual's development and the social-material conditions of his or her everyday practice (e.g., Chaiklin, 2001; Engeström, 1999; in second language research, Lantolf, 2000; Swain, 2000; Thorne, 2000b). Higher order cognitive functions, including intentional memory, planning, voluntary attention, interpretive strategies, and forms of logic and rationality, develop out of participation in social practices such as schooling, interaction with care givers, the learning and use of semiotic systems such as spoken languages, textual and digital literacies, mathematics, music, exposure to folk and "scientific" concepts, context-contingent behavioral norms, and spatial fields such as the social and functional divisions of built structures and visual artistic expression. All of these (and this is but a partial list) are uniquely human social-semiotic systems (e.g., Halliday, 1978) that evolve over time and continue to transform from generation to generation. To put this into modern parlance, Vygotsky (1978, 1986) argued that situated social interaction connected to practical activity in the material world is the source of the development of culture. In turn, cultural-societal structures provide affordances and constraints that shape the development of specific forms of consciousness. This dialectical approach to the relation between agent and structure forms the conceptual foundation of this research and continues today to be at the core of related sociological and psychological inquiry (e.g., for theories of structuration, see Archer, 1995; Bourdieu, 1977; Giddens, 1984; Sawyer, 2002; for an application of the social realist approach to telecollaborative foreign language learning, see Belz, 2001).

### **Mediation and an Artifact's Culture-of-Use**

The structure of texts, literacy, and communicative practices are tightly bound to the materiality of their conveyance and representation (e.g., stone engravings, paper, computer generated documents, and here, a focus on Internet communication tools). The relationship between mediational means, genres of communicative activity (e.g., formal vs. informal registers or informational vs. phatic communication), and forms of communicative practice at the level of utterance and exchange structure, suggest that digital communication technologies have made possible substantive aesthetic shifts in human communicative practices.

*Mediation* is a primary feature of cultural-historical psychology and is the assertion that humans do not act directly on the world. Rather, actions are mediated by social-semiotic tools (language, numeracy, concepts) as well as by material artifacts and technologies.<sup>1</sup> The implication is that historical, institutional, and discursive processes (e.g., the flow of culture at a given point in time and for specific communities) largely mediate an individual's practical and symbolic activity. Artifact or tool (I do not make a distinction between these two terms in this paper) utilization necessarily implies cultural mediation and the routinized use of an artifact exhibits its temporally local as well as its historical constitution. To take a tool like e-mail as an example, it may function primarily as a family information medium for the generation that adopted it after retirement, or be used as a collaboration tool for academics writing articles together. For an Internet advertising operation (e.g., spam manufacturer), e-mail technology forms the means of production enabling its (highly annoying) business to thrive. I know individuals for whom e-mail is an "impersonal" medium ill-suited for intimate or non-work related communication; yet in a recent survey I distributed in a graduate seminar comprised of adult students from a number of countries around the world, 65% ( $n=17$ ) responded that the emotions they expressed are as or more intimate through e-mail as in face-to-face (F2F) contexts. And as we shall see in case study three of this article, for many American undergraduates, "it's like, 'Oh God, I have to write an e-mail now'" (Grace, 19 year-old American undergraduate). Like many of her peers, Grace simply can't be bothered to use such a banal and non-immediately responsive modality. My point with this example is that even something prosaic like e-mail is a variably understood tool, a culturally specific tool, one that may serve a diversity of functions for some, while for others, it conjures up specific associations or may be used for highly restricted purposes. Internet mediated communication, then, can be seen to comprise a set of phenomena involving individuals and collectives (e.g., foreign language classes) who, through their everyday activities, construct CMC norms and forms of activity. In relation to the education projects discussed here, these norms arise not only from local, extemporaneous activity, but from the wider cultural contexts of computing integral to many students' non-academic lives (Thorne, 2000a).

Within educational contexts, CMC activity often appears to forge a hybridity that allows for an interplay between students' non-academic identities and the discursively constructed institutional roles of the classroom. Factors relevant for analyzing CMC use in language classrooms include the historically sedimented characteristics that accrue to a CMC tool from its everyday use, what I am terming the "cultures-of-use" of an artifact. Of course, artifacts do possess a concrete material form, but in the "observer-relative" world of humans (see Searle, 1992), artifacts are meaningfully and differentially defined by their immediate and historical use by communities (Cole, 1996). In short, artifacts embody historical processes that shape, and are shaped by, human activity.

Employing this framework to interpret the mediated nature of human activity, a cultures-of-use analysis attempts to render artifacts as they exist for users. Without endorsing technological determinism -- the suggestion that technology determines human activity (an argument I counter in this article) -- the structural properties of Internet communication tools have an effect on turn-taking and exchange structures (e.g., Herring, 1999; Werry, 1996). However, I wish to underscore and illustrate in the analysis to come that an artifact's materiality is conventional and takes its functional form from its histories of use in and across cultural practices. In this sense, all artifacts, including Internet communication tools, are

imbued with characteristics that illustrate the intersection of histories of use with the contingencies of emergent practice.

In this section, I outlined a theoretical framework describing artifact-mediated practices as, in essence, cultural practices (see also Cole, 1995). In the remainder of the paper, I focus on the cultures-of-use of Internet communication tools and the decisive role they play in transatlantic foreign language communication projects.

As a final lead-in to the case studies, the following section introduces CMC research and communication theory that will be both affirmed and problematized in the case study analyses.

### **CMC Research and Communication Theory**

Within SLA, understandings of "communication" are frequently bound to restrictively operationalized concepts (e.g., communicative competence and proficiency, negotiation of meaning). It is ironic that in a field like SLA, concerned with the development of communicative abilities, communication research (and its research methodologies) is infrequently used to describe and interpret the linguistic activity of foreign and second language learners. Communication theorists and experimental researchers have addressed computer-mediated communication since the early 1980s and over the years have produced a diversity of empirical claims and theoretical frameworks that attempt to explain how Internet communication tools affect language-based human interaction. One early and quite robust line of CMC research describes the medium as "not rich enough" for many task-related needs (Daft & Lengel, 1984, in Walthert, 1996, p. 3), nor is CMC effective for interpersonal exchanges as there is "scant social information" available (Dubrovsky, Kiesler, & Sethna, 1991, p. 119). Prominent communication researcher (and CMC specialist) Joseph Walthert, making reference to both of the aforementioned studies, rhetorically asks, "if it's not good for tasks and not good for socializing, then just what is CMC good for and why would anyone use it at all?" (1996, p. 4).<sup>2</sup>

Examining data from a number of experimental conditions, Walthert (1992) has developed a hypothesis, based on principles of social cognition and interpersonal relationship development, that suggests CMC relationships are as deeply relational as those that occur F2F. His central claim is that in comparison to F2F communication, CMC interaction is not different in kind, but typically mediates a slower rate of social information exchange (Walthert, 1996, p. 10). Termed the information processing perspective, it suggests that "as goes [F2F], so goes CMC, given the opportunity for message exchange and accompanying relational development" (p. 11). If, as Walthert argues, relationships mediated by textual communication over the Internet are similar in kind to those built in F2F settings, what are the implications for intercultural foreign language education projects? The case study data and analyses to follow respond to this question and show that, though Walthert's claims are highly relevant to intercultural education, they benefit from critique and a corrective expansion.

### **THREE CASE STUDIES**

That the Internet can now be used to facilitate direct interaction with expert speaker<sup>3</sup> age-peers over much of world holds great potential for foreign language students. But what forms of linguistic, cultural, and interpersonal relationship building can be experienced via the use of Internet communication and information tools? What is the nature of the production, consumption, and co-construction of meaning and intention when intercultural communication is mediated by such tools? The following three case studies illustrate that Internet communication tools are different cultural artifacts for different communities, precipitating consequential effects on the processes of communication, relationship building, and language development.



### Case One: Clashing Frames of Expectation -- Differing Cultures-of-Use

In a recent study, Kramsch and Thorne (2002) examined the presumption that computer-mediated communication naturally fosters the conditions of possibility whereby learners will construct a common ground for cross-cultural understanding. This study was motivated by the authors' awareness that intercultural communication is certainly made more rapid and convenient by global communication networks, but also that traditional understandings of communicative competence (e.g., Breen & Candlin, 1980; Savignon, 1972, 1983) and negotiation (Pica, 1995) may become something quite different when mediated by the Internet. For obvious historical reasons (the Internet was not widely available for educational use until the mid-1990s in most locations), such artifact mediation is not taken into account in the mainstream SLA literature focusing on communicative competence and negotiation of meaning (recent exceptions include Pelletieri, 2000, and Blake, 2000, both of whom apply the interactionist SLA perspective to Internet mediated foreign language activity; Kötter, 2003, this issue). This brings forth the question of how and if Internet-mediated intercultural interaction alters the parameters of communication and the nature of language use. To address this issue, Kramsch and Thorne (2002) examined the intra- and interclass dialogues between lycée<sup>4</sup> students in Ivry and Fresnes, France, and U.S. students studying French at the University of California, Berkeley, in the Spring of 1997. Both student groups were between 18 and 20 years of age.

### *Real-Time Preparation and Asynchronous Conflict*

The American students were excited about the upcoming exchange with French peers and participated in numerous preparatory activities such as intra-class synchronous CMC ("chat") sessions. These chat sessions were oriented toward developing questions and topics that they would then share with the lycée students. Additionally, they prepared questions that focused on the French film *La Haine*<sup>5</sup> a film depicting issues of racism, gang violence, and ethnic conflict in the housing projects outside of Paris. The resulting inter-class e-mail exchanges were combative, perplexing, and for the American students, resulted in a general sense of disappointment (see also Belz, 2001, 2003, this issue; Kramsch & Thorne, 2002).

As the Americans prepared for the intercultural exchange they exhibited hopes of gleaning an insider's perspective on life in what they had come to imagine as the French equivalent of an American inner city ghetto. Eric,<sup>6</sup> a focal student in this study, participated in the following chat dialogue.<sup>7</sup>

- 1) Eric says, "*comment ils vivent? Leur vie quotidiennement?*" [How they live? Their everyday lives?]
- 2) Ken says, "*oui*" [yes]
- 3) Eric says, "*ca me semble d'etre un sujet*" [that seems to me to be a topic]
- 4) Ken says, "*comment on s'amuse?*" [how they amuse themselves?]
- 5) Ken says, "*est-ce qu'il y a des soirées? les raves?*" [are there parties? Raves?]
- 6) Eric says, "*bon bon, viens!!!!*" [good good, yeah(?):!!!]
- 7) Ken says, "*qu'est ce que c'est les chose qui les inquietes?*" [what are the things that worry them?]
- 8) Ken says, "*les parents, les drogues, la sexe? le SIDA, les politiques*" [parents, drugs, sex? AIDS, politics]
- 9) Eric says, "*oui oui!!!!*" [yes yes yes:!!!]

In this exchange, the marked enthusiasm and their explicit desire to engage around the perceived commonalities of youth culture in certain segments of American and French societies (drugs, parents,

rages, sex, AIDS) illustrates that these students are working toward building solidarity while they also exhibit a perhaps naive idealism that youth culture would necessarily include their projection of a globally viable constellation of anxieties and preoccupations. In their article, Kramsch and Thorne debate the potential benefits of Eric and Ken's discursive move toward cross-cultural symmetry and sharedness, with Thorne arguing that their attempt to build on what they imagine are universal youth culture themes has the potential to invoke the trust necessary to later explore substantive issues of difference while Kramsch is more critical and suggests that their idealism may obfuscate the "different social and cultural conventions under which each party is operating" (2002, p. 90). A few days after this chat session, the American students collectively wrote the first e-mail message and sent it to the Fresnes instructor's e-mail account (the lycée students, to the best of our knowledge, did not have access to personal e-mail accounts).<sup>8</sup>

E-mail 1: Berkeley > Fresnes<sup>9</sup>

*A qui de droit:*

*...Récemment, nous avons regardé le film "Le Haine" en classe. Le contenu de ce film nous a choqué car il y avait des images de France que nous ne voyons pas d'habitude ici aux Etats-Unis. Alors ce film était un peu déroutant pour nous. J'espere que vous ou votre class peut nous aider avec notre confusion. Voici une liste de questions sur "Le Haine" que nous avons prepare: ...*

[To whom it may concern:

... Recently we saw the film "La Haine" in class. The content of the film shocked us since there were images of France that we don't normally see here in the U.S. So this film was a bit unsettling for us. I hope that you or your class can help us with our confusion. Here's a list of questions on "La Haine" that we've prepared: ...]

There followed a numbered list of seven questions which asked if the film *La Haine* accurately represented the Parisian suburbs, if firearms and illegal drugs were available in these areas, if violence was great, and so forth. The response arrived a few days later, written in English and sent from the French instructor's e-mail account.

E-mail 2: Fresnes > Berkeley

Dear Nat,

You shouldn't generalize, because there are three sorts of suburbs at least. For example, Sandrine lives in a very good suburb, in which all is quiet; Sophie lives in an area where violence is rising and Delphine lives in a suburb where violence is widespread: a bookseller was killed without any reason four months ago. However the situation in France is certainly better than the situation in America. As a matter of fact, delinquents have more difficulty getting arms than in the USA. Moreover, areas resembling the American ghettos don't exist in France. If you go to France, you will never see an area like Harlem, where violence is great .... So we can confirm that the suburbs you saw in "La Haine" are not like this in reality.

Signed: Sandrine, Delphine and Sophie.

The Americans were quite literally offended at the tone of this letter. Where they had expected responses to questions that they presumed were polite and genuine, they felt as though they had received a reprimand and immediately produced the following response.

E-mail 3: Berkeley > Fresnes

*Chere Sandrine, Delphine, et Sophie,*

*La premiere chose que vous ecrivez dans votre lettre etait: "You shouldn't generalize", ou en francais, "vous ne devriez pas generaliser" -- ca, c'est incroyable. Innocemment, ma class de francais vous a pose des questions pour mieux comprendre la verite de la situation a la banlieue francaise. Tout que nous recevions de vous etaient des reactions nationalistes! ...*

*Avez-vous visite Harlem? Pouvez-vous dire franchement que vous connaissez bien les problemes sociaux des Etats-Unis? Avez-vous habite a Harlem ou Brooklyn, ou "the Bronx", ou Oakland, ou Richmond, ou Compton, ou Long Beach, ou ici a...? Comment est-ce que c'est possible que vous connaissez la situation des ghettos des Etats-Unis quand vous n'avez jamais habite ici? D'ou avez-vous obtenu votre information -- Des films americains? Si je ne me trompe, vous etes coupable de faire des generalizations, pas nous. Et ca, c'est un peu hypocrite....*

Signed: Nat and Eric.

[Dear Sandrine, Delphine, and Sophie,

The first thing you wrote in your letter was : "You shouldn't generalize", or in French, "Vous ne devriez pas generaliser" -- that is incredible. Innocently, my French class asked you some questions in order to better understand the truth of the situation in the French suburbs. All that we got back from you were nationalistic reactions! ....

Have you visited Harlem? Can you frankly say that you know the US's social problems well? Have you lived in Harlem or Brooklyn, or "the Bronx," or Oakland, or Richmond, or Compton, or Long Beach, or here in Berkeley? How is it possible that you know the situation of U.S. ghettos when you've never lived here? Where have you gotten your information -- from American films? If I'm not mistaken, you are guilty of making generalizations, not us. And that is a little hypocritical ....

Signed: Nat and Eric]

A week later, Delphine replied. Her response showed surprise at Nat and Eric's tone, but she attempted to return to a passionate exchange of ideas by redirecting the illocutionary force of Nat and Eric's rhetorical questions and making them into genuine requests for information.

E-mail 4: Fresnes > Berkeley

Dear Nat and Eric,

I want to answer your letter which surprised me. To my mind, you didn't understand what we wrote. Now, to answer your questions, I have never been to America and all what I know is taken from books and films. The films we see, show us a bad image of the States. In American films, we always see violent actions and in the books we see photos such as I explained to you in my letter of ... And to my mind, we are not "hypocritical" like you wrote: we only wrote what we thought. I'm waiting for an answer from you to know what you think about my last letter.

Signed: Delphine

The American and French messages are characterized by different discourse styles that play themselves out on national, institutional, and personal levels. As this study was based in the US, more data is available, including pre-intercultural interaction chat sessions and post-class interviews, that illustrate the Americans had hoped to build relationships based on trust rather than engage within a communicative genre that privileged more passionate presentations of truth and fact that appears to have been the operative approach taken by the French students. In a retrospective interview, Eric, who appears both in

our synchronous and asynchronous data, had this to say about the conflicting styles of the American and French students:

Eric: e-mail is kind of like not a written thing .... when you read e-mail, you get conversation but in a written form so you can go back and look at them. That's neat. I've had that experience where conversational constructions appear in an e-mail form from a native speaker of French, which is really neat. Because it doesn't fly by you and kind of "look at that" -- But in the [French] communications, it felt like they were writing essays and sending them to us rather than having an e-mail conversation with us.

Interviewer: It seemed like you all would ask questions, right? Didn't you get responses?

Eric: Sometimes we'd get long .... but it's true we didn't get, it seems true that they weren't doing the same thing we were. It seemed like, you know, we had a task. And they, it seemed like, I didn't know what they were doing. [laughs]

He went on to attribute the difficulties they encountered with the Fresnoes students to differences in social class, although it is not clear why he associates "socio-economic class" with the ability to interact and conduct a conversation.

There was a clear socio-economic class difference between us and the French. We were doing different things so it was sort of an interaction, but it wasn't a discussion or conversation. When we [Americans] were talking to each other, it was debate and agreement and process. But with the French, we'd ask a question and receive a statement...

These exchanges, and Eric's post-semester reflections, present a largely problematic scenario of the use of digital technologies for the learning of French in an American university context. Messages were sent back and forth, but is there evidence of relationship building and mutual knowledge construction that the project sought to cultivate? Addressing intercultural pragmatics in foreign language learning contexts, Boxer (2002) distinguishes between cross cultural and interlanguage pragmatics, saying that the latter focuses on the language learner's appropriation and/or acquisition of pragmatic norms represented in the host language community. Cross cultural pragmatics, on the other hand, "takes the view that individuals from two societies or communities carry out their interactions (whether spoken or written) according to their own rules or norms, often resulting in a clash in expectations and, ultimately, misperceptions about the other group" (2002, p. 151). Indeed, the French-American interactions above provide a strong example of the challenges inherent to cross cultural interaction while illustrating little in terms of interlanguage pragmatic development by the participating American students, though conflict is certainly not an inherently negative feature of intercultural communication, and other, perhaps difficult to ascertain developments may have occurred, such as a breaking down of stereotypical images of a monolithic French culture.

### ***Phatic Versus Informational; Trust Versus Truth***

Communication seems defined here by differing emphases on information exchange and personal engagement across culturally different discourse genres.<sup>10</sup> Jerome Bruner might theorize this communicative situation as a case where language reflects and constructs cultural worlds in a way that "preserves the distinction between facts on the one hand, and beliefs and opinions on the other." (1995, p. 20) Most of the French interlocutors used factual, impersonal, dispassionate genres of writing, including the use of examples (e.g., data) and argument building logical connectors ("for example," "however," "moreover"). They made nuanced corrections to what they felt were American mis-judgments about the situation in France. By contrast, the American students, who initiated this exchange in order to understand "how they live? Their everyday lives?" (American student Eric's utterance in a preparatory chat session), viewed this instance of Internet-mediated communication as a ritual of mutual trust building. The phatic style of many of their postings, full of questions and exclamation marks (and other message elements

seeking to build relations rather than exchange information), suggests a high degree of affective involvement and personal-emotional identification with the messages they wrote, especially early in the project. It seems that the Americans, in their search for understanding the lives of the French, expected trust and solidarity to develop through direct contact with French peers on the basis of shared personal experience. The illusion of proximity afforded by their everyday uses of the Internet informed their expectations of what these exchanges would be like.

In part due to the fact that some students have extensive histories as participants in highly structured online speech communities (the Americans in this case), while others have very little or highly specific Internet experience (the French lycée students), educational uses of Internet communication tools may illustrate a heterogeneous set of communicative practices that bring into contact different rules, community norms, and division of labor of these two speech communities. In the intercultural context that Kramsch and Thorne explored (though they didn't address this issue in the paper), the American students reported that Internet-based communication allowed them to interact as though they were not in the institutional context of a foreign language classroom. That is, their acculturation into non-academic digital speech communities predisposed them to engage in Internet-mediated communication in a style and with expectations derived from their everyday uses of the medium. As pertains to their intercultural communication, they were seeking phatic communication and the building of trust through the development of relationships much as they would with peers in the US.

For the French students at the lycée, their Internet access was, from what we know, restricted to academic activity in the classroom. Additionally, they wrote their messages in class and then passed them to their instructor who then e-mailed them from the only Internet connected computer available. By contrast, the American students reported spending on average 3+ hours a day on the Internet and were habituated to the use of e-mail and chat for mediating social, familial, and intimate relationships in addition to its use for school and professional communication. Hanks, speaking from a practice theory approach, suggests that "it is the socially defined relation between agents and the field that 'produces' speech forms" (1996, p. 230). Hence for the American students in this study, the articulation through CMC of themselves as agents and their perception of the 'field,' or discursive context in which they were engaged, supported communication in French, but in the style that they might also use in non-academic Internet-mediated speech-community cultures on a daily basis (for an extended discussion of this issue in other contexts, see Thorne, 1999, 2000a). What I would like to suggest is that a difference in communicative genres demonstrably thwarted satisfying interaction in this case of telecollaborative foreign language interaction. Trust and relationship-building for the Americans and truth value and negotiation of factual accuracy for the French involved differing goals, frames of reference, and perceptions of what is desirable, and even possible, through Internet-based communicative activity. Hence the *activity* of e-mail communication was different for the French than it was for the Americans, in part because the cultural artifact was used in a different way in each case (e.g., the French students were communicating through a surrogate).

The social material conditions of these two student groups, spatially separated by 5,000 miles, and more importantly occupying quite different material discursive contexts while producing their messages, were dramatically at odds with one another. In addition to variance in communicative genre that Kramsch & Thorne conclude to be the primary issue (2002), and perhaps even catalyzing these genre differences, are radically different cultures-of-use of Internet communication tools. When cultures-of-use do not minimally align, derived as they are from social-material conditions, the ideational worlds of intersubjectivity and phatic communion become a challenge to envision and difficult to achieve.<sup>11</sup> This raises a profoundly important issue as to whether cross-cultural communication also needs to explicitly take into account cross-class and cross-social material condition differences. If CMC use expands beyond the privileged communities within privileged nation states that currently have full access to the Internet (which in 1997 does not appear to include 18-20 year-olds in the Parisian suburb of Ivry and Fresnes<sup>12</sup>) and if telecollaborative language teaching continues to expand as a method of foreign language teaching

and learning, we will "need to prepare students to deal with global communicative practices that require far more than local communicative competence" (Kramsch & Thorne, p. 100). Kramsch and Thorne conclude that "Between the global and the local lies genre, the social and historical base of our speech and thought. An understanding of this neglected dimension of foreign language teaching may lead to a reassessment of what we mean by 'communicative competence' in a global world and what the communicative contract will be, upon which trust is based." (p. 100). The following two case studies jump forward five years in time and describe events occurring in the French section of the Spring of 2002 Penn State Foreign Language Telecollaboration Project.<sup>13</sup>

### **Case Two: Intercultural Communication as Hyperpersonal Engagement**

In contrast to Case One, what happens when intercultural communication, initially as part of a formal educational exercise, expands beyond the pedagogical goals of the activity? In the Spring semester of 2002, students of French at The Pennsylvania State University (Penn State) interacted with engineering students at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Télécommunications de Bretagne. Some, but not all, of the students in France were slightly older than their American counterparts, but most participants were between the ages of 18 and 24 years. Like the Berkeley case described above, the course was organized so that students on both sides of the Atlantic would read parallel texts, see the same films, and share personal biographies using e-mail and a form of synchronous chat (using the program NetMeeting; for other parallel class intercultural collaborations, see [Furstenberg, Levet, English, & Maillet, 2001](#); [Kinginger, Gouvès-Hayward, & Simpson, 1999](#)).

### **Thresholds, Authentic Communication, and Meditational Means**

As can occur in distance collaborations, there was a numerical imbalance in participants with more than twice as many Penn State students as there were students participating at the partner institution in France. In the one-to-one e-mail-based correspondence that was to form the critical medium for interaction, each French student was paired with two or sometimes three Americans. As part of their participation grade, the Americans were required to complete a minimum of three e-mail exchanges over the middle 5 weeks of the semester. Kirsten, an American student, initially found her eventual key-pal in France to be frustrating. In a one-hour post-semester interview, Kirsten expressed disappointment with the slow start to this relationship and outlined the following series of events:

I think he had two other key pals and he didn't know I was his key pal .... I e-mailed him again in English and I was like blah blah blah and was like "how are you, what are you up to," whatever, and I think he thought "well, I'm not her key pal and I really don't have time for this" so [he] didn't respond. So after his vacation I e-mailed him again after I thought the rest of them [Kirsten's classmates] would already be done with their e-mails and I tried to take up the correspondence again. And, it worked!

I was really upset when I didn't hear from him [French key-pal] at first. Last week I was like, when I made this appointment [for the interview], I was like "I'm going in there and be like "grrr grrr grrr [vocalizations signifying anger and frustration], he didn't respond, I didn't talk to him, I'm really disappointed, I went and cried", and now I'm like "wow!", within a week I went from completely despondent and being like "I hate this, grrrrr," to "wow, love it! Love it!"

Kirsten was referring to a one-week period of extended and prolific dialogue with Oliver, her French key-pal, which began with an e-mail exchange but then quickly moved to another Internet communication tool, [America Online Instant Messenger \(IM\)](#).

Kirsten: Out of the blue he [Oliver] IM-ed me.

Interviewer: Did he know your screen name?

Kirsten: He found it on my Web page. He has been onto my Web page almost every single day! It's gotten scary [laughing]. And he has clicked, I mean, every single link on my Web page and I have a whole list of good sites.

Their first IM interaction was sustained: "We went on for probably close to six hours that day alone" (Kirsten, in interview).

Interviewer: So 6 hours?

Kirsten: Just that day, and we talk every day.

Interviewer: Really?

Kirsten: Yeah, every day.

Interviewer: For that long every day?

Kirsten: I don't know, usually in 15 or 20-minute spurts, but usually twice or three times a day. So it's about an hour a day.

Kirsten mentioned that both French and English were used and the frequency and duration of her dialogues with Oliver demonstrated an authentic engagement that may or may not be a part of such interactions when they are seen as class activities. As foreign language instructors and students know well, authenticity is unfortunately not a product that can be readily distributed, but is rather a process, the key factor for which is the participant's sense (and enactment) of agency. Van Lier makes the case that language activity is authentic when "it realizes a free choice and is an expression of what a person genuinely feels and believes," and is "intrinsically motivated" (1996, p. 13). In terms of motivation, engagement, and desire, what might account for the success (at the level of time-in-interaction and authentic engagement) of Kirsten's key-pal experience? In reference to successful uses of the Internet in distance learning courses, Kirsten seems to have passed over what Wegerif (1998) terms a *threshold*. Wegerif proposes that success or failure in on-line education (and one might argue in other endeavors as well) depends on participants constructing a space of engagement through which they can position themselves as insiders with a vested interest in the educational, social, and communicative activities at hand. Wegerif's use of a threshold metaphor is derived from Lave and Wenger's (1991) notion of legitimate peripheral participation (LPP), a developmental model contending that participants move from initially peripheral and tentative engagement to full participation in a community of practice over time. Though Wegerif's use of LPP and the threshold metaphor are useful as descriptors of some aspects of this interaction, the case of Kirsten and Oliver is compelling for it shows that the threshold experience that led to mutually satisfying and interpersonally "authentic" engagement (e.g., intrinsically motivated, van Lier, 1996) began as part of a formal educational process but attained its maturity when it migrated out of the academy (course uses of e-mail and NetMeeting sessions) and into another communicative medium for non-class related relationship building and language learning. Based on Kirsten's interview data and the transcripts of her e-mail and IM interactions, the catalyst moving their relationship over the threshold from class task to authentic interpersonal relationship building was indeed tool-related -- the move to the use of IM.

Kirsten: I asked him in [an e-mail message<sup>14</sup>], do you have a kind of chat like AOL IM or ICQ? And I think that's probably what triggered it ... and then out of the blue I got the IM from him and I was like "you have AOL IM?!" and he's like "this is Oliver" and I was like "holy mackerel!" you know, and I put "bonjour!" and like 5 lines of exclamation points. I was like "how are [laughing] you!" you know, and it went from there....

Interviewer: Is IM better for=<sup>15</sup>

Kirsten: =oh definitely=

Interviewer: =for you and Oliver to communicate with each other than e-mail? or

Kirsten: Yeah, e-mail is kinda like "ahh, here's my point, here ya go," but it's really hard to have a conversation.

Kirsten's appraisal of IM is that it is a "conversational" environment. By contrast, e-mail supports a temporally sequenced set of responsive monologues rather than dialogic interaction. As I will describe in Case Three, nearly all the 20 students interviewed as part of the 2002 study found e-mail an awkward medium for most age-peer interaction. It's not that e-mail doesn't serve a communicative function -- most students reported using e-mail at least occasionally for hierarchical interactions with professors, TAs, and parents and other family members. But for Kirsten, the move to IM was a pivotal and necessary condition for moving her relationship with Oliver to a more intimate level.

### *Mediated Intercultural Communication and Language Development*

Despite the positive affect associated with Kirsten's telecollaborative experience, questions remain as to the efficacy of intercultural communication as it may promote language development. As Kern remarked in reference to the use of intercultural exchanges in foreign language education, "students are certainly engaged in communication. But has the communication led to any new understanding?" (Kern, 2000, p. 255). I extend Kern's query by asking, beyond the potential/purported benefits of communication with cultural others, is there also evidence of language development at the level of linguistic and pragmatic performance? The Penn State Foreign Language Telecollaboration Project (see [note 10](#)) includes an extensive empirical investigation of quantifiable changes in foreign language use over time (which we will share in numerous forms at the conclusion of the project). For this paper, however, I restrict my scope to a micro-genetic analysis of Kirsten's language use in e-mail and IM and to the post-experience reflections that she shared while reading over transcripts of her communicative activity with Oliver.

### *Tu/Vous Pragmatics*

Areas of language learning that instructors often feel may not present significant obstacles often do. One of these areas is in the pragmatic deployment of pronouns of address. Especially in a case of two-way distinction (in contrast to languages that grammatically designate many more levels of politeness), one would think that *tu/vous* (T/V) usage would be a fairly straightforward practice, where students would use *tu* forms with peers, friends, in informal contexts and with younger people, and *vous* forms to show respect and/or distance, in formal contexts, and with older people. Yet as Belz and Kinginger (2002, in press) demonstrate, neither the pedagogical guidelines nor expert speaker explanations for T/V usage present a consistent, rule based system. Changes in her use of T/V is the first example that Kirsten brought to our attention in the interview:

Kirsten: If you read my first e-mail, too, I asked him to correct my grammar and he did. He was really nice about it but like, we went [over] I guess my typical errors, and uh, he taught me some things I wasn't quite grasping when the teacher taught it in French. =

Interviewer: =Yeah?

Kirsten: He talked to me in English, like, within five minutes I was better, so=

Interviewer: =Right, right. Is there any of that in here? [pointing to the e-mail and IM transcripts Kirsten had brought with her].

Kirsten: Yeah, actually. If you read where he goes ... We were talking about the election and the fact that Le Pen, he didn't like him at all and it was such a disaster. And then [he said] "let's talk about your French." And he went through and he said this [Kirsten points to a line in Oliver's e-mail which reads "Bon je garde le 'vous' mais, de grace, utilize 'tu' avec moi!"] And then, at the very end of here [pointing to her e-mail response to Oliver], see, I do learn. I changed it!



In the final line of her e-mail, Kirsten had written, "J'attends impatiemment ton réponse!" (see I do learn!), emphasizing her use of T forms throughout the message. Interaction with expert speakers is thought to broaden the discourse options (and obligations) available to participating students, in part because students are engaging in age-peer contact under less controlled conditions than would normally be the case in intra-class small group or class discussion. This is a core rationale for telecollaborative arrangements. Drawing on sociocultural and language socialization approaches, Belz and Kinginger (in press) discuss the complexity of developing pragmatic competence and describe in detail the social-interactive conditions under which interculturally engaged students gain pragmatic competence. In their most recent study, they note that T/V usage is a destabilized and pragmatically complex issue for native speakers (making citations to Agar 1994; Delisle 1986; Morford, 1997; Wylie & Brière, 1995) and thus for foreign language students it is difficult to learn as a rule-governed behavior (despite the fact that it is frequently taught as such).

T/V use is embedded in a system of meaning potentials that are realized in particular social interactions (Belz & Kinginger, 2002, in press). When students engaged in telecollaborative interaction have opportunities to observe appropriate pronoun use by expert speakers and to receive explicit feedback for T form usage from peers, they gain a pragmatic awareness of T/V as an important part of their language use. In their study, such "noticing" (e.g., Schmidt, 1990) led to the approximation of expert speaker norms over time in most cases. Why don't students readily learn appropriate T/V use from the instructor or foreign language texts? Belz and Kinginger suggest that peer interaction creates a social ecology wherein students are motivated to maintain positive face (defined as positive self-image and the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of; see Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 61-62) with age-peers and that the context of age-peer telecollaboration helps to crystallize appropriate usage in a social-interactive forum that can be difficult or impossible to create in instructed educational settings. They conclude by suggesting that multivalent participation, and understanding the social implications of the use of linguistic forms, are crucial conditions for the development of pragmatic competence. "Participation" and language socialization, rather than "acquisition" of a rule, may be a more apt descriptor for the development of pragmatic competence (making reference to Sfarid, 1998, in Belz & Kinginger, in press).

### *Interpersonal Mediation and the Acquisition of Prepositions of Location*

Kirsten was quite concerned about what she considered to be her "horrible" French grammar, but her ability to carry out extended IM discussions with Oliver bolstered her confidence.

Kirsten: And there was this whole portion of this conversation where he was like "I'm really enjoying talking to you and I hope we can do it more often." You know, "I'll hear from you again soon." I mean, it's kind of encouraging because that means he doesn't think that my French is so bad that he [laughing] doesn't want to talk to me.

In terms of specific linguistic gains arising from her interactions with Oliver, Kirsten made the following remarks:

Interviewer: What else beside the tu/vous stuff did he help you with?

Kirsten: Usage of "au" versus "en" versus "dans" versus "à" versus, you know, that kinda stuff. A more in-depth vocabulary, for sure. When he speaks in French I'm like "whip out the [laughing] dictionary!" And then you know, it's kind of nice to have a human dictionary on the other end too....

Kirsten: ..I was like "how am I supposed to say?" like for example .... So the "de" and "à" thing, "de la campagne," "à le cité," whatever, stuff like that. I was like "wow," you know, eeeeeee [vocalization of glee; laughs]. Because I couldn't get that from a dictionary.

Interviewer: That's something you have to have a little help with, yeah?

Kirsten: Yeah, yeah, and how am I supposed to learn it? That's not in the grammar books, you know [laughing], expressions like that, and other things. It was fun.

In these excerpts, Kirsten describes the interpersonally grounded context that allowed her access to the French prepositional system for location that she "couldn't get ... from a dictionary" and that is "not in the grammar books." Though her claims may be empirically debatable, they are true enough for her since she has studied French in high school and at the time of this interview was enrolled in a fourth semester University French composition course focused extensively on grammar. Activity theorist Bonnie Nardi notes that it is not possible to fully understand how people learn if the unit of analysis is "the unaided individual with no access to other people or to artifacts for accomplishing the task at hand" (1996, p. 69). Yet much SLA (and other developmentally oriented) research and assessment approaches privilege the individual as an autonomous being, indirectly suggesting that real learning is *a-social* and unassisted (see Lantolf & Thorne, in press). Many French language students have successfully developed the ability to use French prepositions of location from grammar texts or from grammar lectures. Kirsten, however, required the mediation of another person, specifically an age-peer who was willing to provide immediate and explicit linguistic feedback as part of a socially meaningful relationship.

Oliver and Kirsten exhibit what Leontev terms a *pedagogy of cooperation* where "the relationship established between teacher and pupils are primarily relationships between people, not between participants in a mechanical and programmed process of the transmission of knowledge" (1992, p. 43). They see themselves as peers and friends and do not occupy consistent teacher-student relations to one another, as Kirsten provides limited grammatical assistance about Oliver's English as well.

Kirsten: What kind of errors do we make and what kind of errors do they make. What kind of different things are, you know, like the "look" example [where Kirsten corrected Oliver's abusive use of "look" as a focalizer/discourse marker]. How would you know unless you actually used it and you used it wrong? Apparently everyone he said "look" to didn't tell him!

The appropriation and appreciation of what might be called *teacherly practices* by both parties alters the usual student division of labor in an educational setting. Occupying the position of peer-expert may increase a sense of authority for participants who typically inhabit the discursive and institutional confines of a 'student' subject position, the entailments of which are to receive and demonstrate knowledge but rarely to act as an authority or expert (see also Thorne, in press).

### ***Flow Activity and Self-Regulation***

Building on her confidence expressed through the use of the French T forms, Kirsten provided an extended description of her e-mail and IM transcripts and was able to point to specific instances where, for the first time, she demonstrated what she perceived as an expanded competence to communicate in French. (The IM excerpt has not been orthographically modified but a few lines have been removed to save space.)

- 1) O: by the way, I don't know what smart means?
- 2) O: ...
- 3) K: smart means ..hmmm
- 4) K: how to describe that
- 5) K: intelligent
- 6) O: I mean what does intelligent mean?
- 7) O: no I know what the word means
- 8) K: it's the same thing

- 9) O: but I'm not sure I grasp the idea
- 10) K: ooh..
- 11) K: hmmm
- 12) O: kind of philosophical huh?
- 13) K: yeah.. you know.. *aux Etats-Unis nous avons deux type d'intelligence* [in the US we have two types of intelligence]
- 14) O: *vraiment?* [really?]
- 15) O: *Je veux savoir!!!* [I want to know!]
- 16) K: *il y a "l'intelligence des livres" et "l'intelligence dans la vie"* [there is "book smart" and "life smart"]<sup>16</sup>
- 17) O: *donc l'intelligence des livres c'est le savoir?* [therefore book intelligence is knowledge?]
- 18) K: *oui.. et l'autre est "common sense"* [yes.. and the other is "common sense"]
- 19) O: *on peut lire beaucoup et savoir beaucoup de choses tout en étant stupide je suis d'accord* [one can read a lot and know a lot of things and be stupid at the same time i agree]
- 20) K: *oui!* [yes!]
- 21) O: cool
- 22) K: *le "common sense" est... par exemple, j'ai une amie qui sait beaucoup des choses.. mais elle a mis METAL dans le microwave.* ["common sense" is ... for example, I have a friend who knows a lot of things.. but she put METAL in the microwave..]
- 23) O: *oups* [oops]
- 24) K: *elle n'a pas de "common sense"* [she doesn't have "common sense"]

Kirsten herself provides an exegesis of this dialogue. Her quotations from the IM transcript (IMT) are labeled [IMT line #].

Kirsten: The first couple of lines of this [transcript], there's a particular example and I'll show you ... Here's where, this was the true part, where I was like, "wow, I really have learned a lot of French!" [IMT 1] "By the way, I don't know what smart means." Smart means intelligent, like, I made the translation, I was like, but that's stupid that he didn't know that because intelligent is the same word in both languages! [IMT 6] "But what does intelligence mean." And he's like [IMT 7] "no I know what the word means, "like [ventriloquating Olivier] "come on stupid, "I'm like, yeah [IMT 8] "it's the same thing." And he said, [IM 9] "but I'm not sure I grasp the idea." And I said [IM 10, 11] "ohh" "hmmm." And he said [IMT 12], "kind of philosophical." And I said [IMT 13] "yeah," and then I went into French. And I was [laughing] so proud of myself. And I, you know, then I wrote, [IMT 13] "*aux Etats-Unis nous avons deux type d'intelligence*," right, like life smart and book smart, and then he's like [IMT 15, initially glossing Olivier's message in English then referring to the French], "I have got to know this!!! *Je veux savoir!!!*" with three exclamation points and that was like, that was the beginning of my explaining in French, and I was like "wow!" .... That was the first one we, that was the first time that I was like, "I made a connection in French." I was so proud. It was like, "wow, that's me, in French, and he understood me!"

Kirsten explained the significance of this short excerpt from her first three-hour IM session with Oliver as a threshold moment in her ability to communicate in French. A combination of the use of IM and Kirsten's tremendous enthusiasm for Oliver (that these two elements interrelate has already been



































## LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN TELECOLLABORATION<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

It is widely reported (e.g., Belz & Müller-Hartmann, 2002; Kern, 1996; Kinginger, in press; Warschauer & Kern, 2000) that the goals of telecollaborative language study are the development of foreign language (FL) linguistic competence and the facilitation of *intercultural competence* (e.g., Bausch, Christ, & Krumm, 1997; Bredella & Delany, 1999; Byram, 1997; Harden & Witte, 2000). Whereas evaluations of the impact of telecollaboration on FL linguistic competence have been based on structural descriptions of learner discourse from the earliest days of research in this field (e.g., Beauvois, 1992; Chun, 1994; Kelm, 1992; Kern, 1995; Pelletier, 2000; **Sotillo, 2000**; Warschauer, 1996), discussions of intercultural competence in the same configuration have been characterized primarily in *alinguistic* terms. These have included analyst-sensitive content analyses of learner interaction in telecollaboration, post-semester interviews with learners who have participated in telecollaborative projects, and attitudinal surveys of these same learners (e.g., Fischer, 1998; **Furstenberg, Levet, English, & Maillet, 2001**; Lomicka, 2001; Müller-Hartmann, 1999; von der Emde, Schneider, & Köhler, 2001; Warschauer, 1998; see, however, Belz, 2001; Belz & Müller-Hartmann, 2003). In general, the fields of foreign language learning and teaching (FL&T) have neither advocated nor presented linguistically critical interpretations of the development of intercultural competence in telecollaboration. In this paper, I present a detailed case study of the development of intercultural competence (or lack thereof) in a German-American e-mail partnership by examining the electronic interaction produced in this exchange within the framework of *appraisal theory* (e.g., Eggins & Slade, 1997; Martin, 2000; **White, 1998**), a Hallidayian-inspired linguistic approach to the investigation of evaluative language.

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The quality of conversation may well be one of the most significant measures of civilization, and when people converse, the interlocutors inevitably realize that civilizations do *not* clash, contrary to some academic reductionists, the media, and politicians.. (Kadir, 2003, p. 9; emphasis added)

### INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this paper is to suggest a linguistically grounded analysis of *intercultural competence* (IC) in telecollaborative foreign language learning and teaching (FL&T). *Telecollaboration* involves the use of Internet communication tools by internationally dispersed students of language in institutionalized settings in order to promote the development of (a) foreign language (FL) linguistic competence and (b) intercultural competence (e.g., **Belz, 2002b**; **Furstenberg et al., 2001**; Kinginger, 1998, in press; Müller-Hartmann, 1999; Thome, 1999; Warschauer, 1996; Warschauer & Kern, 2000).<sup>2</sup> As a result of the technological mediation employed in telecollaborative study, participants on each end of the network have direct (and cost-effective) access to expert representatives of the "linguaculture" under study (Agar, 1994). In FL&T, IC is typically loosely defined as an awareness and/or understanding of foreign attitudes, beliefs, values, and (linguistic) practices (e.g., Bredella, 2000, p. 146; Hu, 2000, p. 97; Kinginger, in press; Kranssch, 1998, pp. 27-29). One of the goals of this paper is

to flesh out the notion of IC in the special case of telecollaboration through close attention to its linguistic encoding and expression in the medium of electronic discourse.

Evaluations of the influence of classroom-based computer use on FL linguistic competence have been based on structural descriptions of learner discourse from the earliest days of research in this field (e.g., Chun, 1994; Kelm, 1992; Kern, 1995; Pelleterri, 2000; Warschauer, 1996). In contrast, discussions of the impact of computer use on the development of IC (which includes culturally appropriate uses of language) have been characterized primarily in *alinguistic* terms. Typically, researchers have employed analyst-sensitive content analyses of e-mail and chat exchanges and retrospective learner surveys and interviews as the primary indices of gains in IC (e.g., Fischer, 1998; Furstenberg et al., 2001; Lomicka, 2001; von der Emde, Schneider, & Kötter, 2001; Warschauer, 1998; see, however, Belz & Müller-Hartmann, 2003). In this study, I suggest that IC (or lack thereof) in telecollaboration may be more fully explicated if researchers augment content-based interpretations of this phenomenon with Hallidayian-inspired linguistic analyses (e.g., Burton, 1982; Martin, 1995; White, 1998). Such analyses would broaden the investigative focus on *what* learners say to include *how* they say it. My claim is not that linguistically-based analyses of IC in telecollaboration should replace content-based analyses, but rather that the systematic linkage of aspects of IC to the lexico-grammar of telecollaborative discourse will provide the field of FLL&T with an additional and revelatory (but not definitive) "analytic cut" (Layder, 1993, p. 108) into the rampantly complex and multi-layered social action of telecollaborative language study.

The linkage of IC to specific lexico-grammatical features is particularly important in the case of text-only telecollaborative discourse because learner-learner interaction will be relatively "lean" (Daft & Lengel, 1984) with regard to visual channel cues such as gender, age, and ethnicity, but also with respect to other paralinguistic meaning carriers such as "facial expressions that indicate sincerity, amusement, trust or dislike ... blushing, yawning, rapid breathing or blinking; body language that indicates shyness, distrust or nervousness; [and] gestures like hand motions or nods and headshakes that indicate simple agreement or dissent..." (Giese, 1998). According to sociologist Erving Goffman (1981, p. 128), "the paralinguistic markers of a language will figure" in indexing a speaker's footing or the (attitudinal) alignment that he or she takes up with respect to his or her interlocutor in the production and reception of utterances. Thus, markers of attitude that are typically conveyed through non-linguistic but parallel expressive systems (Walther, 1996) will be shifted to the textual mode in e-mail and chat-based telecollaboration, as in the case of emoticons (Walther & D'Addario, 2001), or they will be absent altogether.

Linguistically grounded analyses of IC have been lacking in the literature to date for at least two reasons. First, IC has not been acknowledged universally as a legitimate goal of FLL&T (Hu, 1999). Despite the efforts of scholars such as Agar (1994), Fantini (1995), Kranssch (1993, 1998), and McCarthy and Carter (1994) to dissolve the "dubious" dichotomy (Kranssch, 1993, p. 2) of *language* and *culture*, many foreign language specialists, in both theory and praxis, continue to conceptualize language as "a fixed system of formal structures and universal speech functions, [a] neutral conduit for the transmission of cultural facts" and thus persist in teaching "language *and* culture, or culture *in* language, but not language *as* culture" (Kranssch, Cain, & Murphy-Lejeune, 1996, p. 105; emphasis added). It may be the case that analysts would not look for evidence of the development of intercultural competence in the linguistic structure of telecollaborative texts if they do not accept the inextricable nature of language and culture on both practical and theoretical levels.<sup>3</sup> Yet, as educational linguist and discourse analyst James Gee (1999) notes, it is in the empirical details of language and interaction that "people are harmed and helped" (p. 2).

In those cases where IC has been accepted as a legitimate learning objective (e.g., Bausch, Christ, & Krumm, 1997; Bredella & Delano, 1999; Harden & Wite, 2000; Hu, 2000; Kranssch, 1998), it generally has been defined in "conveniently broad and vague" terms (Harden, 2000, p. 117; see Edmondson & House, 1998, pp. 161-165, for further definitional concerns). Vague formulations do not foster linguistic analyses of IC because they impede the establishment of a clear link between specific features of

telecollaborative discourse and components of IC. The absence of linguistically grounded examinations of IC in telecollaboration is somewhat surprising, since advocates of intercultural learning in FLL&T tend to ground their attention to this concept in social semiotic accounts of language (e.g., Halliday, 1978). To illustrate, Harden and Witte (2000) define language as "a system of communication that allows for interpsychological and intrapsychological *representations of a socio-cultural order*" in the introduction to their volume on intercultural understanding in German as a Foreign Language (p. 7; emphasis added). Psychologist Rom Harré (2001), however, comments on a similar lack of attention to language in social psychological studies of interpersonal relationships: "The discursive study of friendship and other interpersonal relations is still undeveloped, despite the large number of data available concerning destructive and constructive ways of conversing, for example within families" (p. 702).

In this study, I adopt Michael Byram's (1997) model of IC precisely because it has been operationalized quite extensively in terms of its various parts (see also Kim, 2001). The focus of the current analysis is on the "attitudes" component of this model (see section on [Intercultural Competence](#) for a description of the entire model). The intercultural speaker, that is, the speaker who is deemed to be interculturally competent, must display not only positive attitudes toward "people who are perceived as different in respect of the cultural meanings, beliefs and behaviors they exhibit" (because "even positive prejudice can hinder mutual understanding"), but also attitudes of "curiosity and openness" (Byram, p. 34). In some cases, IC on the level of attitudes can lead to *re-socialization*, a process whereby "individuals dismantle their preceding structure[s] of subjective reality and re-construct [them] according to new norms" (Byram, p. 34). Such re-socializations -- which engender various degrees of "success" -- are vividly represented in the literary works of bilingual and multilingual authors such as Eva Hoffman and Werner Lansburgh (see Belz, 2002c, pp. 228-240). *Attitude* is a particularly relevant site for a first linguistic cut into telecollaborative intercultural learning, since, unlike other components of Byram's model, it is presented as both a necessary prerequisite to and an anticipated outcome of IC (Byram, p. 33). Thus, an early analytic focus on attitude may serve practical purposes for teachers and learners in telecollaboration as well as theoretical ones.

The current study centers on the electronic correspondence of two Germans, Anke and Catharina, and one American, Eric. These learners' developing attitudes toward both the other and the self are analyzed within the frameworks of (a) *appraisal theory* (e.g., Eggins & Slade, 1997; Iedema, Feez, & White, 1994; White 1998, 2002) and (b) *epistemic modality* (e.g., Toolan, 2001). Appraisal theory is a Hallidayian-inspired linguistic approach to the investigation of evaluative language in English, which focuses on the ways in which lexico-grammar may operate as a site for the formation, dissemination, but also contestation of speakers' attitudinal positionings or value systems. Analysts interested in epistemic modality examine the linguistic resources speakers use in order to express their degree of willingness to commit to the truth of a particular proposition.

In the next section, I provide a more detailed discussion of Byram's (1997) model of IC with particular emphasis on the attitudinal component. In [Linguistic Indexes of Intercultural Competence](#), I outline and exemplify the basic tenets of appraisal theory and various analytical categories of epistemic modality. The suitability of each of these approaches for an analysis of IC in telecollaboration is discussed as well. In the section [The Study](#), I describe the telecollaborative partnership in question, the focal students, and the methodology employed in this analysis. In the sections [Data: Analysis in Sequence](#) and [Data: Analysis in Aggregation](#), I present a linguistically grounded analysis of Anke, Catharina, and Eric's e-mail correspondence which entails (a) the close examination of linguistic elements of appraisal and modality as well as other select details of their electronic microinteraction in sequence and (b) the presentation of numerical aggregates of particular lexicogrammatical features along languagcultural lines. Discussions of the findings and conclusions are included at the end.

## INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

In the introduction to his monograph, Byram (1997) sets up a dichotomy between the *tourist* and the *sojourner*.<sup>4</sup> The tourist is a traveler to foreign lands who sets out to see foreign peoples, cultures, and artifacts with the hope that these encounters with otherness will enrich his or her current way of life, but not fundamentally alter it. The sojourner, on the other hand, "produces effects on a society which challenge its unquestioned and unconscious beliefs, behaviours and meanings, and whose own beliefs, behaviours and meanings are in turn challenged and expected to change" (Byram, p. 1). The key to becoming a sojourner, or an *intercultural speaker*, is the ability to *decenter* (e.g., Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Kohlberg, 1983; Kramsch, 1998). This process is evidenced when an individual can relativize his or her own beliefs, practices, values, and meanings when faced with those of the other. (For examples of decentering in telecollaboration see Belz & Müller-Hartmann, 2002, p. 72, for the case of Jackie; Belz & Müller-Hartmann, 2003, pp. 75-84, for telecollaborative teachers; Furstenberg et al. 2001, p. 57; Kinginger, in press, for the case of Anita; Müller-Hartmann, 1999, p. 75, for the case of culture-specific irony; Thome, 2003, this issue, for the case of Kirsten.) Byram (p. 3) argues that it is the qualities of the sojourner that constitute IC, and that this, in turn, is an integral and definitive part of what it means to learn a foreign language.

The proposed model consists of five distinct but interdependent components, some of which Byram rather unfortunately refers to as "skills." The first four are *attitudes, knowledge, skills of discovery and interaction*, and *skills of interpreting and relating*. In an educational setting geared toward *politische Bildung* (Byram, 1997, p. 43), the interplay of these first four components ideally should lead to the fifth, namely, *critical cultural awareness* or an *evaluative orientation* (Byram, p. 43) toward the examination of difference, where learners' evaluative points of reference are made explicit and where the new evaluative orientation toward difference fosters a readiness for political engagement (Byram, p. 44). The choice of the word *skills* to designate components three and four of IC is unfortunate because it carries with it the negative connotation that these components might be "learnt by a simple technology and transferred unproblematically" from one context to another (Ivanic, 1998, p. 168; see also Byrnes, 2001, p. 520; Kumaravadivelu, 1994), when, in point of fact, intercultural interpretation, relation, discovery, and interaction are complex human activities that shape and are shaped by an intimate interface of macro- and micro-sociological factors, including both history and power (Archer, 1995; Layder, 1993; see Belz, 2002b, pp. 61-63). In the following sections, I examine each of these four components in turn, focusing, in particular, on *attitudes*.

### Attitudes

The intercultural speaker must exhibit a "readiness to suspend disbelief and judgment with respect to others' meanings, beliefs and behaviours" and a "willingness to suspend belief in one's own meanings and behaviors, and to analyse them from the viewpoint of the others with whom one is engaging" (Byram, 1997, p. 34). Interestingly, communication theorist Susan Herring (2002, p. 144) also uses the phrase "suspend disbelief" in order to refer to what computer users must do in order to interact in virtual environments. According to Herring, the requirement to suspend disbelief in computer-mediated communication may render the user subject to virtual deception and, I would add, instances of miscommunication.

Concrete curricular objectives for the component of attitudes include developing in the learner (a) a willingness to seek out interaction with the other in a relationship of equality; (b) a genuine interest in the other's point of view on phenomena in one's own culture and in the other's culture; (c) a readiness to interrogate the value systems and assumptions behind one's own cultural practices; (d) a readiness to examine one's own affective reactions to the experience of otherness and to cope with these reactions; and (e) a readiness to engage with culturally appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication in the

corresponding contexts (Byram, 1997, p. 51). In general, the interest of the intercultural speaker in the other is distinct from the interests of those whose interaction with the other is motivated by economic profit or by a fascination with the "exotic."

For the assessment of all aspects of IC, Byram (1997) suggests criterion-referenced performance in particular situations as opposed to norm-referenced exhibition of facts; qualitative progression in contrast to quantitative display; and leaps in insight as compared to incremental increases in knowledge (pp. 104-105). Furthermore, progress is defined in terms of frequency of occurrence of particular "intercultural behaviors" rather than as an all-or-nothing phenomenon. Byram suggests that the key factor to consider in assessing the attitudes component of intercultural competence is "the existence or absence of a perspective shift" (p. 108). Thus, a linguistically grounded analysis of the development of attitudes of curiosity and openness in telecollaboration would need to establish both the frequency and distribution of those lexico-grammatical features that index "shifts in perspective."

### **Relational Knowledge and Skills**

According to Byram (1997), the intercultural speaker does not only "gather facts" about the foreign culture (p. 35), but he or she is able to put this information into dialogue with information about his or her own culture (see Byram, p. 90, for "shallow" learning; Entwistle cited in Gipps, 1994, p. 24, for "deep learning"). For example, an American learner of German would be able to put information about the restriction of Jewish civil liberties in 20<sup>th</sup> century Germany into dialogue with information on the restriction of Japanese-American civil liberties in the United States in the 1940s and the restriction of Muslim-American civil liberties under the George W. Bush administration. Relational knowledge also entails the ability to provide critical commentaries on inter-cultural phenomena (e.g., collegiate school spirit in the US vs. professional soccer fanaticism in Germany) as well as intra-cultural inconsistencies (e.g., articles 2 and 4 of the German *Grundgesetz*, or basic constitution, vs. the 2002 *Kopftuch-Verbot*, or scarf-ban for teachers in German schools).

Byram (1997) defines the skills of discovery as "the ability to recognize significant phenomena in a foreign environment and to elicit their meanings and connotations; and their relationship to other phenomena" (p. 38).<sup>5</sup> These skills are needed in situations where individuals have little prior knowledge of the foreign culture or when interlocutors are unable to explain what is obvious for them in their "taken-for-granted reality" (Byram, p. 99). One important mode of discovery is social interaction. Byram (p. 61) characterizes the skill of interaction as the "ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real time communication..."

Byram (1997) defines the skills of interpreting and relating as the "ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one's own" (p. 52). The outcome of the application of these skills is not necessarily a "balance of opposites, or a moderate pluralism of opinions" (Kramsch, 1993); instead, relating phenomena in one culture to those in another may result in "paradoxical, irreducible confrontation that may change one in the process" (p. 231).

## **LINGUISTIC INDEXES OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE**

### **Appraisal Theory**

Appraisal theory is both an extension and a refinement of the aspect of situation known as *tenor* in systemic functional linguistics (e.g., Halliday, 1994; see Fowler, 1996, p. 192). Tenor refers to the interpersonal relationships and social roles at play in any act of communication and the ways in which these roles and relationships are negotiated among speakers. Peter White (2002) explains that appraisal theory is "an approach to exploring, describing and explaining the way language is used to evaluate, to adopt stances, to construct textual personas and to manage interpersonal positionings and relationships." It is important to distinguish between the psychological phenomenon of *evaluation* which refers to "how ...

interlocutors are feeling, the judgments they make, and the value they place on the various phenomena of their experience" and the linguistic phenomenon of *appraisal* which indicates "the semantic resources [interlocutors use] to negotiate emotions, judgments, and valuations, alongside resources for amplifying and engaging with these evaluations" (Martin, 2000, p. 144). Thus, the term APPRAISAL (written in small caps by appraisal theorists) refers to the system of language used to evaluate and position oneself and others intersubjectively within a text.

In English, APPRAISAL is divided into three subsystems: (a) ATTITUDE, (b) ENGAGEMENT, and (c) GRADUATION (Martin, 2000; White, 1998). As is apparent, the notion of "attitude" surfaces as a key theoretical/analytical construct in both appraisal theory and Byram's (1997) formulation of IC. Whereas Byram (1997, pp. 57-58) provides functional descriptions of the projected attitudes of intercultural speakers (and concrete examples of learner behaviors that would "count" as instances of such attitudes), the appraisal framework offers fine-grained delineations of the linguistic resources (i.e., the lexico-syntactic building blocks) that one might use in order to express varying attitudinal positions in interpersonal interactions. Thus, appraisal theory seems eminently well suited to a linguistically-grounded analysis of IC in the text-only medium of telecollaboration.

According to White (1998, p. 101), the linguistic systems within the ATTITUDE dimension of APPRAISAL provide the resources for social evaluation (see section on [Attitude](#) for a detailed description of this subsystem). These analytical tools are adopted in their entirety in the current analysis because IC is centrally concerned with suspending disbelief about the other and belief about the self. In other words, IC entails modifying or re-evaluating one's evaluations of other societies, cultures, and individuals (through confrontation with them) as well as re-analyzing one's evaluations of the self and one's own culture and society. The subsystem of ATTITUDE, therefore, provides a concrete and transparent linguistic procedure for revealing how speakers do this in the empirical details of their talk at the microinteractional level. The subsystem of GRADUATION comprises those linguistic resources that speakers use in order to raise or lower the intensity of a wide range of semantic categories. In the current analysis, I use the category of FORCE from within the subsystem of GRADUATION in order to examine the ways in which the focal students upscale or downscale their attitudinal positionings. The subsystem of ENGAGEMENT "supplies resources by which the author negotiates (engages with) heteroglossic diversity -- the various convergent, alternative and counter socio-semiotic realities or positions activated and referenced by every utterance" (White, p. 78).

In his formulation, White (p. 13) notes that most of the linguistic resources that he includes in this subsystem of ENGAGEMENT overlap "substantially" with those included in other approaches to the grammar of interpersonal relations such as truth functional approaches to modality (Lyons, 1977), evidentiality (Chafe, 1986), and hedging (Lakoff, 1972). His formulation is broader than either of these other approaches, however, because he is primarily concerned with emphasizing the role of the audience (i.e., the hearer, the recipient of a text) in his analysis of hard news stories. Although I believe that an analysis of telecollaborative discourse using White's (1998) subsystem of ENGAGEMENT could be quite illustrative in future investigations, I do not adopt it in the current analysis for several reasons. First, I am limited by space and the fine-grained subsystem of ENGAGEMENT would require extensive explication of its numerous sub-categories in order for the results of its application to illuminate relevant and revelatory discourse patterns in intercultural Internet-mediated communication. Second, in contrast to White, in this initial attempt to offer a linguistic analysis of IC in telecollaborative FLL&T, I am interested less in the ways that the language learners in this study negotiate heteroglossic diversity in their texts and more in the ways that their individual attitudes vis-à-vis themselves and the other change over time. Negotiating heteroglossic diversity in texts would involve not only the degree to which a speaker commits to the truth of a proposition, but also the speaker's acknowledgement of the "contentiousness of a particular proposition or the deference of the speaker for those alternative views" (White, p. 20). Undergraduate students, many of whom had their belief systems challenged by a confrontation with otherness for the first



time in the telecollaborative partnership under study, may be less equipped to negotiate heteroglossic diversity in their emails with keypals than professional journalists in hard news stories. As a first linguistic cut into this research site, I am interested in ascertaining whether or not the learners involved begin to lessen the degree to which they view particular beliefs as "universal" and "natural" by means of electronically mediated interaction with a representative of the "foreign" language culture under study. Therefore, I choose an analytical tool that is narrower in scope than White's subsystem of ENGAGEMENT. Third, several of the subcategories of ENGAGEMENT do not fit well with my data set since they were developed with media texts in mind and my data involve prolonged interaction between a limited set of particular interlocutors. For example, one of the first subdivisions in the subsystem of ENGAGEMENT involves the classification of utterances into *extra-vocal* and *intra-vocal*. Extra-vocalization involves the explicit introduction of outside voices into a text via attributed or reported utterances. Citation and attribution of sources is less likely to be at stake in informal conversations among keypals than it is in hard news stories (the object of White's analysis). For these reasons, I adopt the notion of epistemic modality as employed in various approaches to the analysis of point of view in (literary) texts (e.g., Toolan, 2001) as a final analytical tool in this initial analysis. In the following two subsections, attitude and epistemic modality are described in greater detail.

### Attitude

The ATTITUDE subsystem of APPRAISAL is divided into three subcategories: (a) AFFECT, (b) JUDGMENT, and (c) APPRECIATION. Each of these three subcategories may be coded as either positive or negative. *Affect* is the semantic resource used to convey emotional responses. For example, Anke and Catharina convey positive affect when they use the verb *love* in the following example: "We love to laugh, to giggle, to have fun..." (*e-mail 1*, line 28). For existing or realis (as opposed to irrealis) states, Martin (2000, pp. 151-152) divides emotional responses into *un/happiness* (misery, antipathy, cheer, and affection), *in/security* (disquiet, surprise, confidence, and trust) and *dis/satisfaction* (ennui, displeasure, interest, and admiration).

*Judgment* refers to the semantic resource deployed for construing (moral) evaluations of human behavior (which are necessarily culture-specific). To illustrate, Anke conveys a negative judgment of drug use with the word *sad* in *e-mail 6*, lines 57-58: "Not only drinking, many of my former friends started doing drugs as well. I think it is really sad." She upscales her judgment of this behavior with her use of the adverb *really*. The subsystem of JUDGMENT is subdivided into *social esteem* and *social sanction* (Martin, 2000, p. 156). Social esteem includes *normality*, *capacity*, and *tenacity*, while social sanction is divided into *veracity* and *propriety*. White (1998, p. 35) explains that "Preaches of social sanction will be seen as sins" from the religious perspective and as crimes from the legal perspective. Judgments of social esteem, on the other hand, serve to raise or lower particular individuals in the eyes of their communities, but they do not carry moral or legal implications. Each of these subcategories may be encoded either positively or negatively.

*Appreciation* designates the semantic resource used to express the "aesthetic" quality of natural phenomena and the products of human behavior. For instance, Anke positively appreciates the juvenile novel *Ben liebt Anna* (Härtling, 1997) when she uses the word *cute* to describe it in the following e-mail excerpt: "Well, back to 'Ben liebt Anna,' really cute, but thinking back I have never experienced anything like this in my childhood" (*e-mail 4*, lines 49-50). The subsystem of APPRECIATION is divided into the following five subcategories: (a) reaction, +/- impact; (b) reaction, +/- quality; (c) composition, +/- balance; (d) composition, +/- complexity; and (e) +/- valuation (Martin, 2000, p. 160).

### Epistemic Modality

Halliday (1994) suggests that modality "refers to the area of meaning that lies between yes and no -- the intermediate ground between positive and negative polarity" (p. 356). For Toolan (2001), modality is a "powerful indicator of point of view, of the speaker's or writer's subjectivity" (p. 71). With respect to the

use of modality to express point of view in literary texts, Fowler (1996) explains that a writer "may create a narrator, or a character, whose language expresses a characteristic or idiosyncratic point of view; and the style may be adjusted, as the book progresses, in order to express ideological development" (p. 168). In telecollaborative partnerships, the learner-as-writer may index the development of IC through variations in patterns of modality in the texts of his or her e-mails over time.

The modal systems of English and German are divided generally into three semantic subsystems, *deontic*, *boulomaic*, and *epistemic*, which are variously encoded in linguistic form. Deontic modality indexes a speaker's sense of duty or obligation in connection with a particular person, event, or state of affairs. Boulomaic modality indicates the wishes and desires of the speaker, while epistemic modality refers to the confidence that a speaker has in the truth of a certain proposition. This confidence (or lack thereof) is signaled linguistically by *categorical assertions* (Simpson, 1993, p. 49), such as in English *you are right*, modal verbs, lexical verbs (in English, *suppose*; in German, *vermuten* [to suppose]), modal adverbs (in English, *allegedly*; in German, *sicherlich* [certainly]), as well as certain idiomatic phrases (in English, *there is no question*; in German, *ohne Zweifel* [without doubt]). In the case of German, epistemic modality also has been grammaticized as a verbal mood (e.g., *sie sei die reichste Frau der Welt* [she is reported to be the richest woman in the world]) and in the form of modal particles (e.g., *das ist doch nicht wahr* [that is really not true]). In the first case, the speaker employs subjunctive I (*sei*) in order to distance herself from the truth value of the subordinate proposition. In the second case, the speaker's use of *doch* underscores her commitment to the truth of a given proposition. Thus, a speaker may either intensify or mitigate his or her commitment to the truth of an utterance. In the current analysis, categorical assertions (the most intense form of commitment), intensification (e.g., certainly), mitigation (e.g., perhaps), and the use of lexical absolutes (e.g., no, all, every) are tallied for each side of the partnership under study.

## THE STUDY

### The Research Project

The data presented here are drawn from a three-year (2000-2002) **research project** designed to investigate the impact of telecollaboration on FL&T at the collegiate level in the United States. From 2000 to 2002, three fourth-semester FL classes at a public institution, one each in French, German, and Spanish, were paired electronically with university-level EFL classes in Europe in which participants speak the FL under study natively. The focal students in this study were participants in the German component of the project during the Fall of 2000. These students used the teleconferencing program *FirstClass* in order to correspond in both English and German. Although *FirstClass* supports multi-room synchronous chat in addition to e-mail, Eric, Anke, and Catharina opted to communicate with one another using e-mail only.

### The Telecollaborative Partnership

In the first phase of the partnership (mid-August to mid-October), while the German university was not in session, the U.S. students collaboratively prepared Web Project I, a Web site that contained individual Web-biographies. At the start of the second phase (mid-October to mid-November 2000), the German students chose an American keypal based on their examination of these Web-biographies. Thus, **e-mail 1** (see **Appendix A**) represents Anke and Catharina's initial e-mail to Eric, which was written in class on the first day of their *Proseminar* after they had visited Eric's Web-biography and picked him as a partner. In the remainder of phase 2, the keypals got to know one another and discussed three sets of parallel texts. Parallel texts explore a phenomenon (e.g., racism or beauty) from different socio-cultural perspectives in different languages. The pedagogical rationale for their use is to provide opportunities for the exposure, juxtaposition, and exploration of cultural fault lines (Kramsch, 1993) with a view to the development of IC. Within the *FirstClass* program, a folder was established for each set of transatlantic keypals to which they could send e-mails. All members of a particular set could read all e-mails that were sent to their folder. In a third phase, keypals worked collaboratively on the design and production of Web Project II, a

second Web site in which they examined in greater detail a topic that arose from their common engagement with parallel texts.

### **Participants**

Anke and Catharina were second-year students in TESL and were therefore preparing for careers as primary/secondary-level English teachers in Germany, while Eric was a second-year student in computer science. Based on their responses to a pre-telecollaboration survey, Anke and Catharina appear to have very different profiles in comparison to Eric in terms of their experiences in electronic discourse communities (see Belz, 2001, pp. 225-227; see also Herring, 2002, p. 138; Thorne, 1999). For example, while Eric has his own personal computer with free Internet access and his own personal Web page unrelated to the telecollaborative course, neither Anke nor Catharina owns a personal computer. Anke/Catharina and Eric also differ with respect to their goals for the course. While Eric wants "to improve his reading/writing/speaking skills," Anke and Catharina are interested in "getting to know an American person" (see also Thorne, 2003, this issue, for differing expectations in a French-American exchange). Anke has studied for one year in Canada. Neither Eric nor Catharina has spent an extended period in a community where their respective FLs are spoken natively.

These three students were chosen for analysis because their electronic correspondence does not reflect well the euphoric reports in the literature of intercultural learning in telecollaboration. In fact, Eric disengaged from his German keypals after *e-mail 13* on November 13, 2000, and did not write any more individual messages to them for the duration of the U.S. semester. In his genetic approach to the study of human development, Vygotsky (1978) notes that one of the most constructive ways to ascertain the developmental path of a particular phenomenon is to study those instances where it is disrupted, that is, those cases where the system fails. Eric, Anke, and Catharina do not appear to develop attitudes of "curiosity and openness" vis-à-vis the other to the extent that one might hope in the course of their telecollaborative partnership. Their apparent miscommunications and misinterpretations, encoded in the text-only medium of e-mail, may be a window on the functioning of German-American telecollaboration in the development of IC.

### **Method**

In the current study, I first examine chronologically sequenced excerpts from Anke/Catharina and Eric's e-mail correspondence with respect to the chosen analytical constructs (e.g., AFFECT, FORCE, epistemic modality). The purpose of this analytical move is to gain insight into the ways in which the meanings of this interaction for these interlocutors emerge at the microinteractional level of situated activity through time. Next, I present numerical aggregates of the relevant analytical constructs for the partnership as a whole along languacultural lines because the effects of particular patterns of language use may be "cumulative, rather than locally salient" (Fowler, 1996, p. 172; see also Gee, 1999, pp. 119-148, for the alternation of qualitative analysis at the microinteractional level of talk and quantitative presentation of specific features of this same talk in his example of "an ideal discourse analysis"). Like Layder (1993, p. 112), Gee notes that "counting things" in stretches of discourse provides an invaluable guide "in terms of hypotheses that [one] can investigate through close scrutiny of the actual details and content" (p. 125) of language-in-use. Similarly, Johnstone (2002) remarks that "[a]ny analytical move that involves drawing boundaries, pulling out chunks from the flow of experience and treating them as wholes" constitute the "essential first steps of any discourse analysis or any other approach to humanistic or social scientific research", despite the fact that the resulting categories may be somewhat arbitrary (p. 20). Although the linear nature of writing demands that one present micro-interactional and aggregational data in a linear fashion (i.e., one before the other on paper or in cyberspace, as the case may be), it should be noted that "discourse analysis is a reciprocal and cyclical process in which we shuttle back and forth between the structure (form, design) of a piece of language and the situated meanings it is attempting to build about the world, identities, and relationships" (Gee, p. 99).

**DATA: ANALYSIS IN SEQUENCE**

The entire 7-week e-mail correspondence between Anke/Catharina and Eric is presented in unaltered form (with English translations at appropriate junctures) in [Appendix A](#).<sup>6</sup> In the remainder of this section, I highlight key moments in this developing interaction in sequential fashion.

**Example 1** is taken from Anke and Catharina's introductory e-mail to Eric. Anke took the lead in the in-class composition of this message, while Catharina sat at her side as she typed.

Example 1 (from e-mail 1; October 19, 2000)

- 1 Dear ERIC
- 2 It was very interesting (6) reading your homepage and getting to know you a little bit through it.
- 3 This week it was the beginning of the semester and today our first class of English
- 4 started. ...now we are here to introduce ourselves to you.
- 5 Well, lets start with my friend.
- 6 Her name is CATHARINA ... She is 21 years old ... [she] is really good looking, always dressed
- 7 in fancy cloth, but no skirts ... I'm the typer for today, not that I'm better than her, with my two
- 8 fingers search system of typing. My name is ANKE, I'm the same age as CATHARINA, 21 but
- 9 we mostly (107) kinda behave younger. We love to laugh, to giggle, to have fun -- everywhere we
- 10 go, so mostly (124) we are the loudest (128) out of class and the wildest (134) on the street, the
- 11 fastest (139) in the car...
- 12 Ach, wir sollen ja noch einige Fehler von dir korrigieren, also uns ist nur ein grosser Fehler
- 13 aufgefallen. In deiner Web-page hast du gleich am Anfang in einem Satz "weil's Manchnal"
- 14 geschrieben, das gibt es in dieser Reihenfolge nicht, es heisst "aber manchmal" und du weisst
- 15 bestimmt (190) selbst, dass man im Deutschen in einem Satz nur Nomen, Substantive gross
- 16 schreibt. Aber mach dir keine Sorgen, wir haben bestimmt auch viele Fehler gemacht...

Anke opens this e-mail by expressing positive affect (satisfaction: interest) with regard to reading Eric's Web page at word 6 in line 2. Beginning in line 7, she initiates a series of negative self appraisals which begins with a negative judgment (social esteem: capacity) of her own typing ability. This series ends with three successive negative judgments (social esteem: normality) of her and Catharina's behavior. These latter judgments are upscaled with the use of the adverb "mostly" at words 107 and 124 and the superlative forms of the descriptive adjectives "loud," "wild," and "fast" at words 128, 134, and 139, respectively. Although these appraisals are tallied as negative (self) judgments (and thus possible instances of positive politeness strategies vis-à-vis Eric) in the appraisal framework, Anke/Catharina actually use them in a positive sense in order to distinguish themselves as "cool" students. In short, they establish their own desirability as telecollaborative partners in their opening e-mail by distinguishing themselves as different from other German university students.

Anke suddenly remembers, as indicated by her use of the German interjection *ach* in line 12 that, according to the rules of the partnership, she should correct some of Eric's mistakes in German. Anke introduces this topic in lines 12 and 13 by stating directly that she and Catharina noticed a mistake in Eric's Web page. Anke's use of the word *Fehler* (mistake) is upscaled by the adjective *grosser* (big) and simultaneously downscaled by the adverb *nur* (only) in the phrase "only one big mistake." Next, Anke asserts that Eric made a syntactic error *gleich am Anfang* (right at the beginning) of his Web page and follows this with the categorical assertion in line 14 that the word order Eric employed "doesn't exist." This information is followed by another categorical assertion in which Anke supplies Eric with the correct word order. Next, Anke uses the German phrase *du weisst bestimmt selbst* to introduce her correction of an error in capitalization on Eric's part.<sup>7</sup> From the perspectives of the Germans, this adverb may function as a face-saving strategy for Eric by means of which Anke/Catharina attribute knowledge of German orthography to him (i.e., "for sure you already know that nouns are capitalized in German"). From Eric's viewpoint, however, *bestimmt* may function as the capstone of a mounting series of face-threatening

insults (i.e., "certainly you must know that nouns are capitalized in German, so why did you make that mistake?"), which began with the Germans' assertion that Eric made a "big" mistake.

Contrasting interpretations of the situated meaning of *bestimmt* may lie in differences in American and German conversational styles (Byrnes, 1986). In her corrections of Eric's mistakes, Anke exhibits the German conversational feature of directness (House & Kasper, 1981) by first failing to praise Eric's efforts in German (a face-giving strategy) and then listing his mistakes in what appears to be unmitigated and even upscaled fashion (the use of categorical assertions). Thus, while Anke and Catharina may intend their conversational moves as a simple listing of the "facts" (i.e., Eric made a mistake in syntax and capitalization), with *bestimmt* functioning as a face-saving device, Eric may perceive their use of this adverb to accomplish a face-threatening positioning of him as a "deficient" user of German (see Belz, 2002a). Kothoff (1989, p. 454) notes, based on the anecdotal experiences of German-speaking academicians at U.S. universities, that an American student "*sich nie wieder bei ihnen blicken ließe*" (would never allow himself to be seen by them again) if he or she were to encounter (unmitigated) negative appraisals on his or her written work. It should be noted that Anke/Catharina attempt to further soften the imposition of their corrections in line 16. One might even argue that their admission that they, too, have made a lot of mistakes characterizes them as overly attentive to Eric's positive face, since, as Kothoff (p. 450) notes, "*die Sympathiesignale der Deutschen sind spärlicher*" (the sympathy signals of Germans are sparser). In fact, the manner in which Anke/Catharina correct Eric's mistakes in German mirrors the example of German norms for the performance of critique given in Kothoff (p. 454), except for Anke/Catharina's use of softeners:

*Ich kann die Arbeit so nicht akzeptieren. Sie haben die wesentlichen Gedanken des Buches nicht erfaßt ... es fehlen Literaturangaben und eine klare Gliederung...*

[I cannot accept the paper like this. You have not comprehended the main points of the book ... there are no references and the text is not clearly structured...] (Kothoff, 1989, p. 454)

It is important to note, however, that Anke/Catharina's face-giving strategies involve a negative judgment (social esteem: capacity) of their own abilities in English, rather than a positive appreciation of Eric's command of German. As Kothoff (1989, p. 454) observes, the typical American performance of critique requires first praise, even in the case of unacceptable work, followed by tempered suggestions for improvement.

These American norms for the performance of critique are exemplified clearly in Eric's correction of Anke/Catharina's English mistakes in his first e-mail to them:

Example 2 (from e-mail 2; October 19, 2000)

- 1 Hello ANKE und CATHARINA,
- 2 It's nice to hear from you for the first time. I am glad you liked our home page, I spent a
- 3 lot of time working on it! Your english is very impressive. My german is not nearly that good so
- 4 you're probably gonna have a lot of errors to correct. I actually had a hard time finding many
- 5 errors in your e-mail. I guess I will begin by correcting a few of your english errors.
- 6
- 7 Error: "This week it was the beginning of the semester..."
- 8 Correction: "This week was the beginning of the semester..."

In line 2, Eric opens his e-mail correspondence with Anke/Catharina by expressing positive affect (happiness: cheer) with respect to his receipt of their e-mail. This move is repeated in the next sentence when Eric states that he is glad that Anke/Catharina liked his Web page. Next, Eric positively appreciates (reaction: quality) Anke/Catharina's abilities in English with the word "impressive" which is upscaled by the adverb "very" in line 3. His praise for his keypad's English is followed by two negative appreciations (reaction: quality) of his own competence in German. Eric then positively appreciates (reaction: quality)

Anke/Catharina's English for a second time in lines 4-5, before he finally corrects one of their linguistic errors.

In sum, each of these keypals exhibits culturally-specific linguistic patterns for the performance of critique (a required task in the partnership under study). However, the Germans do seem to deviate more from their own preferred norms of directness through their use of multiple softeners. Such language use might be an indication that Anke/Catharina exhibit a "readiness to engage with the conventions and rites of verbal" interaction in their FL (Byram, 1997, p. 58), perhaps in an attempt to offer Eric positive face in what is, for him, a face-threatening situation. In this way, they mark themselves linguistically as intercultural speakers who take into "consideration the expectations the others may have about appropriate behavior from foreigners" (Byram, p. 58). However, Anke/Catharina have not adopted English-language norms in their entirety (indeed, should they, if their critique is performed in German?), as evidenced by their lack of praise for Eric's FL abilities and their heavy use of bare assertions. Thus, the hybrid nature of their performance of critique may not be read by Eric as an attempt to meet him halfway; instead, Anke/Catharina inadvertently may have positioned themselves as rude and overbearing from Eric's perspective. The inability of e-mail to convey paralinguistic details of meaning such as facial movements and intonation may detract from an interpretation that is favorable to the Germans and bolster one that highlights stereotypical accounts of German conversational style (Byrnes, 1986, p. 203). In effect, the very medium that is touted as the cost-effective means of bringing sets of "others" together for the purposes of fostering intercultural understanding may simultaneously exacerbate the realization of this educational goal. An additional and crucial point to consider here is that, in their use of uncharacteristic softeners in their correction of Eric's mistakes, Anke and Catharina seem to have imported, at least to a certain degree, the norms of English interaction into the words of German. Kothoff (1989, pp. 454, 458) indicates on two occasions that this type of lingua-pragmatic hybridity is a desired outcome of FLL. I will return to this point in the section "[A Readiness to Interrogate the Value Systems and Assumptions Behind One's Own Cultural Practices.](#)"

In the next excerpt, the analytical focal point occurs in line 6 where Anke uses the word "cool" to positively judge those parents who allow their daughter's boyfriend to sleep over in their home and the word "scared" to negatively judge those parents who would not allow this arrangement.

Example 3 (from e-mail 6; October 30, 2000)

- 1 Hi ERIC,
- 2 ...the weekend was great...we went...to my place and looked at pictures I made during my visit
- 3 in Canada ... At my house it is no problem to bring boys over, my parents really trust me ... In
- 4 Canada I experienced something totally different. My host parents slogan was: NO BOYS IN
- 5 THE HOUSE ... In Canada I have heard of many family handling the boy-girl thing as my host
- 6 parents did, what about the US? Are your parents cool with these kind of things or scared?...

The excerpt opens in line 2 with Anke expressing positive affect (happiness: cheer) vis-à-vis her weekend activities which involved reminiscing about the year she spent as an exchange student in Canada. In line 3, Anke positively judges (social esteem: normality) the practice of bringing boys over to her house and thereby positively judges her parents' decision to sanction this practice. Said parental permission is construed as a result of Anke's parents' positive affective appraisal of her (security: trust). The second appraisal in line 3 is upscaled with the use of the adverb "really." In comparison with her parents' behavior in Germany, Anke negatively judges (social esteem: normality) the behavior of her Canadian host parents by referring to their household rules as "something totally different" in line 4. By analogy, Anke negatively judges (social esteem: normality) the behavior of other Canadian families when she states that they dealt with the "boy-girl thing" in the same way that her host parents did. With this chain of appraisals, Anke does not appear to display a "willingness to question the values and presuppositions in cultural practices and products in one's own environment" (Byram, 1997, p. 50), the third curricular

objective in the attitudes component of IC. Instead, she seems to supplant her cultural values (as evidenced by her appraisal of a particular social practice) into a new cultural context without a(n) (developing) awareness of the relative nature of value systems in general. Byram (1997, p. 92) suggests that in order to judge a learner's interest in other perspectives, the second curricular objective of the attitudes component of IC, one would need evidence that learners are "not prioritising their own over other perspectives" and that they are "choosing the other's explanation of phenomena in the learner's own culture." Anke seems to be providing linguistic counter-evidence for the realization of these two objectives when she makes the syntactic choice to phrase the query concerning mixed sex "sleepovers" in line 6 as an *either/or*-question. In effect, she offers Eric virtually no discursive space in which to explain his parents' policies. He is expected to adopt one of her pre-fabricated labels and thereby re-inforce her pre-determined, culturally mediated taxonomy of parental behavior. The syntax of her question may preclude intercultural discussion of teenage sexuality in the cultures under study because it rules out and simultaneously devalues alternative possibilities, such as Eric's parents disallowing not only mixed-sex sleepovers, but dating in general. In other words, Anke appears to attempt to understand Eric's potential response to her question by assimilating it to her own cultural phenomenon -- Eric's parents are "cool" if they let his girlfriend sleepover, but "scared" if they do not. However, as Byram (1997, pp. 104-105) notes, IC should be assessed based on the frequency of occurrence of particular behaviors (hence the need for numerical aggregates of certain linguistic phenomena in the section "[Data: Analysis in Aggregation](#)").

An excerpt from Eric's response to this e-mail is given in [example 4](#) below.

Example 4 (from [e-mail 7](#), October 31, 2000)

- 1 Hey ANKE and CATHARINA,
- 2 Thanks for writing me. I would like to reply to all the questions you've asked in your e-mails, but
- 3 first I have to write about the stuff that we are required to talk about.
- 4 Meine Lehrerin meint dass "Disney hat das deutsche Kulturgut gestohlen, als er die verschiedene
- 5 Märchen wie Aschenputtel und Schneewittchen verfilmt hat. " Was meinst du ueber diese Idee?
- 6 Weisst du ueber Disney and was es ist und was es macht? Ich glaube dass Disney die Maerchen
- 7 gestohlen hat und politisch korrekt gemacht. Aber in den USA sind politisch falsch Maerchen
- 8 nicht akzeptiert. Vielleicht ist es eine kulturelle Reflexion von den USA dass wir nicht so viel
- 9 Kontrovers Maerchen haben.

Eric opens his response to the "cool-or-scared" e-mail by first thanking Anke/Catharina for their message, even though it contains what, for him, may be perceived as shocking information (Belz, 2001, p. 222) concerning teenage sexuality in Germany, a taboo topic in many American circles (Byrnes, 1986, p. 204; Korthoff, 1989, p. 452). In line 2, Eric offers Anke/Catharina positive face by positively appraising their questions implicitly when he states that he would like to answer all of them. However, he declines to answer the "cool-or-scared" question (and enter potentially contentious conversational territory) by appealing to the rules of the partnership when he states that he must discuss the assigned parallel texts (German and American versions of *Cinderella*, in this case). In doing so, Eric displays English-language conversational style which is characterized by a greater degree of "commitment to creating an air of civility and graciousness toward the other" than is the case among speakers of German (Byrnes, pp. 199-200). However, his avoidance of "topics for which social behavior has no clear prescriptions" may negatively impact Eric's social evaluation in the estimation of speakers of German, among whom the same topics "can be explored very freely, rewardingly, and substantively, thus leading to greater depth than would otherwise be likely under a system which must continuously defer to the sensitivities of others" (Byrnes, p. 201). Thus, Eric's conversational moves at the beginning of [example 4](#) may not be appreciated positively by Anke/Catharina as a skillful display of "practiced ambiguity" in the tradition of English-language conversations (Byrnes, p. 200), but rather negatively judged as an attempt to "seek ... refuge" (Gutiérrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995, p. 466) in the comfortable script of the foreign language classroom (Belz, pp. 227-229; Belz & Müller-Hartmann, 2003, pp. 76-77).

In line 4, Eric switches topics and languages to introduce the proposition that the Disney Corporation "stole" the "cultural goods" of Germany when they adapted various German-language fairy tales to the screen. Eric, however, does not present this idea as his own, but rather attributes it to his instructor. In this way, he can safely maintain a position of uncommitted ambiguity if his German keypals were to disagree with this potentially face-threatening assertion. From the German perspective, however, it is precisely these types of deferential moves that portray speakers of English as "superficial, uninformed, uncommitted, uninterested conversational partners" who are unwilling or perhaps unable to "take a stand" (Byrnes, 1986, p. 203). In effect, Eric's attribution of this idea to his teacher represents a crucial moment in the development of the online exchange under study. Just like Anke and Catharina unwittingly may have positioned themselves as rude and uninviting in their performance of critique, Eric may have shaped himself linguistically as an individual who shies away from disagreement and confrontation. Anke and Catharina may be less likely to value Eric's pending displays of intercultural awareness now that they have ascertained that he does not exercise those conversational qualities -- disagreement and confrontation -- that are highly valued in German conversational style.

One such display comes in the very next sentence where Eric realizes that Disney may be a culture-specific phenomenon and, as a result, checks his partners' comprehension of it. In lines 6 and 7, Eric finally does offer his own opinion of Disney when he states that Disney has stolen German fairy tales and made them politically correct. By way of explanation of this "crime," he negatively appreciates politically incorrect fairy tales by stating that they are "unacceptable." The final sentence of this example almost reads as if Eric were speaking to himself, a possibility that is enhanced by the asynchronous nature of e-mail (see Belz & Reinhardt, 2003). The nascent decentering of his own position is signaled linguistically by his use of the sentence adverb *vielleicht* (maybe) in line 8.

Anke and Catharina's growing frustration with the perceived noncommitted nature of Eric's correspondence is reflected in the bulleted format of their subsequent response. In the opening of this message, they (perhaps ironically) echo Eric's deferential strategy of appealing to the rules of the partnership, one of which is to answer all of their partner's questions. By doing this in the form of a brief and disengaged list, they signal to Eric that, at this juncture, they are not willing to offer the type of "highly emotional participation" that typifies German conversational style (Byrnes, 1986, pp. 201-202). Nonetheless, their subsequent contributions maintain the quality of directness.

Example 5 (from e-mail 8; November 2, 2000)

- 1 Hi ERIC,
- 2 zuerst möchten wir Deine Fragen beantworten:...
- 3 3.) Ob Disney dt. Kulturgut gestohlen hat? Also ANKE und ich sind da nicht so kleinlich. Wenn
- 4 jemand ein schönes Buch, Märchen oder Schriftstück liest und dies gerne verfilmen möchte,
- 5 finden wir, dass er es tun soll...
- 6 7.) We wonder whether you personally think the same about German fairy-tales, or if just your
- 7 teacher told you to write so, because almost everybody from your class did so...

In response to Eric's request for their opinion concerning whether or not Disney has stolen German "cultural goods," Anke and Catharina state in the form of a categorical assertion that they are not so *kleinlich* (narrow-minded). Their use of this word amounts to a negative appreciation (reaction: quality) of Eric's teacher's remark and may simultaneously be interpreted as a negative judgment (social esteem: capacity) of her abilities as an instructor. From Eric's perspective, it appears that his strategy of non-committedness with regard to this proposition has paid off; otherwise he would have served as the object of this uncomplimentary appraisal. In lines 6 and 7, Anke and Catharina offer an implicit negative judgment (social esteem: capacity) of Eric's ability to think for himself by asking whether or not he simply parrots what his teacher tells him to write in his messages. This appraisal may leave Eric both angry and baffled since he may feel that he not only offered his own opinion, he also relativized his



position with respect to his own culture. His response to their confrontational query is true to English conversational norms -- he does not answer it. Instead, he chooses to maintain "surface harmony" (Byrnes, 1986, p. 200) by ignoring uncomfortable and confrontational questions.

These same culturally-contingent conversational styles widen the already substantial chasm of intercultural misunderstanding between Anke/Catharina and Eric in [example 6](#) below.

Example 6 (from [e-mail 9](#); November 2, 2000)

- 1 we just read the parts from Ben libet Anna that your teacher put into the net. Wow, they are so
- 2 different ... Why can't kids swim naked in America? Deutsche Kinder sind schlauer, die wissen,
- 3 dass man in nassen Sachen später friert.

In line 1 of this excerpt, Anke/Catharina refer to the English-language translation of *Ben liebt Anna* (Härtling, 1990), one of the parallel texts in the partnership under study. In the original version of this German-language classic, the two 9-year-old protagonists, Ben and Anna, swim together naked in a lake in a key scene. In Auerbach's English-language translation, the nudity has been censored. Instead, the children jump into the lake fully clothed which prompts Anna to speculate that Ben's mother will be angry that they got their clothes wet, lines that were never uttered in the original text. For the second time in the course of the partnership, Anke/Catharina ask a direct question related to the, in American culture, "stärker tabuisiert" (Kothoff, 1989, p. 450), or "more strongly tabooed" topics of sex and the human body in line 2 of this excerpt. Immediately thereafter, they negatively judge (social esteem: capacity) the mental faculties of American children in general with their use of the comparative form of the adjective *schlau* (clever) to refer to German children who know that they will be cold later, if they swim in their clothes.

In his next e-mail, Eric chooses not to answer Anke and Catharina's question about nude bathing. Instead, he discusses school spirit, a subject that several members of the German group addressed in a communal folder in *FirstClass*. [Example 7](#) is of interest because it exemplifies Eric's typical pattern of qualification of his commitment to the truth value of his utterances. Italics indicate clause-internal qualification (either mitigation or intensification), while bolding indicates clause-external qualification.

Example 7 (from [e-mail 10](#); November 2, 2000)

- 1 Hey ANKE and CATHARINA,
- 2 I'm *really* (2) not surprised to hear that your school doesn't have much (12) school spirit. *Perhaps*
- 3 (15) school spirit is more of an American kind of thing. **However** (26), you *do* (28)
- 4 *still* (29) have (30) a great deal of (34) spirit for your sports teams in Germany like soccer teams
- 5 for example. **At least** (48) that how it *seems* (52) from what I've seen on TV. *Perhaps* (59) you
- 6 even have more "*spirit*" (64) for your soccer teams than we have for our sports teams in America.

In line 1 at word 2, Eric uses the clause-internal sentence adverbial *really* to intensify his statement that he is not surprised about the lack of school spirit in Germany. In line 2 at word 15, he uses the clause-internal sentence adverbial *perhaps* to mitigate his statement that school spirit might be an American phenomenon.<sup>8</sup> This same strategy is repeated two more times at words 52 and 59. At word 29, Eric uses the clause-internal sentence adverbial *still* to intensify his assertion that Germans have a great deal of spirit for professional sports teams. Eric further intensifies this statement with the verbal circumlocution *do have* at words 28 and 30 in contrast to the non-emphatic form *have*. Eric's use of scare quotes at word 64 is a clause-internal means of expressing skepticism toward his statement that Germans might have more spirit for German soccer teams than Americans do for sports teams because he implies that he is not sure if he can equate the sometimes violent behavior of German sports fans with what he understands as spirit at, for example, college football games (e.g., marching bands, mascots). Eric further qualifies his assertions by avoiding the use of lexical absolutes. For example, he does not state that Germans don't

have *any* school spirit, rather he states that Germans don't have "much" school spirit at word 12. This strategy is repeated at word 34. Finally, Eric does use clause-external mitigation at words 26 and 48.

In contrast, Anke and Catharina tend to present their opinions in the form of bald categorical assertions. Mitigation of their assertions is generally distributed over multiple clauses such that the mitigator does not necessarily occur in the same clause as the proposition that it is designed to soften. This situation is illustrated in [example 8](#). Underlining designates a categorical assertion (intensification), while bolding again indicates clause-external mitigation.

Example 8 (from [e-mail 11](#); November 9, 2000)

- 1 Women were suppressed for a very long time. Now, they want to be treated like men.
- 2 **but** (17) they are **still** (20) women ... It is a very hard subject to talk about and it is easy to be
- 3 misunderstood. We think everybody (40), no matter what (43) race, culture or gender, should be
- 4 respected for what he/she is -- human and not be harassed. **But still** (62) there are differences and
- 5 that is good. We were not made for physical labour – you were not made to be pregnant. Anyway
- 6 (84) I hope you understand what we mean.

In line 1, Anke and Catharina state that women were oppressed for a very long time and that now they want to be treated like men. In the following clause, they use the adversative adverb *but* at word 17 to indicate their doubt that women can or should be treated like men. In lines 2 and 3 they make two more categorical statements about the emancipation of women as a topic of discussion. In lines 3 and 4, they imply equality between people by stating in absolute terms at words 40 and 43 that "everybody" should be respected and not harassed "no matter what." In the next sentence, however, they qualify the implication of equality by using the adverbial *but still* at word 62 to introduce the opinion that there are differences between people. Following two more categorical statements about culturally and biologically determined gender roles in society, Anke and Catharina use the topic shifter *anyway* at word 84 to mitigate the gravity of their statements and thus their degree of engagement with them.

Anke and Catharina's pattern of categorical assertion and mitigation is illustrated further in [example 9](#).

Example 9 (from [e-mail 16](#); November 20, 2000)

- 1 Anyway *we did* wrote you one letter in German, one in English that *we both* (15) *didn't like any*
- 2 (18) *of the two movies*. They were boring and they were full of (30) drug abuse. I can't take any
- 3 *one* (36) *serious who is a pot smoker or an alcoholic*. **Well** (46) they spoke about sexuality and
- 4 life and so one **but** (56) in *such a* (59) boring way....
- 5 By the way, we think it is sad (69) that you only write to us about the thinks the teachers tells
- 6 you to. Are you interested in us or only on your mark you will receive at the end of the year. We
- 7 have heard that your course it four times a week. Don't you have the time to write us anything
- 8 personal?

Anke and Catharina begin by making four categorical assertions about the films *American Beauty* (Mendes, 1999) and *Nach fünf im Urwald* (Schmid, 1995). It should be noted that Eric had positively appreciated these two films in his previous e-mail (see [e-mail 13](#) in [Appendix A](#)). Anke and Catharina's negative appreciation of the films is upscaled with the use of the modifiers *full of* at word 30 and *such a* at word 59. Furthermore, their commitment to the negative appreciation of the films is intensified clause internally with the use of absolutes: *both* at word 15; *any* at word 18; and *any one* at word 36. With the use of *well* at word 46, they mitigate their commitment to the negative appreciation of the movies clause externally. In sentence five, Anke and Catharina offer the fact that the movies discussed sexuality and life as evidence for the mitigating statement that they are not only about drug abuse and they are not entirely boring. At word 56, they use adversative *but* to mitigate their hedge of the original position and thus, simultaneously reinforce their initial assertion that the movies are boring and full of drug abuse.

In line 5, Anke and Catharina shift the focus of their negative appraisals from the films to Eric himself in a series of direct questions and assertions: At word 69, they negatively appreciate Eric's participation in the partnership by using the word *sad* to describe what they believe to be his practice of repeating his teacher's opinions. In line 6, they again employ an *either/or*-question to query Eric's motivation for participating in the partnership. The syntax of this question construes Eric as either interested in them or interested in himself. Since they previously stated that he only writes about the things his teacher tells him to, they have already chosen the first option as an answer to this question for him and thereby negatively judged his behavior in the partnership as inappropriate (according to their own desire to get to know an American person). Finally, in lines 7 and 8, Anke/Catharina implicitly judge Eric negatively with a *yes/no*-question regarding his e-mail correspondence. If Eric answers this question in the affirmative (yes, I have the time to write something personal to you) he is, in effect, admitting that he has not done so in the past and therefore stands in breach of the e-mail arrangement (at least from the Germans' perspective). A negative response to this question (no, I don't have any time to write anything personal to you [nor do I want to because you have been so rude to me]) forces Eric into a conversational role which requires a high degree of directness and thereby flouts the conversational norms of English. Byrnes (1986) reports the experiences of an American student living in Germany who chose not to present factual information to counter the position of his German-speaking interlocutors (although this move left the impression that he was uninformed on political matters) because it would have required him to engage in "aggressive" conversational behaviors that, for him, were "overwhelmingly imbued with negative evaluations" (p. 203). My interpretation of Eric's correspondence is that he does indeed present his own opinions (however trite and nebulous they may be) and that he even begins to decenter with respect to his commitment to them (see, e.g., e-mails 10, 12, and 13); however, Anke/Catharina may not be able to read his messages in this way because they are unfamiliar with the package -- the culturally appropriate linguistic encoding of opinions in conversational English.

By the same token, the German students in this study (at least Catharina) may also, at times, construct a conversational package that Eric cannot open. In [example 10](#), which, in contrast to most of the messages from the German side of the partnership, was written exclusively by Catharina, we see heavy use of modal particles and other kinds of language-specific attitudinal qualifiers.

Example 10 (from [e-mail 15](#); November 16, 2000)

- 1 Du hast den Film „American Beauty“ doch (7) bestimmt (8) auch gesehen, oder? (11) Wir sollen
- 2 dir nämlich (15) heute darüber schreiben. Also (19), wir fanden den Film ein bisschen (25)
- 3 lächerlich (26), da sich ein erwachsener Mann wie ein Teenager aufgeführt hat. Aber (37) wir
- 4 fanden es (40) schön, wie sich sie [sic] Beziehung von der Hauptdarstellerin und ihrem Nachbarn
- 5 entwickelt hat. Meinst du, das sich ein erwachsener Mann wirklich (61) in so (63) ein junges
- 6 Mädchen verlieben kann? Sie war ja (71) so (72) alt wie seine Tochter...Außerdem (77) ist der
- 7 Vater von dem Nachbarn etwas (84) komisch, zuerst denkt er, sein Sohn sei (91) schwul, dann
- 8 will er einen anderen Mann küssen. Irgendwie (100) alles ein bisschen (103) komisch. Und die
- 9 Drogen dürfen natürlich (109) auch in diesem Film (113) nicht fehlen... Na ja (116), wir denken
- 10 nicht, dass dieser Film so (123) sehr der Realität entspricht oder (128) was meinst du?

In line 1, Catharina uses the clause-internal sentence adverb *bestimmt* (certainly) at word 8 to intensify her belief that Eric has already seen the film *American Beauty*. Her use of the modal particle *doch* at word 7 serves to further emphasize her commitment to the truth of this proposition. She uses the utterance-final tag *oder* (or) at word 11, however, to allow for a contradiction of this statement and thus mitigates her engagement with it. In line 2 at word 15 Catharina employs the adverb *nämlich* (namely) to emphasize the fact that she is supposed to write about the film in her present e-mail. In lines 2-3 Catharina appreciates the film negatively with the adjective *lächerlich* (ridiculous) at word 26; she downscals this evaluation, however, with the use of *ein bisschen* (a little bit) at word 25. In line 4 at word 37 Catharina uses clause-external adversative *aber* (but) to mitigate her previous appraisal of the film as ridiculous and goes on to

state an aspect of the film that she feels was *schön* (nice). Syntactically, Catharina uses an anticipatory *es*-construction to refer cataphorically to the content of her positive appreciation. In this way, Catharina's appreciative evaluation (*schön*) and the object evaluated (i.e., the relationship between the female character, Jane, and her neighbor, Ricky) do not appear in the same clause. Catharina's use of the adverb *wirklich* (really) at word 61 casts doubt on the statement that a grown man (Lester) falls in love with a teenage girl (Angela). The adverb *so* (so) at word 63 upscales Catharina's description of Angela as young. In the following sentence at word 71 the modal particle *ja* intensifies the assertion that Angela is as old as Lester's daughter, Jane, and implicitly mitigates the statement that Lester falls in love with Angela. The adverb *aufßerdem* (in addition) at word 77 introduces another example from the film that supports Catharina's contention that the film is ridiculous, specifically, the character of Ricky's father, whose appraisal as *komisch* (strange) is downscaled with the adjective *etwas* (somewhat) at word 84. In line 7 at word 91, Catharina uses the subjunctive I mood of the verb *to be* in German to report the thoughts of Ricky's father and thus simultaneously distances herself from the statement that Ricky is gay. The phrase *igendwie alles ein bisschen komisch* (somehow everything [is] a little bit strange) in line 8 echoes the use of *komisch* (strange) at word 85 as well as the use of *ein bisschen* (a little bit) at word 25 and therefore reinforces these previously expressed opinions. The adverb *natürlich* (naturally) in line 9 at word 109 intensifies Catharina's opinion that drugs form an integral part of the film's plot. The phrase *auch in diesem Film* (also in this movie) anaphorically refers to the previously discussed film *Nach fünf in Urwald* and intensifies Anke and Catharina's statement in e-mail 14, lines 1–4 that this movie inappropriately depicts drug use as something normal. The particle *mal* at word 116 downtones the gravity of Catharina's commentary and thus serves to mitigate her commitment to her statements. She also mitigates the idea that the film reflects reality with the adverbial phrase *nicht so sehr* (not too much). Finally, Catharina further mitigates her engagement with this final proposition by using a coordinating conjunction to introduce a clause in which she asks Eric for his opinion. Unfortunately, for all parties concerned, Eric had already disengaged from the partnership at the time that this message was sent, such that the softer linguistic positioning of the writer (Catharina) achieved in this e-mail was most likely lost on him.

## DATA: ANALYSIS IN AGGREGATION

### Attitude

A numerical summary of Anke/Catharina and Eric's total appraisals with respect to ATTITUDE is presented in Table 1. In the first horizontal quadrant of Table 1, overall attitudinal rates are given. Then they are broken down into positive and negative valuations for all attitudinal categories. In the remaining three horizontal quadrants, appraisal rates are given for the individual subcomponents of this category: AFFECT, JUDGMENT, and APPRECIATION. In each case, combined data for both the positive and negative poles are presented first and then the results for each pole is given individually. For both Anke/Catharina and Eric, raw numerical counts for the number of intervening words between each appraisal are given in the first vertical data column. These data were calculated by dividing the total number of words written by a particular side of the partnership by the number of appraisals in a given category. In the second vertical data column for each side of the partnership, the rate of appraisals per 100 words for a particular category is reported. Since Anke/Catharina and Eric produced differing amounts of telecollaborative discourse over the course of their correspondence, the frequency of their appraisals needs to be relativized according to an absolute value for the purposes of revelatory comparison (see Gee, 1999, p. 133, for an identical analytical move).

Table 1. Summary of Attitudinal Appraisal

	Anke/Catharina		Eric	
	word interval between appraisals	rate per 100 words	word interval between appraisals	rate per 100 words
Total attitudinal appraisal	26	3.85	29	3.44
Positive attitudinal appraisal	60	1.67	47	2.13
Negative attitudinal appraisal	46	2.17	73	1.37
Total affective appraisal	91	1.10	115	0.87
Positive affect	138	0.72	146	0.68
Negative affect	268	0.37	535	0.19
Total judgmental appraisal	61	1.64	85	1.18
Positive judgment	252	0.40	178	0.56
Negative judgment	81	1.23	161	0.62
Total appreciative appraisal	89	1.12	70	1.43
Positive appreciation	179	0.56	115	0.87
Negative appreciation	179	0.56	178	0.56

Based on these results, Anke/Catharina and Eric appear quite similar in their rates of appraisal for all categories over the course of their e-mail correspondence, 3.85 and 3.44 appraisals per 100 words, respectively. However, marked differences in their relative rates of appraisal become clear when one considers positive and negative appraisals separately. Anke and Catharina make 1.67 positive appraisals per 100 words (e.g., *e-mail 1*, line 22, *Catharina is really good looking, always dressed in fancy cloth, but no skirts.*) in comparison to 2.13 positive appraisals per 100 words for Eric. The results are nearly the opposite for negative appraisal (e.g., *e-mail 18*, line 3, *we are not very much impressed with your work*): 2.17 and 1.37, respectively. Anke/Catharina and Eric have nearly the same rate of positive affective appraisal at 0.72 and 0.68 evaluations per 100 words, respectively (e.g., *e-mail 6*, line 23, *I loved Pulp Fiction...*; *e-mail 2*, line 2, *I am glad you liked our homepage...*), while Anke/Catharina's negative affective appraisal out-strips Eric's rate by nearly 2 to 1.

The biggest difference is seen in the rates of negative judgment (e.g., *e-mail 16*, lines 8-9, *We can't understand you actually liked American Beauty*), where Anke/Catharina out-perform Eric by a margin of 2 to 1. On the whole, Anke/Catharina make 41% of their total judgments in the category of +/- *propriety*. These empirical details of the interaction appear to confirm Byrnes' (1986, p. 201) suggestion that in German conversational style, as opposed to American, speakers tend to place greater emphasis on the information-conveying function of language, an orientation which is concerned more rather than less with facts and truth-values. These truth values, Byrnes speculates, are derived from "social norms which are more amenable to evaluations of right and wrong, or at least to evaluations of propriety or impropriety" (p. 201). While Eric makes positive appreciative evaluations about 1.5 times as frequently as Anke and Catharina (e.g., *e-mail 2*, line 3, *Your english is very impressive*), their rates of negative appreciation are equal (e.g., *e-mail 15*, line 4, *Also, wir finden den Film ein bisschen lächerlich...*).

These already marked differences between Anke/Catharina and Eric become even sharper if one compares what it is they are appraising with their evaluative comments. White (1998) notes that by "tracking the broad social type of the human participants, the manner of their identification in the text and the nature of the evaluations and positionings applied to those participants, it becomes possible to develop a profile of the readerships that a text constructs for itself and the nature of the relationship it seeks to establish with those readerships" (p. 117). In these data, Anke and Catharina negatively evaluate Eric or Eric's work on 18 occasions (e.g., *e-mail 18*, lines 25-6, ... *and Eric, if this [writing two e-mails per week] is too much for you, you might have thought about it before taking the course*), while Eric never

negatively evaluates Anke or Catharina or their work. In fact, Eric positively evaluates them or their work 12 times (e.g., [e-mail 7](#), lines 17-8, *I think it's really amusing that the racial problems in the movie "Shaft" reminded you of the racial problems in "if you come softly: "That's very perceptive of you. : )*), while they positively evaluate Eric or his work only three times (e.g., [e-mail 19](#), lines 3-4, ...*wir wollten dir noch einen kurzen Brief schreiben und sagen, dass uns die Web-Page sehr gut gefallen hat.* ). The placement of these three appraisals is critical. One occurs in the opening line of their first e-mail to him when they stated that it was "interesting" to read his Web page, whereas the other two occur in their last e-mail to him ([e-mail 19](#)), which was written approximately three weeks after Eric had discontinued his correspondence with them. Furthermore, Eric negatively appraises his own behavior or ability in comparison to Anke and Catharina's more superior behavior or ability, from his perspective, on four occasions (e.g., [e-mail 2](#), lines 3-4, *Your english is very impressive. My german is not nearly that good so your probably gonna have a lot of errors to correct*). Thus, one might interpret Eric's self-deprecating evaluations as politeness strategies with regard to Anke and Catharina's positive (and, in this particular case, also negative) face. Anke and Catharina also engage in self-deprecating appraisals of their own abilities and behavior (e.g., [e-mail 1](#), line 26, *I'm the typer for today; not that I'm better than her, with my two fingers search system of typing*); however, some of their negative self-appraisals are actually designed to increase their own positive face. For example, throughout the correspondence, Anke, in particular, emphasizes that she is not a typical girl/student ([e-mail 6](#), lines 11-15, 53-54; [e-mail 14](#), lines 3-7). Because she explicitly uses the terms "not normal" and "not typical," these appraisals are tallied as *social esteem: normality* in Martin's (2000, p. 156) coding scheme. However, in Anke and Catharina's particular discursive sub-community, they are using the characterization "not normal" positively, as it distinguishes them from other university students who engage in the "normal," but, from their perspectives, indecorous behavior of taking drugs and drinking alcohol.

### Graduation

Anke/Catharina and Eric have similar rates of upscaling evaluations at 1.51 and 1.69 times per 100 words, respectively. Anke/Catharina upscale their evaluations three times as much as they downscale them, while Eric upscales his evaluation 5.5 times as often as he downscales them (see House & Kasper, 1981). Again, it is important to note what it is that Anke/Catharina and Eric are upscaling and downscaling. In these data, Anke and Catharina upscale negative evaluations 1.7 times as frequently as they upscale positive ones (41 to 24 occurrences; e.g., [e-mail 16](#), lines 8-9, *Well they spoke about sexuality and life an so one but in such a boring way*). Eric, on the other hand, upscales positive evaluations 1.6 times as often as he upscales negative evaluations (17 to 10 occurrences; e.g., [e-mail 5](#), line 3, *Wow! That was a really long letter you sent me Anke*).

### Epistemic Modality

In [Table 2](#) below I provide a comparative look at Anke/Catharina and Eric's use of intensifiers and mitigators in expressions of epistemic modality.

Table 2. Number and Types of Epistemic Modality per E-mail per Author

	Anke/Catharina				Eric			
	Intensification			Mitigation	Intensification			Mitigation
	Lexical Absolute	Categorical Assertion	Other Intensif.		Lexical Absolute	Categorical Assertion	Other Intensif.	
1	8	3	4	14				
2					0	1	1	2
3	0	0	0	0				
4	8	4	14	18				
5					1	0	0	2
6	5	13	6	17				
7					2	1	1	7
8	1	2	3	11				
9	0	4	1	4				
10					2	5	2	13
11	2	12	5	7				
12					7	2	1	4
13					0	6	0	5
14	2	5	0	5				
15	1	1	3	8				
16	2	5	4	5				
17	1	9	3	5				
18	5	11	4	5				
19	0	0	1	1				
Subtotals	35	69	48	100	12	15	5	33
Word Interval	122	62	89	43	134	107	321	49
Rate/100 Words	0.82	1.61	1.12	2.33	0.75	0.93	0.31	2.04
Subtotals	152			100	32			33
Word Interval	28			43	50			49
Rate/100 Words	3.57			2.33	2.00			2.04
Totals	251				65			
Word Interval	17.1				24.7			
Rate/100 Words	5.85				4.05			

These data reveal several important trends. First, Anke/Catharina use intensification approximately 1.5 times more frequently than Eric does (see House & Kasper, 1981). In contrast, their rates of mitigation are quite similar at 2.33 and 2.04 times per 100 words, respectively. Notably, Anke and Catharina outnumber Eric in their use of categorical assertions by a margin of nearly 2 to 1 and they outscore him in their use of other types of intensification by almost 4 to 1. In other words, Anke and Catharina tend to emphasize rather than hedge their commitment to the truth of the statements they make. Second, Anke and Catharina's use of mitigators appears to decrease in density per e-mail over time (note the abrupt drop off at e-mail 9), while Eric's use of mitigators appears to increase in density over time (see e-mail 7). On the face of things, these data would appear to suggest that Anke/Catharina and Eric move in opposite directions with respect to the development of IC in telecollaboration, at least to the extent that they use

intensifiers in expressions of epistemic modality and to the degree that these uses can be interpreted as an index of intercultural learning.

As we have seen in [example 10](#), however, there are other, language-specific linguistic means and patterns (e.g., modal particles, clause-external mitigators, subjunctive I, and cataphoric *es*-constructions) that may be used by speakers of German to both mitigate and intensify their engagement with specific opinions. Because some of these devices are not represented (to a similar degree) in Eric's first language, they may not be as salient to him as other types of epistemic modality, and, therefore, he may be less able to apprehend the full impact of Anke/Catharina's use of epistemic modality. On the other hand, they may occur at points in the e-mail partnership where their effects are lost on Eric either because he has already disengaged from the correspondence (e.g., the modal particles in Catharina's [e-mail 15](#)) or because he has already been positioned by Anke/Catharina as a particular type of partner through their systematic use of particular appraisal patterns.

## DISCUSSION

In this section, I discuss the linguistic features and patterns of Anke/Catharina and Eric's 7-week e-mail correspondence with respect to the five curricular objectives and learner behaviors that Byram (1997, p. 51) associates with the attitudes component of his model of IC.

### **A Willingness to Seek Out Interaction with the Other in a Relationship of Equality**

One might argue that Eric does not seek out interaction with the other because he does not write to his partners outside of class time. This tendency is reflected in the number and frequency of his messages (see [Table 2](#)). Anke and Catharina, on the other hand, follow the 2-e-mails-per-week-rule established at the outset of the partnership, even though this may cause some inconvenience for them since their *Proseminar* only meets once a week, they do not have computers at home, and computer access at their institution is quite limited by American standards. In a post-semester telecollaborative survey, Anke and Catharina related that they sometimes paid US \$5.00/hour at a local Internet café in order to e-mail Eric. On the other hand, Eric may not perceive himself to be in a relationship of linguistic equality after he learns that Anke finds the juvenile novels to be such easy reading. Furthermore, Anke and Catharina may doubt the equality of the partnership in terms of Eric's performance as a telecollaborative partner. They negatively evaluate Eric or his work 18 times, whereas he never negatively evaluates them or their work. On the contrary, he positively evaluates them or their work 12 times, whereas they positively evaluate him or his work three times.

### **A Genuine Interest in the Other's Point of View**

Semantically, Anke and Catharina express interest in Eric's point of view and this is evidenced by their frequent e-mail messages, the long, personal survey that Anke sent Eric in [e-mail 4](#), and Anke's comments on a post-telecollaboration survey where she stated explicitly that she was disappointed that Eric did not answer the "cool-or-scared" question because she really would have liked to compare American and Canadian families on this issue. Syntactically, however, Anke and Catharina frequently choose question types that allow Eric very little responsive space or that force him into a conversational role in which American norms are flouted (see also [e-mail 16](#), lines 6-7). At two points in the course of the correspondence, Eric actually uses the word *curious* when asking Anke and Catharina a question ([e-mail 7](#), line 30; [e-mail 12](#), line 13), thus echoing Byram's (1997, p. 34) prerequisite of attitudes of curiosity and openness for the development of IC.



### **A Readiness to Interrogate the Value Systems and Assumptions Behind One's Own Cultural Practices**

In **e-mail 10**, Eric reconsiders his previous position that Disney is morally upright, although, in the end, he does return to his initial, positive evaluation of Disney as an American cultural icon. Anke certainly interrogates the practices of drug use among German youth; indeed, she states her opposition to drug and alcohol use among German youth quite vehemently. However, she transfers her entrenched opposition of this social practice to the American cultural context and it appears to hinder her from understanding the film *American Beauty* (1999) in a more symbolic or ironic sense. In other words, she does not see the portrayal of teenage drug use in the movie as a potential critique of American society, something that would be in line with her own viewpoints. Linguistically, Anke and Catharina's use of mitigation appears to decrease over time, whereas Eric's remains about the same. One might interpret this to indicate that Anke and Catharina become more committed to the truth values of their own propositions over time rather than less committed. In other words, their electronically mediated interaction with Eric served to re-inforce (not de-stabilize) stereotypes that they held of Americans.

### **A Readiness to Examine One's Own Affective Reactions to the Experience of Otherness and to Cope With These Reactions**

Eric's refusal to communicate with Anke and Catharina after **e-mail 13** and his repeated refusal to be interviewed by researchers concerning his experiences in the partnership may indicate that Eric had a low tolerance for the experience of otherness. Elizabeth, Eric's American partner during phase 3 of the partnership, indicated in a post-telecollaboration focus group interview that Eric was angry about the way that his German partners had corresponded with him and was just waiting for the semester to end. Anke and Catharina, on the other hand, continue to express interest in Eric's well-being in the partnership (through their use of boullonaic modality), even though he was not performing up to their expectations. Their frustration may have resulted in verbal aggression in several messages; however, they did seem to be able to return to a more even tone in their final e-mails and even compliment Eric on his work on Web Project II.

### **A Readiness to Engage With Culturally Appropriate Verbal Communication in the Corresponding Contexts**

Anke, Catharina, and Eric were unable to establish and maintain functional social relationships in telecollaboration because they did not have adequate knowledge of culture-specific patterns of interaction in their partner's language (e.g., the performance of critique, the discussion of taboo topics, the degree of directness in conversational discourse, linguistic devices for the mitigation of opinions). They were unable to identify and appropriately assign meaning to these features of their partners' discourse. Crucially, the text-only medium of e-mail did not allow them access to additional non-verbal cues that might have aided them in the identification and interpretation of these same interactional conventions. Furthermore, Anke/Catharina and Eric had different levels of experience with the interactional norms of computer-mediated discourse communities. These varying levels of experience led to disparate interpretations of the electronic signs that they encountered in the course of the partnership (e.g., capitalization, the ephemerality of e-text) and this, in turn, resulted in social misunderstandings.

The patterns of appraisal uncovered in these data find corroboration in the work of House (1997, 2000), House and Kasper (1981), and Wierzbicka (1998) on German-American contrastive pragmatics (see also Clyne, 1998; see Rings, 1995, for anecdotal corroboration). House (1997) proposes five continua of interactional patterns for German-American encounters (a) directness -- indirectness; (b) orientation toward the self -- orientation toward the other; (c) orientation toward content -- orientation toward the addressee; (d) explicitness -- implicitness; and (e) ad hoc formulations -- linguistic routines. In each case, House (1997, p. 8) argues that speakers of German tend to fall toward the left ends of these continua, whereas speakers of English tend to fall toward the right. Thus, Anke and Catharina's tendency toward

negative appraisal, categorical assertions, and intensification may be reflective of broader German interactional patterns of directness, explicitness, and an orientation toward the self. Eric's patterns of self-deprecating judgments, positive appreciation, and the upscaling of positive evaluations may index broader English communicational patterns of indirectness and implicitness (see also Fandrych & Graefen, 2002; Trikkonen-Condit, 1996).

At first blush, one might interpret the results of this study to indicate that, in the case of German-American telecollaboration, one needs to teach German partners not to make so many negative judgments, to decrease their use of categorical assertions, or to modify the ways in which they use intensification and mitigation in expressions of epistemic modality. Similarly, one might argue that American learners need to be told to express their opinions more directly through the increased use of judgment and intensification in order to build positive face in conversation with German-speaking partners. Indeed, Koithoff (1989, p. 454) appears to take this tack when she writes that

*...sich deutsche Kinder meines Bekanntenkreises in amerikanischen Schulen schnell sehr wohl fühlen, während das umgekehrt nicht zutrifft. Die deutschen Kinder profitieren von der positiven Atmosphäre, die u. a. dadurch zustande kommt, daß sie mehr positives Feedback bekommen und weniger negatives. Aus interkulturellen Kommunikationsvergleichen können wir auch lernen und uns Anregungen für Veränderungen holen.*

[...the children of my German friends quickly feel at ease in American schools, while the reverse situation is not the case. The German children benefit from the positive atmosphere that, among other things, comes about because they receive more positive and less negative feedback. We can learn from intercultural comparisons of communication and see in them an impetus for change.]

Byrnes (1986), however, questions the appropriateness of changing one's conversational style, even when speaking in the second language:

*...speakers [from Germany] seem ... to be known and not loved by many for their inflexibility, at times combative directness, and domineering way of always appearing certain they are right in a discussion. Should [for example] a Japanese teacher of German really teach students to emulate such behavior which is arguably less than desirable and which, in addition, is contrary to Japanese cultural norms? (p. 190)*

Later, in the same article, Byrnes states that any "suggestions that hint at changing individual behavior dangerously disregard the interconnectedness of the [communicative] system" and the fact that conversational style typically is the result of early socialization processes and therefore quite resistant to change (p. 204). Instead, she suggests that it is the task of the foreign language teacher "to foster ways that enhance our ability to be aware of each other's style, although we cannot change the other's style nor do much to alter our own" (Byrnes, p. 204).

These arguments seem to indicate that Germans should not decrease the number of negative judgments when communicating with Americans in German, if this linguistic feature is representative of conventional patterns of verbal interaction in German. Instead, the American learners need to become aware of the existence and, most importantly, the meaning of the pattern. Similarly, Americans should not necessarily alter patterns of argumentation and consensus when communicating with Germans in English, but they need to become aware of the situatedness of their interactional styles and the impact that they may have on their evaluation by their German-speaking interlocutors. One should also not assume that Americans have de-centered more than Germans because they hedge their commitment to the truth value of propositions more than Germans do, if these patterns are characteristic of conversational norms in the respective languages in general. Instead, one would need to demonstrate a change in language use over time within a particular community of speakers relative to that group's participation in the telecollaborative partnership. When writing in German, however, American learners should be able

employ German patterns of communication, and vice versa for German learners of English. For example, American learners of German should be able to use modal particles in order intensity and mitigate their engagement with the truth value of their utterances. Germans should be aware that they need to be less direct and to employ fewer negative appraisals in order to exhibit typically American patterns of interaction. These discourse patterns are integral components of sociolinguistic and interactional competence in German and English, respectively, and the speaker who is unaware of their operation will suffer the interactional consequences.

On a final note, I would like to return to the notion of linguistic hybridity that was raised in relation to Anke and Catharina's performance of critique in their opening e-mail to Eric in the section [Data: Analysis in Sequence](#). The line of argumentation presented in the preceding paragraph seems to be predicated on the notion of the monolingual native speaker and on the idea that the first language is (or should be) insulated from the FL in the mind of the learner. Sociolinguistic research (e.g., Edwards, 1994), however, has shown that multilingualism, not monolingualism, is the world-wide norm, while recent reconceptualizations of the learner as a multicompetent speaker of both the first language and the FL (instead of as a deficient communicator in the FL) have revealed that the first language and the FL are in an intimate and illuminating interrelationship in both psycholinguistic (Cook, 1991, 1992) and affective regards (Belz, 2002a). For example, Belz (2002c, pp. 220-225) has shown that Yen, a Japanese and English-speaking learner of German, uses both English and German in an experimental text in order to construct metalingual jokes, reflect on the polysemy of German modal particles, and to clarify the socio-pragmatic ambiguity of certain politeness markers in ways that are pleasurable to her. It seems, therefore, that linguistic hybridity does not necessarily compromise the integrity of either linguistic system, but may reflect, instead, a natural and emerging state of multicompetence, that is, the state of mind with two (or more) languages, in the learner. It should be made clear, however, that the type of linguistic hybridity under consideration is not the result of an uniformed and haphazard juxtaposition of the norms of two linguistic systems. On the contrary, it is a creative act that is rooted in a conscious and reasoned variation on a previously mastered FL (or first language) linguistic norm. Thus, Anke and Catharina's hybrid performance of critique in [e-mail 1](#) may be enabled by a sense that strictly German patterns of directness are likely to offend an American interlocutor. Similarly, Eric can only understand the hybrid and thus super-sensitive nature of their corrections if he is first aware of the conventional patterns of directness in German conversation. The quasi-anonymity and temporal disenfranchisement of the (asynchronous) electronic medium may contribute to the occurrence of linguistic acts of hybridity that would not be possible typically to the same degree in face-to-face interactions. In the end, becoming interculturally competent may be not so much about adopting the words and interactional norms of the other in his or her language as it is about performing judicious acts of linguistic hybridity in a broadened discursive space.

## CONCLUSION

Research on the role of the teacher in computer-mediated FLL&T has suggested that he or she is reconfigured as more of a "guide on the side" rather than a "sage on the stage" in the virtual learning environment (Fitch cited in Tella, 1996, p. 6; see also Teles, 2000; Warschauer, 1997). And, indeed, some administrators have interpreted these observations as a legitimization of a decrease in student-teacher contact hours in favor of an increase in student-computer contact hours in the FL classroom. The findings of this study seem to indicate, however, that the importance (but not necessarily the prominence) of the teacher and, ultimately, teacher education programs (e.g., Cain & Zarate, 1996) increases rather than diminishes in Internet-mediated intercultural foreign language education precisely because of the electronic nature of the discourse. In contrast to conventional face-to-face classroom-based learning, the teacher in telecollaboration must be educated to discern, identify, explain, and model culturally-contingent patterns of interaction in the absence of paralinguistic meaning signals (see also Belz &

Müller-Hartmann, 2003, p. 86; Müller-Hartmann, 1999), otherwise it may be the case that civilizations ultimately do clash -- in the empirical details of their computer-mediated talk.

## NOTES

1. This research is funded by a United States Department of Education International Research and Studies Program Grant (CFDA No. 84.017A). The author is a research associate on this grant and the instructor of the experimental German section in the United States. The instructor of the Teacher Education *Proseminar* in Germany is Andreas Müller-Hartmann.
2. The linguistic formulation of the goals of telecollaboration as the development of "linguistic" competence and "intercultural" competence does not imply in any way that linguistic and cultural competencies are separate and discrete ontological entities (see Belz & Müller-Hartmann, 2003, for an in-depth discussion and explication of "linguaculture" [Agar, 1994, p. 60] in telecollaboration); it merely serves (a) to echo the goals of telecollaborative language study as reported in the published literature and (b) to emphasize the author's experience that issues of culture (both big *C* and little *c* as well as culturally appropriate ways of interacting in the FL) assume high focus for students in telecollaborative partnerships. The saliency of culture for students in such configurations is related to the computer-mediated opportunity for prolonged intercultural communication with expert speakers of the languaculture under study.
3. It should be noted that Edmondson and House (1998) have argued that intercultural competence is a superfluous construct in FL&T on precisely these grounds (see also House, 1997).
4. Byram's (1997) dichotomization of the language learner into the "tourist" and the "sojourner" tends to downplay the important fact that not all language learners are in the privileged position of travelers to foreign lands. Much second language learning takes place under conditions of occupation, invasion, colonization, slavery, economic and social marginalization, and more recently, cultural imperialism via telecommunications technologies, without the privilege of volitional travel. Since language learning is eminently context-dependent, as Byram repeatedly notes, these configurations will influence the development of intercultural competence, the methods by which it is assessed, and indeed, its societal valuation.
5. The ability to pose appropriate and relevant questions and a readiness to answer questions asked are two linguistically based markers of the skill of discovery (Byram, 1997, p. 62). In this partnership, Anke/Catharina's rate of questioning was 0.79/100 words, while Eric's rate was 1.92/100 words. However, Eric answered only 18% of the questions his partners asked him, while they answered 56% of the questions that he posed. Space considerations prevent a detailed analysis of the questioning patterns in this exchange, but O'Dowd (2003, this issue) and Belz (2001, p. 223) point toward the relationship between questioning techniques and the functionality of particular learner dyads in telecollaboration.
6. It is suggested that the reader familiarize himself or herself with it at this time, since the subsequent discussion assumes good knowledge of it.
7. Although it is true that adverbs are not capitalized in German and therefore *manchmal* (sometimes) should not be capitalized, lack of capitalization is one of the characteristic features of electronic discourse (Crystal, 2001, pp. 164–165). As I have shown elsewhere (Belz, 2001, pp. 225-227; 2002b, p. 71), Anke and Catharina repeatedly mark themselves as inexperienced users of computer-mediated communication, while Eric is a highly proficient user of the same medium. Thus, Anke/Catharina's characterization of a capitalization error as "a big mistake" may be met with bemusement on the part of Eric.
8. With the phrase "more of an American kind of thing" in line 2, Eric makes use of the category FOCUS in the subsystem of GRADUATION. White (1998, p. 109) explains that linguistic resources in the category

of FOCUS serve to sharpen or soften the degree to which particular elements are viewed as prototypical members of certain categories (see Lakoff, 1987; Rosch, 1973; and Taylor, 1995). In this case, the adverb *more* serves to sharpen the degree to which "school spirit" is seen as a member of the category "American kinds of things." In may be the case that the semantic resources of FOCUS are particularly indicative of processes of decentering. For example, Eric seems to indicate here through his use of this phrase that he has re-evaluated his view on the universality of school spirit. Due to space considerations a detailed analysis of FOCUS was not possible here (see, however, Belz, 2003).

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**APPENDIX A****E-mail 1 (October 19, 2000)**

- 1 Dear ERIC
- 2
- 3 It was very interesting reading your homepage and getting to know you a little bit through it.
- 4
- 5 This week it was the beginning of the semester and today our first class of English started.
- 6 Here at the Justus-Liebig-University most of the classes are really crowded. Like our English-
- 7 class: You have a choice of signing up in a list during the summerbreak to make sure you get in
- 8 the course of your choice, but my friend and I couldn't decide what courses to take until the last
- 9 minutes, so we were not on that special entry list. Luckily we got still accepted (about 15 people
- 10 had to leave) and now we are here to introduce ourselves to you.
- 11
- 12 Well, lets start with my friend.
- 13 Her name is CATHARINA, called CATHARINA or from me OLGA. She is sitting right next to
- 14 me. We are doing this project in team work, because firstly there weren't enough partners of
- 15 yours to match with the number of students from us and secondly because we are such good pals
- 16 that we usually try to do everything together.
- 17 She is 21 years old, lives near Giessen in LA, yes seriously in LA - Langenaubach . It is quite a
- 18 small village with about 2000 inhabitants and there is not much to do. That's why she mostly
- 19 hangs out in the surrounding with friends, having fun, laughing, watching TV, doing some
- 20 sports. She is now trying to convince me to tell you that she plays squash, well, I'm not really
- 21 convinced, I guess she is rather trying to hide from the ball. JUST KIDDING
- 22 CATHARINA is really good looking, always dressed in fancy cloth, but no skirts. Oh, she has
- 23 something hardly anyone has, it's really cool!
- 24 She sees everything twice, two boys instead of one, two bottles of Coke, not one, cool, ey/h?!?
- 25
- 26 I'm the typer for today, not that I'm better than her, with my two fingers search system of typing.
- 27 My name is ANKE, I'm the same age as CATHARINA, 21 but we mostly kinda behave younger.
- 28 We love to laugh, to giggle, to have fun - everywhere we go, so mostly we are the loudest out of
- 29 class and the wildest on the street, the fastest in the car.
- 30 ...the loudest out of class... you asked us what we study. We both study Math and English to be
- 31 a teacher on high-school and we are in the 3rd semester, that means the 2nd year.
- 32 University is not that hard over here, we mostly enjoy it.
- 33
- 34 Wir müssen jetzt in Deutsch weiterschreiben und sind leider noch nicht zum Verbessern unserer
- 35 Fehler gekommen, da die Zeit schon rum ist.
- 36 Sorry, das nächste Mal gibt es mehr in Deutsch.
- 37 Nochmal zu mir, ich höre auch geme Musik und versuche immer wieder verschiedene
- 38 Musikinstrumente(Gitarre, Cello, Klavier) auszuprobieren und sonst habe ich wieder mit
- 39 Kampfsport angefangen- Shotokan Karate, was ich schonmal mit 14 gemacht habe.
- 40 *(Now we have to continue writing in German and unfortunately we didn't get to correcting our*
- 41 *mistakes because the time is up. Sorry, next time there'll be more in German. Back to me, I also*
- 42 *like to listen to music and I'm always trying out different musical instruments (guitar, cello,*
- 43 *piano) and otherwise I've taken up contact sports again - Shotokan karate, something that I did*
- 44 *when I 14.)*
- 45
- 46 Ach, wir sollen ja noch einige Fehler von dir korrigieren, also uns ist nur ein grosser Fehler
- 47 aufgefallen. In deiner Web-page hast du gleich am Anfang in einem Satz "we'll's Manchnal"

48 geschrieben, das gibt es in dieser Reihenfolge nicht, es heisst "aber manchmal" und du weißt  
 49 bestimmt selbst, dass man im Deutschen in einem Satz nur Nomen, Substantive gross schreibt.  
 50 Aber mach dir keine Sorgen, wir haben bestimmt auch viele Fehler gemacht.  
 51 *(Oh, we're supposed to correct some of your mistakes, so we noticed only one big mistake. On*  
 52 *your web-page you wrote "weil's Manchmal" right at the beginning of a sentence, that doesn't*  
 53 *occur in this order, it should be "aber manchmal" and you certainly know yourself that in*  
 54 *German one only capitalizes nouns, nouns in a sentence. But don't worry, we certainly made a*  
 55 *lot of mistakes, too.)*  
 56  
 57 Mehr das nächste Mal (*more next time*)  
 58  
 59 Bis dann (*until then*)  
 60  
 61 ANKE und CATHARINA

**E-mail 2 (October 19, 2000)**

1 Hello ANKE und CATHARINA,  
 2 It's nice to hear from you for the first time. I am glad you liked our home page, I spent a  
 3 lot of time working on it! Your english is very impressive. My german is not nearly that good so  
 4 you're probably gonna have a lot of errors to correct. I actually had a hard time finding many  
 5 errors in your e-mail. I guess I will begin by correcting a few of your english errors.  
 6  
 7 Error: "This week it was the beginning of the semester..."  
 8 Correction: "This week was the beginning of the semester..."  
 9  
 10 Error: "We both study Math and English to be a teacher on high-school..."  
 11 Correction: "We both study Math and English to be high school teachers..."  
 12  
 13 Jetzt werde ich ein bisschen auf Deutsch sprechen. Habt ihr unsere ganzen Webseite gesehen? Es  
 14 gibt viel Information ueber unsere Lebens und Uni. Habt ihr die Bilder von unsere ganzen  
 15 Klasse gesehen? Es ist sehr nett. Es steht auf: <http://language.la.psu.edu/ger201/Landkarte.html> .  
 16 Habt ihr Bilder von sich selbst oder die Klasse? Vielleicht kommt ihr die Bilder an unsere Klass  
 17 schauen. Du hast gesagt dass, CATHARINA spielt Squash. Was ist das? Ich weiss nicht ueber  
 18 Squash oder was es ist. Es tut mir leid, aber die Seit fuer unsere Klasse ist um. So muss ich jetzt  
 19 gehen.  
 20 *(Now I will speak [sic] a little in German. Did you see our whole website? There's a lot of*  
 21 *information about our lives and the university. Did you see the pictures of our whole class? It is*  
 22 *very nice. It is here: web address. Do you have pictures of yourself or the class? Maybe you*  
 23 *could show the pictures to our class. You said that Catharina plays squash. What's that? I don't*  
 24 *know anything about squash or what it is. I am sorry but the time for our class is over. So I have*  
 25 *to go.)*  
 26  
 27 Später, (*Later*)  
 28 ERIC

**E-mail 3** (October 26, 2000)

- 1 Hey ERIC,
- 2
- 3 we wrote such a long mail to you this morning, and then ANKE closed the
- 4 program...
- 5 She writes a new message now.
- 6 I just wanted to correct your errors, but for doing this I have to read
- 7 your email again.
- 8 We will correct them next Thursday.
- 9
- 10 Well, you don't know squash?!
- 11 I explain it to you... But in German!
- 12
- 13 Also, Squash ist ein Ballspiel mit einem Schläger... Squashschläger. Man
- 14 ist in einem geschlossenen Raum und schlägt einen kleinen Ball gegen
- 15 eine Wand. Er kommt dann immer wieder zurück... Man kann es entweder zu zweit
- 16 oder allein spielen.
- 17 *(So, squash is a ball game with a racket... a squash racket. You are in an enclosed space and*
- 18 *you hit a small ball against a wall. It keeps coming back at you... You can play it as doubles or*
- 19 *singles.)*
- 20
- 21 That's it.
- 22
- 23 Ciao, bye, tschüss, CATHARINA

**E-mail 4** (October 26, 2000)

- 1 Hi ERIC,
- 2
- 3 after having written you an e-mail for about 45 minutes the whole long
- 4 letter just disappeared. :- ( :- (
- 5
- 6 In it we wanted to tell you about the student-party yesterday night but
- 7 haven't had enough time to do so, so we didn't. (What a sentence!)
- 8 Anyways, we got a task from our teacher, I guess you got the same:
- 9 To talk about literature.
- 10 Well, lets do so:
- 11 I think it is kinda hard to express my thoughts to a person from which I
- 12 have
- 13 only received just one letter. (I know it's no ones fault, we just have to
- 14 little time). I don't really know how you think, what you think... Usually
- 15 I wouldn't tell kinda "strangers" my feelings, even if it is only about a
- 16 book, because it is kinda personal.
- 17 But well, we don't have any other choice, do we?
- 18 We got two books from Mr. Müller-Hartmann last week: "Ben liebt Anna" and
- 19 "If you come softly!" to read through. First I read "Ben liebt Anna", it
- 20 was really easy reading for me, because this book is mainly written for grade
- 21 6 to 8ers.
- 22 After starting "If you come softly", the title seemed quite interesting.
- 23 Looking through the book, I noticed that it can't be that hard either,

- 24 because of the big letters in which it is written. Reading was as I  
 25 thought, quite easy with no vocabulary problems, but still the book kinda  
 26 hit/struck me. (But i didn't really get the title thing.)  
 27 Compared to "Ben and Anna" I could really identify with the main  
 28 characters, even I never had a problem with racial differences. (Here in Giessen  
 29 aren't so many black/colored or whatever the political right declaration of  
 30 people with black skin is, and the Turkey and Russan people kinda already belong  
 31 to us, so that in my group of friends no one would ever care if I had a "not  
 32 German" boy-friend). You know, I used living in Canada as an exchange student and there I  
 33 remembered the situation described in the book - falling in love for the  
 34 first time. I was 15 saw the boy first time in high-school. I became a  
 35 really weird feeling, nowing that I liked him, but not why - the same  
 36 feeling the girl feels in the book,... Except we never made it that far. I  
 37 only knew him for a few weeks, not much talking to eachother, but already  
 38 knowing that I liked that person quite a lot. Than I went on a weekend  
 39 trip to Edmonton and when I came back, Kyle had killed himself.  
 40  
 41 I wonder what the book tries to tell you? For sure it tells you to think  
 42 about racism and that people no matter of their skin color might have  
 43 similar feelings anyway. But what does the end tries to tell you??  
 44 For me, already influenced through that thing that happend in Canada can't  
 45 really imagine of anything other than: try to live in the moment, tell  
 46 people when you like them,...???  
 47 What do you think?? And what does the title tell you?  
 48  
 49 Well, back to "Ben liebt Anna", really cute, but thinking back I have  
 50 never experienced anything like this in my childhood.  
 51 Looking at the language, he really uses interesting expressions, even he  
 52 comes from Hessen (it's a Bundesland, like Pensilvania) where I live and  
 53 through this should use quite similar vocabulary.  
 54 I think you really see that the book was written about 20 years ago.  
 55 If you 'd like any examples please tell me in your reply.  
 56  
 57 Do you know any interesting English books, just for reading and thinking  
 58 at home?  
 59 Have you heard of "the celestrian prophecy", I really liked that book.  
 60  
 61 Ich muss dir ja auch noch etwas in Deutsch schreiben, obwohl meine  
 62 deutsche Schriftsprache am Computer meist schlechter ist als mein Englisch.  
 63 Wir haben deinen Text gelesen und du hattest einige Fehler gemacht.  
 64 CATHARINA verbessert sie dir in ihrer e-mail.  
 65 Wenn ich eine ganze Zeit in Englisch gedacht habe, ist es total schwer für  
 66 mich auf einmal in Deutsch weiter zu schreiben.  
 67 Ach, da fällt mir ein, du wolltest wissen ob wir Fotos von uns haben.  
 68 Momentan noch nicht, aber wir werden uns drumm kümmern. Du hast auch nach  
 69 einem Klassenbild gefragt. Also, bei uns ist das keine Klasse, sondern  
 70 eher ein Kurs. Wir kennen uns alle nicht, kommen aus verschiedenen Städten und  
 71 sehen uns auch nur ein Mal in der Woche für so ca. 80 Minuten.  
 72 Freundschaften werden da eher selten geschlossen, folglich gibt es auch  
 73 kein Bild.  
 74 *(I still have to write you something in German, although my writing in German on the computer*

- 75 is typically worse than my English. We read your text and you made several mistakes. Catharina
- 76 is going to correct them for you in her email. When I have thought in English for a while, it is
- 77 totally hard for me to suddenly continue writing in German. Oh, it occurs to me that you wanted
- 78 to know if we have pictures of ourselves. Right now we don't, but we'll take care of that. You also
- 79 asked about a class picture. Well, our course isn't a class [NB: this is the German word for a
- 80 group of pupils a the elementary or secondary level. Unwittingly, Eric uses it to refer to the
- 81 group of people in his university course, causing some confusion here.] but rather a course. We
- 82 don't know each other, we are from different cities and we see each other only once a week for
- 83 80 minutes. We seldom make friends [with people in our university course], therefore there is
- 84 also no [class] picture.)
- 85
- 86 So unten auf der Seite kommt noch eine kleine Auflistung über meine
- 87 Person, die ich mal von einer Freundin (über sie) zum Zurücksenden bekommen habe,
- 88 kannst sie wenn du Zeit has mir auch zurücksenden mit Angaben über dich.
- 89 (*Below you'll find a little list of information about me, that I once got from a friend to fill out and*
- 90 *send back to her, if you have time you can also fill it out with information about you and send it*
- 91 *back to me.*)
- 92
- 93
- 94
- 95 >NAME: ANKE
- 96 >
- 97 >AGE: 21
- 98 >LIVING ARRANGEMENT: mumm, dad, sis and my dog Alf
- 99 >FAVORITE TV SHOW: Comedy
- 100 >FAVORITE BOARDGAME: its a card game: Skat
- 101 >FAMORITE SMELLS: coffee, my boyfriend (when I have one)
- 102 >PERFUME/COLOGNE: cool waters by Davidoff and ... by Adidas
- 103 >WORST FEELING IN THE WORLD: Lonliness, fear
- 104 >BEST FEELING IN THE WORLD: When you fall in love, to arrive in
- 105 Canada
- 106 >FAVORITE SOUNDTRACK:Hip Hop (right now)
- 107 >WHAT IS THE FIRST THING YOU THINK WHEN YOU WAKE IN THE MORNING?
- 108 What's the
- 109 >time?
- 110 >ROLLAR COASTER - SCARY OR EXCITING? The more scary the more exciting as
- 111 >long as I don't get sick on them.
- 112 >HOW MANY KIDS: 0
- 113 >FUTURE DAUGHTERS NAME:?? might call her "Kyle" as well?? FUTURE SONS NAME:
- 114 >Kyle
- 115 >FAVORITE FOODS:it really depends on my mood CHOCOLATE OR VANILLA?
- 116 >Chocolate all the way
- 117 >DO YOU LIKE TO DRIVE? I DO!!!!
- 118 >DO YOU SLEEP WITH A STUFFED ANIMAL? No
- 119 >STORMS SCARY OR COOL? Cool, it whistles around my house (I live 30m off the
- 120 >ground) WHAT TYPE WAS YOUR FIRST CAR? GM- Opel Senator, 1989 with 100ps
- 121 >IF YOU COULD MEET ONE PERSON DEAD OR ALIVE? J. F. Kennedy
- 122 >FAVORIT ALCHOLIC DRINK? None
- 123 >WHAT IS YOUR ZODIAC SIGN? Cancer
- 124 >WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE POET? I don't have one (No Fear poems)
- 125 >DO YOU EAT THE STEMS OF BROCOLLI? yep

- 126 >IF YOU COULD HAVE ANY JOB YOU WANTED WHAT WOULD IT BE? Scientist or a  
 127 cop  
 128 >IF YOU COULD DYE YOUR HAIR ANY COLOR WHAT WOULD IT BE? I can, but I don't  
 129 >want to HAVE YOU EVER BEEN IN LOVE? I think so  
 130 >IS THE GLASS HALF EMPTY OR HALF FULL? Half full :-> depends on what it's  
 131 >in the glass  
 132 >FAVORITE MOVIE(S):The Crow, Pulp Fiction, Eiskalte Engel ARE YOU A RIGHTY,  
 133 >LEFTY OR AMIBIODEXTROUS? Lefty  
 134 >DO YOU TYPE WITH YOUR FINGERS ON THE RIGHT KEYS? I try  
 135 >WHAT'S UNDER YOUR BED? Blankets  
 136 >FAVORITE SPORT TO WATCH? HOCKEY and Material Arts  
 137 >BEST VACATION: what does it mean? Like holidays? Canada  
 138 >PLACE YOU MOST WANT TO VISIT: after being a stewardess (visited lots of  
 139 >places) maybe Japan, Thailand,Laos SAY ONE NICE THING ABOUT THE PERSON WHO  
 140 >SENT THIS TO YOU: I miss our parties from 1995/96 and the summer of 99 (  
 141 >Cowboy, cars and guys)  
 142 Used to be my host sister  
 143 >PERSON YOU SENT THIS TO WHO IS MOST LIKELY TO RESPOND: I'm not even sure  
 144 >whome I'm going to send this to  
 145 >PERSON YOU SENT THIS TO LEAST LIKELY TO RESPOND: Frank, cause he doesn't  
 146 >like things like this (quite good friend of mine)  
 147 >  
 148 >  
 149 >Now you know a bit more about me and my interests. Hope you liked it.  
 150  
 151 Take care  
 152 Hope to here from you soon  
 153  
 154 ANKE  
 155  
 156 P.S. You can also use my hotmail adress to send me any other e-mails  
 157 [XXX@XXX](mailto:XXX@XXX)  
 158 Are you interested in some funny forwarded e-mail-junk :-> like pictures  
 159 or jokes??  
 160 >  
 161 >

**E-mail 5** (October 26, 2000)

- 1 Hey ANKE and CATHARINA,  
 2  
 3 Wow! that was a really long letter you sent me ANKE. And the profile was very interesting. I  
 4 will try and fill that out for myself and send it back to you so you can know a little more about  
 5 me. Perhaps then it will be easier for us to discuss our personal feelings about the books we read  
 6 since you'll get to know me a little better.  
 7 One mistake that i noticed you made in translating was when you said "political right." I  
 8 understood what you meant, but in English this term is "politically correct." Wie sagt man das  
 9 wort auf Deutsch? (*How do you say that word in German?*)  
 10  
 11 CATHARINA... Danke fuer ihre erklaren von Squash. Es klingt wie ein sehr spass Spiel.  
 12 (*Catharina... thank you for your explanation about squash. It sounds like a really fun game.*)



13  
 14 OK, jetzt soll ich ein bisschen ueber "Ben liebt Anna" und "if you come softly" sprechen. Ich  
 15 meine dass "if you come softly" zu kontrovers fuer kleine kinder ist. Als ich ein kleine Kind  
 16 war, habe ich keine kontrovers Maerchen gelesen. Ich war zu jung zu die Konzepte verstehen.  
 17 Aber jetzt koennte ich sie verstehen. Ich meine dass "if you come softly" ist nicht ein typisch  
 18 american Maerchen, es ist zu kontrovers. Ich finde "ben liebt anna" sehr interessant. Es war ein  
 19 bisschen schwer fuer mich zu lesen, weil ich viel woerter in dem Worterbuch finden um zu  
 20 verstehen.  
 21 *(OK, now I should speak a lite bit about "Ben loves Anna" and "if you come softly". I think that*  
 22 *"if you come softly" is too controversial for little kids. When I was a child, I didn't read any*  
 23 *controversial fairy tales [sic]. I was too young to understand the concepts. But now I can*  
 24 *understand them. I think that "if you come softly" is not a typical american fairy tale [sic]*  
 25 *because it is too controversial. I think that "ben loves anna" is very interesting. It was a little bit*  
 26 *difficult for me to read because I had to find a lot of words in the dictionary in order to*  
 27 *understand it.)*  
 28  
 29 Es tut mir leid, aber die zeit ist um fuer meine Klasse. *(I am sorry but the time for our class is*  
 30 *over.)*  
 31 spater, *(later)*  
 32 ERIC

**E-mail 6 (October 30, 2000)**

1 Hi ERIC,  
 2  
 3 well we were told to write eachother at least twice a week, so here is my  
 4 second letter to you.  
 5 First an apolloogy (please don't mind my spelling problems). Sorry, haven't  
 6 had any time to look for an aproprate picture, but I'll keep on  
 7 looking.  
 8  
 9 So I think I have written enough about the two books (not really-SMILE)  
 10 so I'll continue to tell you something about my life and through this about  
 11 Germany. The weekend was great. I don't really know how "real students" spent their  
 12 time at weekends, probably learning, drinking, smoking and such, but I'm  
 13 not a typical person. Neither a typical girl (I know how to drive my car and  
 14 how to repair things or built a garden house), nor a typical student (not  
 15 drinking or smoking, hanging out with different people).  
 16 Anyway, Friday I spent with a friend of mine at the movies. Have you seen  
 17 the movie "Shaft" (I believe it was in your theatres probably in February).  
 18 I think the movie was pretty good for an action movie, they never have a  
 19 story or a plot, neither had Shaft, but it had lots of action and thats why I  
 20 watch these kind of movies. Well it had a small story line, the color  
 21 problems, doesn't it remember me of something??? AHH year, the books I  
 22 read. (SMILE)  
 23 What kind of movies do you like? I loved Pulp Fiction, when I was younger  
 24 I liked "the crow" and now my favourite movie is "Eiskalte Engel" and  
 25 "Matrix" well "Blade" was good too, hmm and "8mm". It's not that I only watch  
 26 movies, but with friends it is a not expensive, warm and coasy thing to do. Going  
 27 to movies is pretty expensive in Germany. It costs about 7\$ per person.  
 28

29 Anyway after the movie we went home to my place and looked at pictures I  
 30 made during my visit in Canada and my job as a stuardess. At my house it  
 31 is no problem to bring boys over, my parents really trust me. They even want  
 32 me to bring them over so they know with what kinda people I hang out.  
 33 In Canada I experienced something totally different. My host parents  
 34 slogen was: NO BOYS IN THE HOUSE. They didn't want to be responsible for any  
 35 thing that could happen between boys and girls. They didn't minded me having  
 36 boys as friends, but when they came over only in the living room with an open  
 37 door. It was new for me, cause my parents never had any problems with me  
 38 and a guy in my room with a closed or even locked door. (They even told me  
 39 sometimes to better lock the door, because of my nosy little foster  
 40 brothers that time).  
 41 In Canada I have heard of many family handling the boy-girl thing as my  
 42 host parents did, what about the US? Are your parents cool with these kind  
 43 of things or scared??  
 44

45 Back to my weekend. Saturday I cooked supper with another friend of mine  
 46 at home, was lots of fun, except the eating part. Didn't taste that  
 47 delcouse. After we met a boy I got to know in hospital (last November I fell down a  
 48 wall (6m) and broke my pelvis as well as my right arm twice). Anyways that  
 49 boy lost his leg in a motorcicle crash. We three met and had a real good  
 50 time driving around Giessen, listening to very loud techno and hip-hop  
 51 music talking and singing. We found a nice playground to hang out a bit, taking  
 52 more and acting foolish! wow, we had a blast.  
 53 I see you can notice that I really don't like to do normal stuff every  
 54 day. I don't have a problem going in a pub, but not every day!! Well I don't  
 55 drink at all, that makes me very different here in Germany. So many young  
 56 people see this as their weekend activity.  
 57 Not only drinking, many of my former friends started doing drugs as well.  
 58 I think that is really sad. Drugs as the meaning of your life?? Not my  
 59 meaning. Sunday I visited my cousine near Heidelberg, a really beautiful city  
 60 around 230km south from Giessen. He taught me how to play guitare.  
 61

62 Well gotta go

63  
 64 Hope you enjoy reading my letters

65  
 66 ANKE

**E-mail 7 (October 31, 2000)**

1 Hey ANKE and CATHARINA,  
 2 Thanks for writing me. I would like to reply to all the questions you've asked in your e-mails, but  
 3 first I have to write about the stuff that we are required to talk about.  
 4  
 5 Meine Lehrerin meint dass "Disney hat das deutsche Kulturgut gestohlen, als er die verschiedene  
 6 Märchen wie Aschenputtel und Schneewittchen verfilmt hat." Was meinst du ueber diese Idee?  
 7 Weisst du ueber Disney und was es ist und was es macht? Ich glaube dass Disney die Maerchen  
 8 gestohlen hat und politisch korrekt gemacht. Aber in den USA sind politisch falsch Maerchen  
 9 nicht akzeptiert. Vielleicht ist es eine kulturelle Reflexion von den USA dass wir nicht so viel  
 10 Kontrovers Maerchen haben.

- 11 *(My teacher thinks that Disney has stolen German 'cultural goods', when he filmed different fairy*  
 12 *tales like Cinderella and Snow White. What do you think about this idea? Do you know about*  
 13 *Disney and what it is and what it does? I think that Disney stole the fairy tales and made them*  
 14 *politically correct. But in the USA politically incorrect fairy tales are not acceptable. Maybe it is*  
 15 *a cultural reflection of the USA that we don't have too many controversial fairy tales.)*  
 16  
 17 Aschenputtel von Grimm ist viel gewalttätiger als Cinderella von Disney. Es ist so weil  
 18 Disney nicht möchten, dass die Kinder Gewalttätigkeit sehen. Disney ist nicht unvereinbar, weil  
 19 sie gleichbleibend ist. Disney fordert "Mortal Kombar" und "Pokemon" und verschiedene  
 20 gewalttätiger dinge nicht, weil sie zu viel Gewalt hat. Was meinst du ueber alle diese dinge?  
 21 *(Cinderella by Grimm is much more violent than Cinderella by Disney. It is so because Disney*  
 22 *doesn't want children to see violence. Disney is not [?] because she is consistent. Disney does*  
 23 *not promote "Mortal Kombar" and "Pokemon" and different more violent things because they*  
 24 *have too much violence. What do you think about all these things?)*  
 25  
 26 I think it's really amusing that the racial problems in the movie "Shaft" reminded you of  
 27 the racial problems in "If you come softly." That's very perceptive of you. :) Unfortunately i  
 28 havent seen that movie yet, but i want to. I also liked "the matrix" very much. When you see all  
 29 of these american movies, are they translated into german? or do they have subtitles? or are they  
 30 just in english? I am curious to know about that. I did see "the crow" a long time ago, however i  
 31 didnt like it very much.  
 32  
 33 So deine Lieblingsfilme ist "Eiskalte Engel"? Was ist das? Ich weisst nicht ueber es. Ist es  
 34 ein amerikanische Film oder deutsch? Ins Kino gehen ist einbisschen teuer in den USA auch. Es  
 35 kostet ungefahr \$7 hier auch. Hast du deutsche Filme gem? oder nuer amerikanische Filme?  
 36 Ich muss jetzt gehen.  
 37 *(So your favorite movie is "Eiskalte Engel"? What is that? I don't know about it. Is it an*  
 38 *american film or german? Do you like German films? Or only american films? I must go now.)*  
 39  
 40 wiedersehen, (good-bye)  
 41 --ERIC

**E-mail 8** (November 2, 2000)

- 1 Hi ERIC,  
 2  
 3 zuerst möchten wir Deine Fragen beantworten:  
 4 *(first we would like to answer your questions:)*  
 5 Die Übersetzung von "politically correct" ist "politisch korrekt".  
 6 *(1.) The translation of "politically correct" is "politisch korrekt".)*  
 7 Du hast das Buch "If you come softly" ein Märchen genannt, wir würden es eher eine  
 8 Geschichte (story and not fairy-tale) nennen.  
 9 *(2.) You called the book "If you come softly" a fairy tale. we would probably call it a story (story*  
 10 *and not fairy-tale).)*  
 11 Ob Disney dt. Kulturgut gestohlen hat? Also ANKE und ich sind da nicht so kleinlich. Wenn  
 12 jemand ein schönes Buch, Märchen oder Schriftstück liest und dies gerne verfilmen möchte,  
 13 finden wir, dass er es tun soll. Disney hat dem Märchen ja auch einen anderen Namen  
 14 gegeben, und somit gezeigt, dass es amerikanisiert worden ist.  
 15 *(3.) Whether or not Disney has stolen German 'cultural goods'? In this respect Anke and I are*  
 16 *not so small-minded, if someone reads a beautiful book, a fairy tale or a story, and would like to*  
 17 *film this, we think that he should do it. After all, Disney gave the fairy tale a different name and*

- 18 *thereby indicated that it has been americanized.)*  
 19 Was ist Disney? Vielleicht kannst Du uns darüber genauer aufklären, bis jetzt dachten wir,  
 20 dass Disney früher eine Privatperson war und jetzt zu einem wirtschaftlichen Konzern  
 21 geworden ist. Stimmt das?  
 22 *(4.) What is Disney? Maybe you can clarify that more precisely for us, until now we thought that*  
 23 *Disney used to be an individual and has now become a company. Is that right?)*  
 24 Wir sind an unsere Märchen gewöhnt und wir halten die "Gewalt" irgendwie für normal. Sie  
 25 rückt die Märchen ein bisschen weiter in die Realität. Wir finden es in Ordnung, wenn  
 26 Kinder Märchen zum Einschlafen erzählt bekommen, denn sie lassen die Kinder über das  
 27 Gute und Böse in der Welt nachdenken.  
 28 *(5.) We are used to our fairy tales and we think that the "violence" is somehow normal. It makes*  
 29 *the fairy tale a little bit more realistic. We think that it's ok, if children are read fairy tales at*  
 30 *bedtime because they make kids think about good and evil in the world.)*  
 31 6.) As you wrote only politically correct fairy-tales exist in America. We think this is also okay.  
 32 To show children a "beautiful world with no crime in it" is a very nice thing to do, especially  
 33 living in parts of America where the real world seems like the german fairy-tales.  
 34 7.) We wonder whether you personally think the same about German fairy-tales, or if just your  
 35 teacher told you to write so, because almost everybody from your class did so.  
 36 8.) You asked us whether American movies get translated into German.  
 37 Yes, they get translated. We never have subtitles but because of the American soldiers living in  
 38 Germany, we have a few cinemas which show movies in their original language.  
 39 9.) The English name for "Eiskalte Engel" is "Cruel Intentions".  
 40 10.) Now we correct some of your errors:  
 41 Fehler (*mistake*): Es klingt wie ein sehr spass Spiel.  
 42 Verbesserung (*correction*): Das Spiel scheint sehr viel Spass zu machen.  
 43 Es klingt wie ein sehr spassiges Spiel  
 44  
 45 Fehler (*mistake*): später  
 46 Verbesserung (*correction*): Bis später  
 47  
 48 Looking forward to hear from you.  
 49  
 50 CATHARINA and ANKE
- E-mail 9** (November 2, 2000)
- 1 Dear ERIC,  
 2  
 3 we just read the parts from Ben Ibbet Anna that your teacher put into the net. Wow, they are so  
 4 different and we think it really changed important messages through the politically right  
 5 translation.  
 6 Why can't kids swim naked in America?  
 7 Deutsche Kinder sind schlauer, die wissen, dass man in nassen Sachen später friert.  
 8 *(German children are smarter, they know, that later on one will freeze in wet clothes.)*  
 9 Why isn't it allowed for kids to hug each other and feel each other's warmth?  
 10 In Deutschland dürfen sich kleine und auch grössere Kinder umarmen und Küsschen geben, das  
 11 ist etwas Normales in unserer Gesellschaft und auch für Kinder sehr schön.  
 12 *(In Germany young and also older children may hug one another and give each other a little*  
 13 *kiss, that is something normal in our society and also very nice for children.)*  
 14  
 15 Well time is over

16 We got to go  
 17  
 18 Bye Bye  
 19 ANKE and CATHARINA

**E-mail 10** (November 2, 2000)

1 Hey ANKE und CATHARINA,  
 2 I'm really not surprised to hear that your school doesn't have much school spirit. Perhaps  
 3 school spirit is more of an american kind of thing. However, you do still have a great deal of  
 4 spirit for your sports teams in germany like soccer teams for example. Atleast this is how it  
 5 seems from what I've seen on TV. Perhaps you even have more "spirit" for your soccer teams  
 6 than we have for our sports in America.

7  
 8 Anyway, now I'll address a few of your questions from your "Cinderella" e-mail:

9  
 10 Ich stimme zu mit dir ueber Disney und die Maerchen. Ihr sagte: "Wenn jemand ein  
 11 schönes Buch, Märchen oder Schriftstück liest und dies gerne verfilmen möchte, finden wir, dass  
 12 er es tun soll. Disney hat dem Märchen ja auch einen anderen Namen gegeben, und somit  
 13 gezeigt, dass es amerikanisiert worden ist."  
 14 *(I agree with you about Disney and fairy tales. You said: "If someone reads a beautiful book,  
 15 fairy tale or a story and would like to film this, we think that he should do it. After all, Disney  
 16 gave the fairy tale a different name and thereby indicated that it has been americanized.")*

17  
 18 I'm not sure how to say this expression in german, but in english when i agree like this i would  
 19 say "I couldn't have said it better myself." Perhaps you do have a phrase like that in german? if  
 20 so what is it?

21  
 22 Ihr wollt mir einbisschen ueber Disney aufklären. Ihr habt rechts dass Disney war ein  
 23 Mann aber jetzt ist es ein wirtschaftlichen Konzern. Vielleicht ist es ein kontrovers Konzern,  
 24 weil es viel Maerchen gestohlen hat. Und viele Leute meinen dass Disney nicht morale ist, aber  
 25 ich finde das nicht. Disney ist ein sehr wichtig Teil von der amerikanische Kultur.

26 *(You want me to explain a little bit about Germany. You are right that Disney was a man but now  
 27 it is a company. Maybe it is a controversial company, because it has stolen many fairy tales. And  
 28 many people think that Disney is not moral, but I don't think so. Disney is a very important part  
 29 of American culture.)*

30  
 31 You asked what i thought about the german fairy tales and how politically correct they  
 32 are. Of the fairy tales that i have read they are all more realistic than politically correct, but  
 33 perhaps in germany that is what it means to be politically correct. Here in the USA everyone is  
 34 very sensitive and easily offended so companies like Disney have to be very careful to make  
 35 their stories politically correct or they will be criticized.

36  
 37 Bis später *(see you later)*  
 38 --ERIC

**E-mail 11** (November 9, 2000)

- 1 Hi ERIC,  
 2  
 3 Am Montag abend hat uns unser Prof eine andere Version von Cinderella gezeigt. Der Film hieß  
 4 "Ever after", und wir gehen davon aud, dass Du ihn auch schon gesehen hast. Für mich und  
 5 ANKE war es schwer, politisch nicht korrekte Stellen zu finden. Wir fanden den Film sehr  
 6 "amerikanisch". Jedoch merkte man, dass der Film nicht so alt sein kann, da die  
 7 Hauptdarstellerin sich nicht "unterbutern" lassen hat, auf ihre Rechte bestanden hat und sich  
 8 selbst beschützt hat. Sows sehen wir als moderne politische Korrektheit.  
 9 *(On Monday evening our prof showed us another version of Cinderella. The movie was called*  
 10 *"Ever after" and we're assuming that you have seen it, too. For me and Anke it was difficult to*  
 11 *find politically correct spots [in the movie]. We found the movie to be very 'American'. However,*  
 12 *one could tell that the film can't be that old because the leading actress didn't let herself ... she*  
 13 *stood up for her right and she ... We see this as modern political correctness.)*  
 14  
 15 We think that emancipation is very difficult. Women were suppressed for a very long time. Now,  
 16 they want to be treated like men, but they are still women. It is a very hard subject to talk about  
 17 and it is easy to be misunderstood. We think everybody, no matter what race, culture or gender,  
 18 should be respected for what he/she is - human and not be harassed. But still there are  
 19 differences and that is good. We were not made for physical labour - you were not made to be  
 20 pregnant.  
 21 Anyway I hope you understand what we mean.  
 22  
 23 Have you seen the video some white police men made harrasing black people: It was on the news  
 24 in Germany yesterday. They let dogs bite blacks and when they were crying on the ground they  
 25 just kicked them again and again.  
 26 Wir denken, daran kann man sehen, dass es eigentlich egal ist, ob ein Land seine Märchen  
 27 politisch korrekt oder realistisch oder wie auch immer erzählt. Nicht die Märchen lassen  
 28 Menschen so etwas tun, es ist die Gesellschaft um sie herum.  
 29 All diese politisch Korrektheit wirkt "wie ein Tropfen auf einen heissen Stein" und hat eigentlich  
 30 keine Auswirkung.  
 31 *(We think that this incident shows that it really doesn't matter if a country tells its fairy tales in a*  
 32 *politically correct fashion, realistically or however. It's not the fairy tales that make people do*  
 33 *something like that, it's the society around them. All of this political correctness is just a drop in*  
 34 *the ocean and really has no effect.)*  
 35  
 36 We couldn't have said it better ourselves.  
 37 Eine wörtliche Übersetzung hat noch den gleichen Inhalt. *(A literal translation has the same*  
 38 *meaning.)*  
 39  
 40 "Ihr wilt mir einbisschen über Disney aufklären."  
 41 Ich werde Euch über Disney aufklären. *(I will explain Disney to you.)*  
 42  
 43 Bis später, *(see you later)*  
 44 ANKE + CATHARINA

**E-mail 12** (November 9, 2000)

1 Hello ANKE + CATHARINA,

2  
3 Ich habe "Ever After" auch gesehen. Es gefällt mir weil es sehr gut Musik Hat. Ausser dem  
4 politische Korrektheit, was denkst du ueber den Film? Gefällt es du oder nicht? warum? Ich  
5 verstehe deine Gefuehle ueber Manner und Frau und Gleichheit (equality). Ich stimme mit dir.  
6 Manner und Frauen und alle sind gleich (equal) und muss die selbe die Grundrechte haben.  
7 *(I have also seen "Ever After". I liked it because it had good music. Aside for the political*  
8 *correctness, what do you think about the movie? Did you like it or not? Why? I understand your*  
9 *feelings about men and woman and equality (equality). I agree with you. Men and women are all*  
10 *equal(equal) and must have the same basic rights.)*  
11 Although everyone is not the same person, they are all still created equal and have equal rights.  
12  
13 I am curious, what is the german cultural translation of the word "equal" or "equality" in this  
14 context? I assume the word gleich isn't necessarily correct.  
15

16 Ich habe den Film mit der weisse Polizei und der Schwarze und der Hund gesehen. Ich weiss  
17 nicht so viel ueber es und was ist passiert. Vielleicht die Polizei sind rassist oder nicht. Wenn  
18 sie beunruhigen alle und nicht nur die Schwarze, sind sie nicht racist aber dann sind sie schlechte  
19 Polizei. Wenn sie nur die Schwarze beunruhigen dann sind sie rassist. Alle Polizei sollen  
20 niemand beunruhigen.

21 *(I have seen the film [sic] with the white police and the black man and the dog. I don't know so*  
22 *much about it and what happened. Maybe the police are racist or not. If they harass everyone*  
23 *and not only blacks then they are not racist they are just bad police. When they only harass*  
24 *blacks, then they are racist. All police shouldn't harass anyone.)*  
25

26 Hast du ueber die amerikanischen Presidential Election gehor? Ich sehe es sehr viel im Fern,  
27 aber jetzt haben wir keine Erfolg. Es gibt sehr viel Ungewissheit in America von dieses Wahl.  
28 Hast du viel Nachrichten ueber es in Deutschland? Was meinst du?

29 *(Did you hear about the American presidential election? I am watching it all the time on TV, but*  
30 *now we have no success [sic: he probably means 'results']. There is much uncertainty in*  
31 *American from this election. Do you have much news about it in Germany? What do you think?)*  
32

33 Aufwiedersehen (good-bye),

34 --ERIC

**E-mail 13** (November 13, 2000)

1 Hello ANKE und (and) CATHARINA,

2 In diesen Briefe werde ich ueber die zwei Filme "Nach fuef im Urwald" und "American  
3 Beauty." Meiner Meinung nach beide sehr gut sind aber "American Beauty" gefallt mir viel  
4 besser. Welche Filme hast du besser gefunden? und warum?

5 *(In this letter I will [talk] about the two movies "It's a jungle out there" and "American*  
6 *Beauty". In my opinion both of them were very good, but I like "American Beauty" much better.*  
7 *Which films [sic] did you like better? And why?)*

8 Beide Filme haben vieles gemeinsam. Zuum Beispiel einige Themen wie: Familie  
9 Probleme, aufwachsen, erste Liebe, Elternschaft, und Fröhlichkeit. Diese Ideen sind nur meinr  
10 Meinung, stimmst du zu? Welche Themen findest du in beide Filme?

11 *(Both films have a lot in common. For example several topics like: family problems,*  
12 *growing up, first love, parenthood, and happiness. These ideas are just my opinion, do you*

- 13 *agree? Which themes do you find in both films?*)
- 14 Ich finde, dass "American Beauty" viel mehr Themen als "Nach fuerf im Urwald" hat.
- 15 Zum Beispiel einige Themen in "American Beauty" sind: Sexualität, Schönheit, was normal ist,
- 16 Heirat, und genießen im Leben. Diese Themen machen "American Beauty" einen komplexen
- 17 Film. Findest du den Film schwer oder einfach zu verstehen?
- 18 *(I think that "American Beauty" has a lot more themes that "It's a jungle out there" does.*
- 19 *For example several themes in "American Beauty" are: sexuality, beauty, what is normal,*
- 20 *marriage, and enjoyment in life. These themes make "American Beauty" a complex movie. Do*
- 21 *you find the movie difficult or easy to understand?)*
- 22 Ich kann eine wichtige Quotierung von "American Beauty" nicht vergessen. Es ist "Today
- 23 is the first day of the rest of your life."
- 24 *(I cannot forget an important quote from "American Beauty". It is "Today is the first day*
- 25 *of the rest of your life.")*
- 26
- 27 That quotation sounds kind of silly but actually when you think about it, it is true. I think it has to
- 28 do with the theme of enjoying life and being happy because you should live every day like it's
- 29 going to be the last day of your life. That's what Lester Burnam does in the film. I was very
- 30 surprised that despite all of the things going wrong in his life, he remained a very happy and
- 31 loving person.
- 32
- 33 In "American Beauty" war die Rolle der Jane ein Bisschen wie die Anna in "Nach fuerf im
- 34 Urwald." Sie sind das gleiche Alter und haben probleme mit Liebe und Familie. Am Ende
- 35 "Nach fuerf im Urwald" sind Annas Problema mit familie gelöst aber das geht nicht fuer Jane
- 36 am Ende "American Beauty".
- 37 *(In "American Beauty" the role of Jane was a little bit like Anna in "It's a jungle out*
- 38 *there". They are the same age and have problems with love and family. At the end of "It's a*
- 39 *jungle out there" Anna's problems with her family are solved but that's not the case for Jane at*
- 40 *the end of "American Beauty".)*
- 41
- 42 Bite erzachlst was du ueber diese zwei Filme denkst...
- 43 *(Please tell me what you think about these two movies...)*
- 44
- 45 Bis spaeter, *(see you later)*
- 46 ERIC
- E-mail 14** (ANKE to Eric; November 16, 2000)
- 1 ... well we will write you as well a few thoughts about the movie "nach 5 im Urwald". We didn't
- 2 like that movie either. We think we do not need to watch people using drugs on TV. We are very
- 3 strict against any of this. We think movies are supposed to make you laugh, to forget a bit af
- 4 reality, to make you sad or whatever, but not to show you that drugs are something normal, that's
- 5 running away is cool and o.k. We think IT IS NOT.
- 6 And we think we do not appreciate watching movies or reading books in which the problems of
- 7 society get presented as something normal! Do you think so too?? Anyway, I'd rather watch a
- 8 political correct Cinderella than any of this movies!
- 9 Thorough media it is possible to influence people, why do they get influenced in the wrong
- 10 direction???
- 11 Well hope you can tell us your thoughts about that matter...



**E-mail 15** (CATHARINA to ERIC; November 16, 2000)

- 1 ...Anke mailt Dir heute auf Englisch und ich auf Deutsch. Wie geht's Dir denn? Wir sitzen hier
- 2 gerade im Computerraum und sind im Internet. Du hast den Film „American Beauty“ doch
- 3 bestimmt auch gesehen, oder? Wir sollen dir nämlich heute darüber schreiben.
- 4 *(Today Anke is writing to you in English and I am writing in German. How are you doing? We're*
- 5 *sitting here in the computer room and we're online. For sure, you've also seen the film*
- 6 *"American Beauty", haven't you? We're supposed to write to you about it today.)*
- 7 Also, wir fanden den Film ein bisschen lächerlich, da sich ein erwachsener Mann wie ein
- 8 Teenager aufgeführt hat. Aber wir fanden es schön, wie sich sie Beziehung von der
- 9 Hauptdarstellerin und ihrem Nachbarn entwickelt hat. Meinst du, das sich ein erwachsener Mann
- 10 wirklich in so ein junges Mädchen verlieben kann? Sie war ja so alt wie seine
- 11 Tochter...Außerdem ist der Vater von dem Nachbarn etwas komisch, zuerst denkt er, sein Sohn
- 12 sei schwul, dann will er einen anderen Mann küssen.
- 13 *(Well, we thought the movie was a little bit ridiculous, because a grown man acted like a*
- 14 *teenager. But we really liked how the relationship between the leading actress and her neighbor*
- 15 *developed. Do you think that a grown man could really fall in love with such a young girl? After*
- 16 *all, she was as old as his daughter...the father of the neighbor was also a little bit funny, at first*
- 17 *he thinks that his son is gay, then he wants to kiss another man.)*
- 18 Irgendwie alles ein bisschen komisch. Und die Drogen dirften natürlich auch in diesem Film
- 19 nicht fehlen... Na ja, wir denken nicht, dass dieser Film so sehr der Realität entspricht oder was
- 20 meinst Du?.....
- 21 *(Somehow everything is a little bit funny. And, of course, the drugs can't be left out in this movie*
- 22 *either...in any case, we don't think that this film corresponds to reality all that much or what do*
- 23 *you think? ...)*

**E-mail 16** (November 20, 2000)

- 1 Hi ERIC,
- 2
- 3 we did write you a letter last thursday, did you receive it? We wrote it from our privat mail
- 4 system.
- 5 Anyway we did wrote you one letter in German, one in English that we both didn't like any of
- 6 the two movies. They were boring and they were full of drug abuse.
- 7 I can't take anyone serious who is a pot smoker or an alcoholic.
- 8 Well they spoke about sexuality and life and so one but in such a boring way. We can't
- 9 understand you actually liked American Beauty. It was so hard for me watching it to the end as
- 10 well as for CATHARINA.
- 11 We think there are better ways to present themes like love, parent-kids problems and so on as in
- 12 this movies described.
- 13 By the way, we think it is sad that you only write us about the thinks the teachers tells you to.
- 14 Are you interested in us or only on your mark you will receive at the end of the year. We have
- 15 heard that your course it four times a week. Don't you have time to write us anything personal?
- 16 Wir würden gern mehr über dich erfahren. Wie du lebst, wie deine Eltern sind, was du isst, was
- 17 du an Kleidungsstücken trägst, warum du den Film American Beauty magst. Verstehst du das?
- 18 Sonst wird unsere Kommunikation total langweilig. CATHARINA und ich haben diesen Kurs
- 19 gewählt um eine Person in America kennenzulernen und nicht nur seine Ansichten über die
- 20 Fragen seiner Lehrer.
- 21 *(We would like to learn more about you. How you live, what your parents are like, what you eat,*
- 22 *what kind of clothes you wear, why you like the movie American Beauty; Do you understand*
- 23 *that? Otherwise our communication will be totally boring. Catharina and I chose this course in*

24 *order to get to know a person in America and not only to learn his opinions about the questions*  
 25 *his teachers ask.)*  
 26 Es würde uns freuen wenn du mal etwas über dich erzählst.  
 27 *(We'd really like it if you could tell us something about yourself.)*  
 28  
 29 Bis dahin *(until then)*  
 30 Ciao ANKE und CATHARINA

**E-mail 17** (November 23, 2000)

1 Hi ERIC,  
 2  
 3 wir fanden es sehr schön, dass ihr eine Gliederung mit einer Aufteilung ins Netz gegeben  
 4 habt.  
 5 Wir stimmen mit euch überein und werden die Woche über unsere Aufgaben bearbeiten. Wir  
 6 haben beschlossen, die Einleitung und den Schluss ganz in Deutsch und den Hauptteil ganz  
 7 in Englisch zu schreiben.  
 8 Weiterhin werden wir die Con-arguments direkt nach den pro-arguments aufführen.  
 9 For Example: II B.... Janet und Anna sind fröhlicher als die Frauen aus dem Fernsehen.... (pro)  
 10 ....Sie benehmen sich aber nicht altersentsprechend.... (con)  
 11 We would very appreciate you doing the same.  
 12 *(we thought that it was really nice, that you all posted an outline of the essay with a division of*  
 13 *labor in the Internet. We agree with you all and will work on our tasks in the course of the week.*  
 14 *We have decided to write the introduction and the conclusion completely in German and to write*  
 15 *the body of the essay in English. Furthermore, will we put the contra-arguments directly and the*  
 16 *pro-arguments. For example: II B.... Janet and Anna are happier that the women on*  
 17 *TV....(pro)....However, they don't behave appropriately for their age....(con)*  
 18 *We would very much appreciate you doing the same.)*  
 19 Falls ihr Hilfe mit eurem Deutsch braucht, schreibt eure Fragen bitte auf unsere Privat-e-mail-  
 20 Adresse [xxx@xxx](mailto:xxx@xxx) oder  
 21 [yyy@yyy](mailto:yyy@yyy) Wir helfen euch gerne und hoffen, dass ihr unsere Fehler auch verbessert.  
 22 Ihr habt in eurer Gliederung einen Fehler gemacht:  
 23 Es heisst nicht: auf dem Fern  
 24 Richtig: aus dem Fernsehen  
 25  
 26 Vielleicht könnt ihr das verbessern.  
 27 *(In case you need help with your German, please send your questions to our private email*  
 28 *address [xxx@xxx](mailto:xxx@xxx) or [yyy@yyy](mailto:yyy@yyy) We'll be glad to help you and hope that you also correct our*  
 29 *mistakes.*  
 30 *You made a mistake in your outline:*  
 31 *It's not: auf fern Fern*  
 32 *Correct: aus dem Fernsehen*  
 33  
 34 *Maybe you could correct that.)*  
 35  
 36 Since CATHARINA and I don't have any access to first class it might take us until next week to  
 37 write a reply to you. We hope you can understand that. Hopefully you do agree with our  
 38 arguments and theses and we will do this project as a real team.  
 39  
 40 Wir müssen uns noch über den 2. Teil des Projektes Gedanken machen. Wir sind da auch mit  
 41 eurer Aufteilung und Aufgabenstellung einverstanden. Wir werden euch unsere Einstellungen

42 über Amerika schreiben. Ihr werdet uns antworten und Thesen richtig stellen, the same for us.  
 43 *(We still have to think about the second part of the project. For this part we also agree with your*  
 44 *division [of labor] and the task. We will tell you our perceptions of America. You will answer us*  
 45 *and correct the theses, the same for us.)* You will send us your thoughts about Germany, our  
 46 culture, boys, girls, racism, family, identity,... and we will answer you how things really are.  
 47 Okay?  
 48 So see you next class.  
 49 Have fun.  
 50  
 51 ANKE and CATHARINA

**E-mail 18** (November 30, 2000)

1 Dear ERIC,  
 2  
 3 we are not very much impressed with your work!:  
 4 It is not possible to give us an outline to work on and then suddenly change it after a week.  
 5 You know as CATHARINA and I wrote you we don't have access to the computers from at  
 6 home and not to first class.  
 7 We think you don't do any partner work with Germany at all. You do have our privat e-mail  
 8 addresses and you could have send us a notice of this change right away!  
 9 We worked over 4 hours on our excepts, and dear ERIC, we do not have class every day so we  
 10 work on it on our spare time.  
 11 Actually we wrote you, if you have any problems with our work, it is your responsibility to  
 12 change it. You made the outline and we took your word that it is going to be as you wrote it.  
 13 As to your outline, as you have noticed we wrote the Schlüsse (*conclusions*) in German and we  
 14 are not going to rewrite them in English. If you really need them in English to get a better mark,  
 15 please do so and change them by yourself, we are happy with them being in German.  
 16 Further more under point 3 Neudarstellung (*new representation*) you didn't put a name. Or is  
 17 this except not even the last and you are planning to change it again?????  
 18 Well we wrote something for point III but in English, cause our Schlüsse (*conclusions*) are in  
 19 German. If you have a problem with this either please feel free to translate them in German.  
 20 As well ERIC, we thought we were supposed writing each other at leased twice a week, we were  
 21 interested in your life and thoughts, but we noticed that you don't seem very interested in  
 22 anything of us. It is a pity, we had fun on this project, but only with only getting few mails from  
 23 you and no private ones at all we don't think that it can do any good for our language or for our  
 24 cultural exchange. We need to read some letters from you to get a picture of the part of America  
 25 where you are living in, and ERIC, if this is too much for you, you might have thought about it  
 26 before taking that course.  
 27 A waiting your favourable reply to your earliest convenience  
 28  
 29 Have a nice day  
 30 ANKE and CATHARINA

**E-mail 19** (December 7, 2000)

1 Hallo ERIC,  
 2  
 3 wir wollten dir noch einen kurzen Brief schreiben und sagen, dass uns die Web-Page sehr gut  
 4 gefallen hat. Es war schön mit euch zusammenzuarbeiten. Vielleicht lässt du ja nochmal was von  
 5 dir hören...

- 6  
7            *(Hello Eric,*  
8  
9            *we just wanted to send you a short letter and say that we like the web page very much. It was*  
10           *nice to work with you. Maybe you'll drop us a line sometime...)*  
11  
12            Have a nice day.  
13            ANKE + CATHARINA

**NOTE**

Though Julie A. Belz was the guest editor of this overall issue, she was not involved in the review process of her own article. The review process of this article was handled instead by Associate Editor Richard Kern and three anonymous reviewers.

## UNDERSTANDING THE "OTHER SIDE": INTERCULTURAL LEARNING IN A SPANISH-ENGLISH E-MAIL EXCHANGE

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### ABSTRACT

Intercultural learning is often assumed to be an automatic benefit of e-mail exchanges between groups of learners in different countries, but little research exists on whether on-line intercultural collaboration does actually develop learners' understanding of the other culture's perspective and world view. This paper reviews what recent literature suggests intercultural learning to involve and then reports on a year-long e-mail exchange between Spanish and English second year university language learners. Using the results of qualitative research, the paper identifies key characteristics of e-mail exchanges which helped to develop learners' intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997). It also outlines elements of e-mail messages which may enable students to develop successful intercultural relationships with their partners.

### INTRODUCTION

Despite the plethora of descriptive reports on intercultural e-mail projects, little appears to be known about what students actually learn from the interaction with their virtual peers in other cultures (Kem, 1998; Mueller-Hartmann, 2000a). Although many projects adopt ambitious aims which involve the development of tolerance and better intercultural awareness, as well as the reduction of stereotypes and prejudice (Gray & Stockwell, 1998; Meagher & Castaños, 1996; Roberts, 1994; Sakar, 2001), little has been done to evaluate to what extent such objectives can be achieved in the limited life-span of an e-mail exchange between groups of foreign language learners or how they should be achieved. Nevertheless, recent work in this area would appear to demonstrate that this gap in the literature is being addressed (Belz, 2002; Belz & Kinginger, 2002; Kranssch & Thorne, 2002).

The belief that contact between cultures automatically leads to intercultural learning and to the development of positive attitudes towards the target culture has already been rejected by many (Allport, 1979; Coleman, 1998; Fischer, 1998) and Richter confirms that this is also the case for virtual intercultural contact: "The Internet brings about the contact of cultures, but this does not automatically imply cultural understanding" (1998, p. 15; this author's translation).

Others, including Belz (2002), Belz and Müller-Hartmann (2002) and O'Dowd (2000) have also found many impediments for intercultural learning in technology-supported exchanges. In contrast, Furstenberg, Levet, English, and Maillet (2001), Tella (1991), and von der Emde, Schneider, and Kötter (2001), have reported more positive experiences.

This paper reports on an e-mail exchange which took place between five pairs of Spanish and English second-year university students over the course of one academic year. Both sets of students were studying the language of the partner group. This author was both the teacher of the students in Spain and the researcher. By carrying out a content analysis of students' on-line interaction, combined with questionnaires and interviews, my aim was to "look beyond the texts of interaction to the broader contextual dynamics that shape and are shaped by those texts" (Warschauer & Kern, 2000, p. 15). In particular, I wanted to gain insight into why some networked exchanges may fail to lead to intercultural learning while others can bring learners to alter their perspectives and change their way of viewing both

the home and target cultures. The central research question can be stated as follows: What characteristics of e-mail exchanges lead to intercultural learning?

Section two is a review of the recent literature on the aims of intercultural learning and intercultural communicative competence. Section three offers an overview of how e-mail exchanges have been seen to contribute to intercultural learning in the foreign language classroom. This is followed in section four by a brief presentation of the background of this particular project, including its aims, the tasks which the students carried out, and the qualitative research techniques which were employed by the author in order to identify the effects of the exchange on the learners. In sections five, six, and seven, I look at the three key elements which emerged during the exchange as being influential to the development of intercultural learning. Finally, in the discussion in section eight, I consider the possible consequences of these findings for the organisation and implementation of future intercultural e-mail exchanges.

## **INTERPRETATIONS OF INTERCULTURAL LEARNING**

The process of "intercultural learning" and its implied goal "intercultural competence" (Grosch & Leenan, 1998) have recently become fashionable in the world of foreign language methodology; however, their exact meanings continue to be the source of much debate and disagreement. Writers such as Hu (2000) and Paige, Jorstad, Siaya, Klein, and Colby (2000) have made practical contributions to the discussion by presenting overviews of cognitive, affective, and skill-based aims, while others have outlined the content of interculturally-oriented curricula (Neuner, 1997) as well as activities for developing intercultural competence in learners (Sercu, 1998). However, collections of papers in search of common definitions have served merely to reveal the many different interpretations of intercultural learning which exist, as well as the different levels of importance which writers and teachers feel should be attributed to this goal (for examples of varying definitions see Bausch, Christ, & Krumm, 1997). Edmondson and House (1998) believe that intercultural learning has avoided definition because it is seen by some as a learning objective, by others as a learning process, and yet by others as a particular form of communication. These authors also question the usefulness of the term when, in their opinion, all foreign language learning is inherently "intercultural." Finally, they consider "intercultural learning" as overloading communicative competence with sociocultural objectives. The consequences of this is that the linguistic aspect of language learning has been played down in favour of an idealistic, affective perspective (Edmondson & House, 1998; House, 1996).

The emphasis which models of intercultural learning attribute to changing students' attitudes and perspectives has particularly been the cause of much criticism in the literature. Hamburger (1990) suggests that intercultural learning over-emphasises foreignness and the differences between cultures and therefore risks leading to a reinforcement of stereotypes and ethnocentrism among learners. Kramsch (1993) has highlighted the difficulties in ascertaining if and when the affective aims of intercultural learning have been achieved. Finally, Cryle questions the realism of focusing on the affective aspects of intercultural learning when getting students to become more aware of foreign perspectives may be "an unhelpfully distant goal" (2002, p. 30).

Despite this lack of clarity in terms of definitions and evaluation, there seems to be general agreement among the supporters of intercultural learning as to its key underlying goals and their consequences for language instruction. Risager (1998), in her review of approaches to culture learning, explains that, in contrast to previous approaches to language and culture learning, students are no longer expected to simply take on positive attitudes towards the target culture and its members. Byram (1997) outlines why this is the case: "Attitudes which are the pre-condition for successful intercultural interaction need to be not simply positive, since even positive prejudice can hinder mutual understanding" (p. 34).

Similarly, Bennet (1993), in his developmental model of intercultural sensitivity, warns against the limited nature of an understanding of culture where difference is recognised, but nevertheless minimised

in order to highlight the "universality" of human behaviour. Bennett says the belief that "deep down we all are the same" is not an adequate response to cultural difference. Although characteristics of cultures may have much in common at times, he sees this as not being relevant to the real issues of intercultural communication:

They [attitudes of universalism] fail to address the culturally unique social context of physical behavior that enmeshes such behavior in a particular worldview. Failure to consider this context leads people to assume that knowledge of the physical universals of behaviour is sufficient for understanding all other people. (Bennett, 1993, p. 43)

Instead, Bennett sees true intercultural sensitivity coming about when behaviour is understood as belonging to a particular cultural context and the behaviour is therefore subsequently judged from within that context and not by the learners' own cultural standards. This ability to step back from one's own cultural background and critically identify the original cultural reasoning behind beliefs, actions and behaviour is described by Bennett as "constructive marginality" and reflects much of what other writers have described as "critical cultural awareness" (Byram, 1997), dialogism (Tella & Mononen-Aattonen, 1998), intersubjectivity (Klinginger, in press) and "cross-cultural capability" (Killick, 1999). In contrast to earlier models of culture learning, learners are no longer expected to reject their own culture and "take on" the target culture (something viewed as undesirable as it involves replacing one form of monoculturalism for another), but rather to find what Kramsch (1993) describes as a "third place." This refers to a location between the home and target cultures where all behaviour (both that of others and that of oneself) is seen as being grounded in a particular cultural context. This concept owes much to the description of the "third domain" offered by Bhabha (1994) and Bakhtin's notion of dialogism (1986). Kramsch (1993) sees the term as an alternative to the tendency in foreign language teaching to treat the home and foreign cultures as monolithic entities. She refers to the phrase "being on the fence," as being representative of the common belief that language learners are somehow located merely between two cultures. She criticises this term for ignoring the reality of differences in class, race, religion, and so forth, which are inherent in each of the two national cultures. Instead, Kramsch suggests that learners need to locate themselves in a place which "grows in the interstices between the cultures the learner grew up with and new cultures he or she is being introduced to" (p. 236). This description highlights two important aspects of intercultural learning. Firstly, it underlines the learners' newly achieved distance from both the home and target cultures, and secondly, it refers to the multiplicity of cultural identities which belong to all of us, thereby rejecting the fallacy of "one nation = one culture."

Taking into account these principles or key characteristics of intercultural learning, Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence can be seen as a representative model of what elements the process of intercultural learning should aim to develop in learners. There are various reasons for this choice. Firstly, the model (summarised below) offers a comprehensive approach that deals with the skills, attitudes, knowledge and critical awareness which have been seen to constitute intercultural competence. Secondly, Byram's main work on the model offers not only objectives for each of the components, but also suggests modes of assessment for each part. Such elaboration on the model facilitates the teacher and action researcher's (Wallace, 1998) task of operationalising and putting the model into practice in the classroom, although Burwitz-Melzer (2000) criticises the objectives proposed by Byram as being "inevitably very general and abstract" (p. 45, this author's translation). Finally, the model has already been put into use extensively in foreign language classrooms. As such, it has become a common point of reference in the literature on intercultural learning, thereby confirming to a great extent its relevance and practicality. Classroom practice and research which have been carried out using the model, at least to a certain extent, as a source of aims and assessment include Byram (1999), Duffy and Mayes (2001), Müller-Hartmann (1999), and Woodin (2001).



Byram's model (1997) contains the following elements:

- "Attitudes of curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own" (p. 50).
- "Knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general process of societal and individual interaction" (p. 58).
- "Skills of interpreting and relating: ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one's own" (p. 61).
- "Skills of discovery and interaction: ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction" (p. 61).
- "Critical cultural awareness/political education: an ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries" (p. 63).

The question which is of interest here is, *What must occur in an intercultural e-mail exchange in order for such learning to be achieved?* The following section looks briefly at how networked technologies have been used until now by teachers to develop intercultural learning.

### INTERCULTURAL LEARNING AND NETWORKED EXCHANGES

Intercultural exchanges in education have their origins in the global learning networks pioneered by Freinet (1994) in France in the 1920's and later by Lodi in Italy in the 1960's (Cummins & Sayers, 1995). Freinet made use of available technologies and modes of communication to enable his classes to exchange "cultural packages" of flowers, fossils, and photos of their local area with classes in other regions of France. Similarly, Lodi motivated his class and helped to develop their literacy skills by encouraging them to create student newspapers in collaboration with distant partner classes.

Cummins and Sayers (1995) also make reference to the importance of Allport's (1979) "contact theory" in the design of successful global exchange projects. This theory proposed that inter-group prejudice could be combated by providing the rival ethnic groups with opportunities to co-operate together to achieve common academic goals.

E-mail based exchanges and projects between groups of language learners have received much attention in the literature of computer mediated-communication (Cummins & Sayers, 1995; Donath & Volkmer, 1997; Meagher & Castaños, 1996; Warschauer, 1997) and much has been made of their potential for developing intercultural competence and bringing about a change in students' perspectives (Kingtoner, Gourvès-Hayward, & Simpson, 1999). However, many e-mail exchanges often result in little more than superficial pen-pal projects where information is exchanged without reflection and where students are rarely challenged to reflect on their own culture or their stereotypical views of the target culture. For example, Meagher and Castaños found in their exchange between classes in the USA and Mexico that bringing the students to compare their different attitudes and values led to a form of culture shock and a more negative attitude towards the target culture. Fischer (1998), in his work on German-American electronic exchanges, warns that very often students simply react to the foreign way of thinking, dismissing it as strange or "typical" of that particular culture, instead of reflecting and learning from the messages of their distant partners.

For this reason, researchers have called for carefully designed approaches to e-mail exchanges which integrate them fully into the classroom as opposed to treating them as mere pen-pal activities (Cummins & Sayers, 1995; Kern, 1998; Roberts, 1994). Mueller-Hartmann (2000a) suggests that if learners are to achieve a genuine change in perspective in an e-mail exchange, it is necessary to have an effective task-based structure which is integrated into the classroom so students have an opportunity to analyse and

reflect on their computer-based investigations with the help and guidance of their teachers. Several recent studies have also looked at how the outcomes of intercultural exchanges can be influenced by both macro- as well as micro-level aspects of the environments in which they take place. Belz (2002) describes how social and institutional factors in Germany and the USA, such as language valuation, technological access, and course accreditation, influenced the outcome of intercultural exchanges between university students in these two countries. Similarly, Müller-Hartmann (2000b) looked at the institutional pressures and requirements which influenced the developing relationship of teachers who were organising an intercultural e-mail exchange. He also investigated how the teachers' ability to adapt to the extra challenges of such an exchange influenced the intercultural learning process of their students. Referring to e-mail exchanges as well as other on-line learning activities, Warschauer's (1999) ethnographic study of four different language classes emphasises the need for electronic learning activities to be authentic, learner-centred, relevant to students' lives, and also for them to allow students to explore their own social and cultural identities.

In the following section I explore a year-long e-mail exchange between two classes of language students in Spain and Britain. This qualitative analysis attempts to identify what elements influenced the developing attitudes of the students towards the target and home cultures and thereby affected their levels of success in achieving "a third place" between both cultures.

## **BACKGROUND TO EXCHANGE: LEÓN, SPAIN AND KING'S COLLEGE, ENGLAND**

### **Project Background**

As the teacher of the Spanish students, I came into contact with my counterpart at King's College, London through the *HECC Network*, one of the many on-line mailing lists which facilitate the creation of intercultural partnerships between classes in different countries. Both of us were native speakers of the language that we were teaching. At the time, I was an Irish teacher of English as a foreign language in Spain and my partner was a Spanish native speaker teaching in London.<sup>1</sup> We decided that five members of each class would be paired together for the exchange. The five participants in León were a subset of approximately 50 students enrolled in a second-year course of English as a foreign language at León University, while the students from London were part of a smaller second year class of Spanish as a foreign language. The students' levels in their respective foreign languages varied greatly, although my partner teacher and I both believed, based on previous class tests, that all the students were able to express themselves in the L2 at a relatively advanced level. With one exception, none of the Spanish group had been in Britain before, while all the members of the British group had spent periods abroad either in Spain or Latin America.

### **Project Tasks**

Taking into account Byram's (1997) model of intercultural competence, we both agreed on a series of tasks, which we hoped would serve as a springboard for discussion and interaction. Some of these were based on material already placed on-line by the Tandem Network, while other activities were adapted from the *Cultura project* (Funstenberg et al., 2001). Following Appel (1999) and Brannerts (1996), students were asked to complete each task in their target language but also to write a section in their own language where they would correct the mistakes made by their partner in previous correspondence.

Table 1. Overview of Tasks

Task	Title	Description	Aim
1	In-class e-mailing list	Students discuss the image of Spain abroad (Spanish Group only).	Acqustom students to using e-mail in their learning.
2	Introductory letter	Students introduce themselves and tell partner what may be different if they visited the other's home town.	Students get to know their partners and reflect on cultural differences.
3	Word association	Students write the associations which they have of key words such as "good food," and "bull-fighting." They then compare their reactions with their partners' (Furstenberg et al., 2001, p. 57).	Students become more aware of the link between language and culture.
4	In-class e-mailing list	Students discuss the image of Britain in Spain and recount their experiences with members of that culture (Spanish group only).	Brainstorming and discussion for future exchange with partners (Kern, 1995)
5	Tourist shop	Students visit a local tourist shop and report back to their partner, telling them what they saw and how accurately this image represents their home culture.	Students reflect on how the two cultures are represented to foreigners and how accurate these representations are.
6	Comparative expressions	Students complete a list of comparative phrases (e.g. "as good as ... as black as...") in their native language. They then explain the possible origins and cultural significance of these phrases.	Students examine differing connotations in the two cultures by comparing what nouns are used in comparative phrases.
7	Text extracts (1)	Students read text extracts taken from various foreign writers about Spain and the Spanish. The Spanish group reflect on how accurate they feel the texts to be. The British group pose questions about the texts.	Using the texts as a springboard, both groups explain to their partners how they view the Spanish culture and people.
8	Explaining idioms	Students explain in the target language the meanings of various idioms from their own language. They also look at the idioms' origins and significance.	Students look at the link between idioms and cultural values in both cultures.
9	Text extracts (2)	Students read and discuss various short extracts about England and the English.	Using the texts as a springboard, both groups explain to their partners how they view English culture and its people.
10	"The Unfaithful Woman" (source: e-mail mailing list)	Students compare reactions to a fictitious story which brings up issues of morality and sexuality.	Discussion of the story leads to comparison of moral values and sexuality in both countries.

The tasks reflected the components of Byram's (1997) model in that they involved interacting with members of the target culture in order to acquire knowledge and subsequently to become more aware of the different interpretations of cultural products or practices which members of another culture may have. In tasks 5 and 9, students also had the opportunity to become more aware of their own culture and how it

was viewed by members of the foreign culture. Due to time and technical restrictions, the English group was not able to use the in-class e-mail exchange system which was carried out in León (tasks 1 and 4). These tasks allowed the Spanish group to discuss the topics and develop their ideas with members of their own culture before carrying out the tasks with their foreign partners. As this was the first time any of the Spanish students had used new technologies in their classes, the activities also gave the students an opportunity to get used to e-mail as a medium for debate and learning.

For each task students were required to write at least two messages to their partner. In the first message they were to present their own opinion and in the second they were to discuss and react to the message they had received from their partner. In many cases students wrote more than the minimum number of e-mails in order to discuss topics other than the task.

### **Researching the Exchange**

Having established the exchange and the theme of my research, I then identified the research approach which would best suit my needs. The approach which I adopted was essentially ethnographic (Agar, 1980; Nunan, 1992; Spradley, 1979); however, the research also strongly reflects the principles of action research. Wallace (1998) defines action research for teachers as "collecting data on your everyday practice and analysing it in order to come to some decisions about what your future practice should be" (p. 4).

Wallace also sees action research as part of a process of reflection on professional practice which leads to professional development. This reflected my own aim of improving the standard of learning in my classes by attempting to identify how one of the learning activities (i.e., e-mail exchanges) could be improved and its effectiveness increased. Shetzer and Warschauer (2000) consider action research to be particularly well suited for researching aspects of networked-based language learning as the electronic networks can greatly facilitate collaboration and the co-construction of knowledge between the teacher/researcher and the learners themselves. As will become clear later, interaction between myself and the students involved in this study (on both face-to-face and virtual levels) played an important part in the conclusions of this research.

A variety of ethnographic techniques were used in the research in order to capture "the immediate and local meanings of actions, as defined from the actors point of view" (Erickson, 1986, p. 119). It was hoped that, through the analysis of the interviews, e-mails, students' essays, and questionnaires, I would be able to identify the issues emerging which were important for the students, as opposed to those which I, teacher and researcher, might have considered influential in the exchange's level of success. The research techniques employed in this study included participant observation, e-mail data, questionnaires, interviews, the researcher's reflexive journal, and peer-group feedback.

### **Participant Observation**

In this study I played the roles of teacher and classroom researcher. By taking on both roles I hoped to play an integrated role in the community of learning and to experience the benefits and drawbacks of on-line learning first hand. My role as course teacher also allowed me to build up a relationship of trust and familiarity with the students, which an outside researcher may not have achieved. Other researchers of second language learners have also carried out successful studies of the classes they are teaching (Belz & Kinginger, in press; Canagarajah, 1993; and partly, Warschauer, 1999). I was, of course, aware of the dangers of my role as both teacher and researcher in this project and exploited various techniques indicated in the literature in order to minimize the influence of my own sociocultural frameworks (Davis, 1995) and the risk of engaging in biased interpretations of the data. These techniques included member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), that is, checking my interpretation of the data with that of the actual students who produced the data. Another technique I used to avoid researcher bias was a reflexive journal.

### ***E-Mail Data***

The Spanish students were asked to send me copies of all messages they sent or received from their partners in London. In total, I received approximately 150 e-mails containing copies of messages which had been sent. I also received 30 e-mails containing feedback on the exchange and answers to questions which I had sent to students.

### ***Questionnaires***

The Spanish students were regularly sent questionnaires by e-mail during the exchange in order to establish their developing reactions to the virtual contact. The teacher in London was unable to engage in similar research with her class due to time restrictions. Instead, the English students were asked, on a less regular basis, to fill out questionnaires which were then mailed to León. They also carried out and submitted an extensive personal evaluation of their exchange at the end of the course which proved to be particularly helpful for our research purposes.

### ***Interviews***

During the course of the exchange, I asked students to come to my office and carry out interviews about their experiences. These interviews were recorded on audio tape and later transcribed for content. During the interviews, I usually had a print-out of the particular student's e-mails and many of the questions were based on sections of their correspondence. While students were normally chosen for interview on a random basis, others were specifically chosen when they appeared to be having a particular problem or a phase of particularly rich interaction with their partner. By asking students to comment on their e-mail correspondence I was able to take into consideration their interpretation of events instead of imposing my own analysis on the material. The fact that students could also be interviewed by e-mail enabled me to react quicker to issues as they emerged.

### ***Researcher's Reflexive Journal***

Following each class, and at regular stages during the study and evaluation of the other data, I made entries into a reflexive diary regarding my thoughts on the exchange and the intercultural learning which, I felt, was or was not taking place at that stage. If I received any feedback from students or the partner class in any form this was also noted in the journal. Very often, I printed out e-mail messages and pasted them into the journal near other information which I felt was related to the same category or theme. By noting down my theories and ideas in the journal, I was able to return to these at a later date and reflect on their validity and, in many cases, fine tune them in the light of new research material.

### ***Peer-Group Feedback***

Throughout the exchange I was in regular contact with the teacher of the class in London. Our messages often involved reporting on how our students were reacting to the exchange and what they were learning from it. Very often I contacted my partner to try out theories which I was developing based on the data.

While carrying out the research I attempted to let the themes and issues emerge from the material, as opposed to testing what particular theories might be confirmed or rejected by the data. As the term proceeded, I collected e-mails and other data and began developing ideas about what the key issues were. I then checked with other sources (e.g., interviews, questionnaires) in order to confirm or refute these ideas. This triangulation of data is seen as a vital part of any qualitative research as it helps to develop a deeper understanding of the subject in question (Denzin, 1970; Müller-Hartmann, 2001).

In the course of the exchange, three key issues emerged which were influential in the extent to which students became more aware of the differing perspectives and interpretative systems of the target culture. Each of these three themes will now be looked at in detail in sections five, six, and seven.

## STUDENTS PRESENTING THEIR HOME CULTURES

In his research on electronic literacies, Warschauer (2000) reports on a class of native Hawaiian students who, in their class in Hawaiian language, used their Web-page projects to make a contribution to information about their native language and culture. He goes on to talk about the potential of on-line project work "for fostering the exploration and expression of cultural and social identity" among learners and suggests that it allows them "to carve out on-line space for their own language and culture" (p. 56). Similarly, during this exchange, the students in León seemed to be taking this opportunity to fight against the stereotypes which they felt others had of Spain and of the Spanish people. It became apparent that students were taking control of the virtual medium and the interaction with their foreign partners to present their lives and their homes as they perceived them and thereby correcting the misrepresentations which they believed others had of them and their culture.

Before beginning their exchange with the students in London, the Spanish students took part in an in-class e-mail discussion between themselves and other class members (task 1). In it they gave their reactions to questions about what they thought was Spain's image abroad and whether they would feel proud to say they are Spanish when they are away from home. Even though participation was not compulsory, the questions provoked many responses, the majority of which reflected an attitude of frustration and annoyance as to how the students believed their country was viewed by others abroad. The following message reflects the general content of the exchange and shows an awareness of the stereotypes which would appear to exist about Spain:

### E-mail extract 1

First of all, I want to say that I am very proud of being Spanish, although people around world doesn't have a good idea about us. I think the most important problem is the noise we make.

People says that we talk very loud and, from my point of view, it is due because we don't mind expressing our feelings; we shout when we are happy and we shout when we are angry as well.

There is another idea that I think it is not true. There is a lot of people who thinks that Spanish people is very lazy and we are the whole day laying at bed and going to parties. People works here so hard as in other countries and some cities of Spain are very hot which makes the work harder.

It is time people changes their minds about us.

As a result of this frustration, it appears that many members of the Spanish group used their exchange with the English students to differentiate themselves from this negative image and highlight other aspects of Spain. The level of success they experienced in carrying out this goal was influential in their level of participation in the exchange and whether or not they later reported a changing perspective to the British culture. The following two partnerships in the exchange show first a negative and secondly, a positive example of this.

### Partnership One: An Unreceptive Audience, Juan and Alice

Juan,<sup>2</sup> one of the Spanish exchange participants, considered himself a "Leónese nationalist"<sup>3</sup> and in the course of the year he caused many heated debates in class as he attempted to steer many discussions to the questions of regional nationalism and the need for autonomy in León. When the exchange began, he took the opportunity of his introductory e-mail to his partner (task 2) to immediately differentiate between Spain and León on a political and historical level:

#### E-mail extract 2

I'm going to tell you something about Lión and about my nation (situated within an area of the North-West of Spain):

Llión is an ancient town of about 150,000 inhabitants. Llión and the Leónese Country ("País Llionés" in the Astur-Leónese language) are the result of a mixture of Celtic, roman, Germanic, Arabic, Jewish and other cultures. Because of this fact, we have monuments from different ages and cultures and our traditions are also the result of that mixture. For example, in Llión there're some Romanic churches and a gothic cathedral and in some areas of the "País Llionés" (Leónese Country) there're buildings of pre-roman art.

It is interesting to note in this e-mail how Juan begins his presentation of León in a way that almost assumes that the region is independent from Spain (not the case) by using terms such as "nation" and "Leónese country." The fact that he does not explain what he means by these terms seems to imply that he expects his partner to be already aware of the local political situation. After receiving a copy of this message, I immediately sent Juan an e-mail, asking him why he had chosen to tackle this issue with his partner in his opening message.

#### E-mail extract 3

I used the names "Llión" and "País Llionés" because I think that is important to support our language (a language that is decreasing the number of speakers but that is still spoken by 10% of the Leónese people -- I'm not actually very sure of the rate of speakers).

I consider the "País Llionés" my nation instead of Spain because I think that the Spanish identity is an invention: in Spain there're a lot of different languages, personalities and traditions (different cultures, the case of the U.S.A. is a very similar case: different nations within a "country").

I think that internet is a very good way for expressing ideas because it isn't controlled by censors (yet?). And I like to show foreigners the Leónese culture because I don't like the common place of "Spain is bulls and flamenco."

Comments such as "I consider the 'País Llionés' my nation instead of Spain" and "the Spanish identity is an invention" as well as many other comments in the course of our time together in class show that this belief in regional nationalism was a central part of his personal and cultural identities. His comments about the Internet not being "controlled by censors" and that he liked "to show foreigners the Leónese culture" also demonstrate that he saw the on-line activities as a safe and promising medium to express this identity without it being rejected or laughed at. (Many times in class his classmates had sighed with impatience when he raised the topic.) Unfortunately, Alice, his virtual partner in London, did not seem to be very receptive to his particular view of his homeland either. In a later interview, Juan reported being surprised and a little disappointed that his partner had not reacted to his presentation in any way and had simply ignored the differentiation between Llión and Spain. Perhaps as a result of this, this particular partnership never seemed to function very well and messages remained short and impersonal for the remainder of the exchange. In her final evaluation of the exchange, Alice complained that Juan had failed to complete certain tasks and that he had rarely attempted to enter into any detailed explanations of his ideas and views. Her rejection of his ideas on his culture appear to be confirmed in a comment almost tinged with sarcasm: "his description of his area didn't particularly make me want to visit his Llionese country." Juan's attempt to express his own perspective of his culture therefore met with rejection and as a result his interest and motivation to carry out the exchange seems to have died quickly. His own final feedback reflected this. In it he described his partner as "not very friendly" and resigned himself to the stereotypes of Spain which he believed his partner to have and which he was unable to change: "She thinks that a lot of commonplaces like bull-fighting and flamenco are true. It didn't surprise me at all."

In this case, the breakdown of the partners' relationship highlights the need for further developing both students' intercultural communicative competence. Alice, for example, appears unwilling or unable to try and understand Juan's representation of his home culture. For this reason, she perhaps needs to further develop an attitude which Byram (1997) describes as "interest in discovering other perspectives on

interpretation of familiar and unfamiliar phenomena ... in other cultures" (p. 50). Juan, on the other hand, needs to work on the skills of interpreting and of interaction. Firstly, he must be able to identify in advance that his version of his home culture may contrast with the image that Alice has of that culture. Byram refers to this as the skill of being able to identify possible areas of misunderstanding in interaction (p. 52). Secondly, he must be able to use his skills of interaction to express his understanding of his home culture in a way in which is interesting and understandable to his partner. Juan's position on regional nationalism and identity is very common in Spain and it is therefore important that students of Spanish should be made aware of this aspect of Spanish culture. However, Spanish students engaging in e-mail exchanges need the intercultural communicative competence to talk about this concept in a way which their virtual partners will understand it.

### **Partnership Two: Opening Up to "The Other Side," Anna and Mary**

Other members of the Spanish group were more successful in using their exchange to express or defend aspects of their cultural identity. I found Anna to be the student who was most affected personally by her experiences with Mary, her English partner. The warmth and honesty which the two expressed in their e-mails almost from the beginning of the exchange led her to comment on a feedback form at the half-way stage that "my experience with my exchange partner is the best thing to happen to me this year" and in a later interview she explained, "I always imagined them [the English] very serious and reserved. But after doing this I've changed my mind. She is so nice." In contrast to Juan and Alice, Anna and Mary seemed to invest a lot of time in their messages, making sure to always write "off-task" as well as carrying out the activity they had been asked to do. Both students used their partner to find out extra information about their target culture and both made sure to acknowledge comments and respond to questions which they had been asked by their partner.

Early on in the exchange, Anna and her partner found differences in attitudes towards "los toros" (bull fighting) when they were asked to compare what came to their minds when they thought about this well-known Spanish tradition (task 3). This developed into an exchange which showed the great potential for this type of comparative activity (Furstenberg et al., 2001). Mary associated "Spain, blood, cruelty, and festivals" with the term, while Anna responded with the much more positive associations "tradition, olé, and bull-fighters." This is a typical clash of opinions on one of the most representative cultural symbols of Spain. For many, both in and outside of Spain, bullfighting is a cruel sport where animals are toyed with, tortured and then slaughtered in the name of culture and tradition, while for others, *los toros* represents tradition and bravery and is seen as a fair combat between man and beast. In an interview with Anna after this initial exchange on the subject, she reported being frustrated by her partner's associations but was unclear as to how to deal with the subject in further e-mails. In response, I explained to Anna that she should use this clash of opinions as an opportunity to become more aware of how British people view her culture, thereby discovering, in the words of Byram, "other perspectives ... on familiar phenomena" (1997, p. 51). Secondly, I suggested that the challenge of the exchange was not for Anna to try and change her partner's opinion, but rather to successfully explain why she personally felt the way she did, thereby giving her partner an insight into the different beliefs and meanings which she attributed to the topic. In this way, the exchange of messages gave Anna the opportunity to develop her intercultural communicative competence in several aspects. She gained knowledge about a cause of misunderstanding and disagreement between the Spanish and British cultures (Byram, p. 51) and she was also given an opportunity to try and mediate between two different interpretations of a cultural practice. This is an important aspect of the intercultural skills of interpreting and relating (Byram, p. 52).

Following our discussion together about her partner's message, Anna's next e-mail contained the following explanation:



## E-mail extract 4

I'd like to tell you about your last E-Mail I think it is very important to know each other a little bit. I think your opinion about "toros" is wrong and I want to explain you something about this. (I don't want to change your opinion, I only think that is better to know something else.)

"Toros" is a typical thing here in Spain but some people think that is cruel too. When I was a child I hated bullfights but one day my father went to a "corrida" and I went with him. When you are there, you change your mind. You realise that it's a world (some people are inside and others outside). These bulls are grown to bullfight. When a man have a farm with chickens, he kills them and sells them. People buy them because they need to eat. It's true that people don't need these bullfights, but I will ask you that if you will come to Spain again you should go to a "corrida."

It's a bit expensive but you will understand it. Nevertheless I understand that some people hate it and I understand that they try to eliminate it.

Anna's low level of English is evident here but, despite her limited linguistic resources, she approaches her explanation in a sensitive, tolerant way such as in her comment in the opening paragraph, "I don't want to change your opinion, I only think that is better to know something else..." She also lets her partner know that she understands that other people are against bull fighting. In any case, it is unlikely that her line of argumentation here would convert anyone to *los toros*, but nevertheless it does go beyond the basic claim "bull fighting is good" and tries to explain her genuine belief that the *corrida* is as much a natural part of life as people killing and selling farm animals. The task and her foreign audience forces Anna to put into words and explain what she may have taken for granted until now, thereby achieving what Byram (1997) describes as suspending belief about one's own culture (Byram, p. 50). In Mary's following e-mail she does not react in detail to Anna's explanation; however she does seem to have taken on the reasoning behind her explanation:

## E-mail extract 5

*Gracias por tu explicacion de tu perspectiva de los toros. Es interesante entender "el otro lado," no?*

[Thank you for your explanation about your opinion on bull fighting. It's interesting to understand "the other side," isn't it?]

Apart from learning how to effectively express her culture, Anna is also learning about the important link between language and culture in the form of communicative style and sociolinguistic norms. Earlier in the exchange, Anna had corrected her partner's Spanish mistakes in the following way:

## E-mail extract 6

Well, I'm going to tell you something about your mistakes: You have problems with the gender of nouns, adjectives and articles.

We don't say "chevere" and "plata" We say: "que algo es guay, muy bueno, estupendo, genial.. and so on" and "dinero, pelas..."

Anna's lack of knowledge of suitable language for pointing out mistakes to an English-speaking person or her inability to use such language probably risked insulting or hurting Mary who was being corrected in such a dismissive way. I wrote an e-mail to Anna suggesting that the language she used for correcting was perhaps a little too direct and harsh for an English speaker and that, instead of saying, "you have problems with..." that she could say something like, "you made one or two mistakes with..." Furthermore, her rather dismissive comment, "We don't say 'chevere' and 'plata,'" was not strictly correct. The terms she was correcting referred to vocabulary items which are used in some South American dialects of Spanish but

not in Castilian Spanish. Therefore, Anna's e-mail should have been explained that the "we" in her correction referred only to speakers of her dialect of Spanish. Anna acknowledged these corrections and I think the message explaining her opinion about bull-fighting reflects a growing sensitivity to issues of directness and politeness (i.e., appropriate social interaction) in language, something which is considered an important aspect of intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997, p. 58).

The success of Anna's exchange and the relative failure of Juan's (a fact reflected in the relative number and quality of e-mails sent as well as in the contrasting feedback from all four partners during and at the end of the exchange) may be attributed to various factors. Motivation, proficiency level, access to technologies and interest in learning about the target culture all may have been influential factors. However, none of these emerged as significant in interviews with the two Spanish students, and they were also not noticeable in the final evaluations submitted by the English. If anything, Anna should have had more difficulties getting involved in the exchange due to her level of English and her lack of experience in interacting with foreign nationals. Their contrasting levels of success would therefore appear to be due to the reactions which they received when they expressed aspects of their culture to their partner. If they perceived their partner as being interested in their descriptions of their own culture, then they felt encouraged to write more and, possibly, to learn more themselves and change their attitudes towards the target culture. If, on the other hand, they felt their positive face was threatened (Brown & Levinson, 1987) by their partner showing a distinct lack of interest in their cultural background, then motivation to write and to change their attitudes rapidly diminished.

When Anna was asked at the end of the exchange if her attitude towards the English had changed, she wrote, "My original idea about the English was totally wrong. They are not serious and closed. They are people like us and I like knowing it now. The tasks taught me that they are not like others describe them; you have to get to know them to know how they truly are." This reflects a development in attitude, moving away from negative stereotyping, but perhaps only reaching as far as what Bennett might describe as "minimisation" and "physical universality" (Bennett, 1993) where cultural difference is ignored in the belief that we are "deep down all the same." While this may not be the "third place" aimed for in intercultural learning, her comments do demonstrate a process of development and a growing awareness of the inaccuracies of national stereotyping: "they are not like others describe them."

### **Students Engaging in Distancing and Cultural Self-Reflection**

According to Cummins & Sayers (1995), one of the many valuable aspects of the early global networks of Freinet and Lodi was their adherence to the principle of "distancing." This referred to the process of learners reflecting on and becoming more aware of their own environment and culture by interacting with foreign partners and answering their questions about the home culture. Gervilliers et al. (cited in Cummins & Sayers, 1995, p. 137) explain the principle in the following way:

The student, because she needs to describe them, develops an awareness of the conditions of her life, of the life of her town or her neighbourhood, even of her promise... She had been living too close to these conditions and through inter-school exchanges she distanced herself from them in order to better comprehend the condition of her life. (1977, p. 29)

The power of intercultural comparison and dialogue is also recognised by the writer Bakhtin:

In the realm of culture, outsidership is a most powerful factor in understanding. It is only in the eyes of *another* culture that foreign culture reveals itself fully and profoundly .... A meaning only reveals its depths once it has encountered and come into contact with another, foreign meaning... (1986, p. 7)

The following example from the project serves to illustrate this point.

**Partnership Three: Questions From Abroad, Lourdes and Sonya**

In the León -- London exchange, students were constantly called on to distance themselves from their home culture as they tried to explain the meaning and significance of aspects of their language and everyday lives. Several interesting examples of this come from the partnership of Lourdes and her English partner, Sonya. These students wrote the longest messages of all the partnerships. This was due, perhaps, to the high levels of competence both students had in their target languages and also because both seemed to recognise the usefulness of having a partner in the target culture who could help with cultural and linguistic doubts and questions. Both would often include comments and questions in their mails which were not related to the tasks but which referred to topics which had come up in other classes and in other contexts.

The partners were led to distance themselves from their home cultures several times in the course of their correspondence as they tried to differentiate between the everyday products and practices of their countries and their deeper cultural significance. In many cases, the students were able to take an "off-task" comment about something one of them had done and then explore its significance in both cultures. When Sonya mentioned in the introduction of one of her mails that she had been at a fireworks display in London for Halloween, Lourdes took up the comment and contrasted the British significance of the festival with the Spanish:

**E-mail extract 7**

Here I have met some English people, from Liverpool and the other day when they asked me where they could buy fireworks I thought they were crazy, but now you have told me about that day I can understand. Here we don't celebrate that night. We are more religious - at least the older generation - and that night we don't do any special things .... The day after Halloween we usually go to the cemetery to put flowers on the graves. That is supposed to be something devout but for most of the people it is just an occasion to show the neighbour your new dress, car or husband. I hate that and it happens a lot in the villages. I think I am beating about the bush but I want you to know the truth.

The genuine expression of feeling in this mail becomes clear in the personalised example using the second-person pronoun, "it is just an occasion to show the neighbour your new dress," and the direct statement of intent at the end of the message, "but I want you to know the truth." This therefore becomes much more than a superficial comparison of "facts and fiestas." Lourdes not only describes what happens on that date in Spain but also tells her partner how she actually feels about the tradition, thereby giving her a personal, critical perspective into the target culture -- something which textbooks are generally unable to do. In terms of intercultural communicative competence, the students are primarily learning about how institutions and traditions in the target culture (in this case, Spain) are perceived through the perspective of members of that culture. This is an important aspect of the knowledge which students need in order to interact successfully with members of the target culture (Byram, 1997, p. 51).

Both students were given another opportunity to engage in distancing and reflect on their own culture when they carried out the task of visiting the tourist shops of their respective cities (**task 5**). Both students found that their country was represented by symbols which were, at times, inaccurate and misleading. Lourdes claimed she was disappointed that León's shops were full of dolls of bull-fighters and flamenco dancers while Sonya wrote,

**E-mail extract 8**

*Las tiendas se venden tambien las banderas de Inglaterra, que representan el nacionalismo del pais. Sin embargo, el idea de nacionalismo no existe realmente. Inglaterra tiene una sociedad muy multi-cultural. No conozco a nadie quien es totalmente Ingles.*

*En las tiendas vi muchas teteras y cajas de te. El te es como una institucion nacional aqui. Si tenemos un problema, la primera cosa que hacemos es tomar una taza de te. Pensamos que el te puede resolver nuestros problemas y despues nos sentimos mucho mejor.*

[The shops also sell English flags which represent the nationalism of the country. However, the idea of nationalism doesn't really exist. England has a multi-cultural society. I don't know anyone who is totally English.

In the shops I saw a lot of teapots and boxes of tea. Tea is like a national institution over here. If we have a problem, the first thing we usually do if have a cup of tea. We believe that tea can solve all our problems and that afterwards we will feel much better.]

The message demonstrates how both students seem to be becoming more aware that intercultural learning is much more than simply reporting and exchanging cultural products and practices. In the message, not only are facts reported: "The shops also sell English flags..." but the connotations behind these cultural products and what they symbolise are identified and then discussed: "However, the idea of nationalism doesn't really exist. England has a multi-cultural society..." In this way the students are trying to express the deeper cultural and contextual meaning of various aspects of their cultures -- all souls' day, flags, and tea. While doing this, they are forced to consider what these cultural symbols, so long taken for granted, actually mean to them and their compatriots. This is giving them invaluable practice in developing skills of interpreting and relating cultural symbols as well as attaining what Byram (1997) describes as "critical cultural awareness" (p. 63).

A further example, this time from another activity about comparative phrases in both cultures, shows how Lourdes is also becoming aware of the link between language and culture. Her message reveals that it is the process of carrying out the task with someone from another culture which makes her stop and reflect about an aspect of her language which she had never considered before:

E-mail extract 9

When we talk about working a lot, we usually say "trabajar como un negro" [to work like a Black]. It is really racist but I had never thought of the meaning before, sometimes you are so used to saying some things that you don't stop to think how despective they can be.

Later, in a mid-project interview, Lourdes' comments confirm that the exchange has led her to reflect on her own culture and language: "I have been able to compare our two cultures and in many situations I have reflected about why we say some expression and not the other ... I learned not only about the other culture but also I find very interesting themes about my own culture."

Sonya also confirms this in her post-project evaluation and she seems to suggest becoming aware, not only of her own culture, but also of how her culture is viewed by members of the target culture: "I think the task [on tourist shops] helped us to discover and think about our own culture and how people see us. I agree with Lourdes when she says that you never know the image people have of your country until you do something like this."

As was seen earlier, Byram (1997) sees this willingness to understand how one's own culture is viewed by others as one of the key attitudes of intercultural communicative competence in learners (p. 50).

## STUDENTS DEVELOPING PERSPECTIVE TO THE TARGET CULTURE THROUGH DIALOGUE

As the project progressed it became clear that students were not only using the exchange as a platform to express their own identity, but they were also using the interaction with their partners (both in their own virtual in-class debates and in their interactions with the target group) to "test-out" and develop their ideas on the target culture. Byram (1997) suggests that learners need to be able to "elicit from an interlocutor the concepts and values of documents and events and to develop an explanatory system susceptible of application to other phenomena" (p. 53) and it would appear that the students used this exchange in order to achieve this objective. Students told anecdotes, expressed theories, and made assumptions about the foreign culture, and then looked for their partners to respond to these ideas by either confirming or denying them. In this way students constructed a new perspective towards the other culture or, at times, simply confirmed their old one.

This process reflects the "technology-mediated" model of learning with technology which, according to Meskill and Ranglova (2000), places the learner's construction of knowledge at its centre. In this model, technology is used to facilitate interaction with variable sources of knowledge and thereby exposes learners to a variety of perspectives. This model is based on the dialogic principles of writers such as Bakhtin (1986) and Kramsch (1993) who see knowledge and meaning as being constructed when interaction and dialogue with others leads to a taking-on of new perspectives. Tella and Mononen-Aaltonen see dialogue as "interaction between self and other and the incorporation of the latter's conceptual horizon to one's own perspective" (1998, p. 13).

Warschauer (1999) and Kinginger et al. (1999) see networked learning as being particularly suited to dialogic interaction as it allows knowledge to be socially constructed through interaction with others in various on-line environments. On-line discussions allow learners to express their ideas and then to clarify and redefine them through feedback and through the other perspectives to which they are exposed.

### Partnership Four: The Cost of Failing to Engage, Manuel and Heather

Manuel was one of the most academically successful students in the class and seemed to be respected a great deal by students both because of his intellectual capabilities and his position as class representative. I was surprised to find out during one of my early interviews with him that he was unhappy and frustrated by the exchange due, initially, to his lack of knowledge of how to work e-mail and then later, to his inability to connect on a personal level with Heather, his partner in London. He complained that she was unwilling to "get stuck into" the topics and discuss issues in a more-detailed, revealing level. He explained,

She blows hot and cold. One day she appears to have changed her batteries and to do her part, the next she doesn't care ... "Well, I'm really busy" ... I don't know. I tried to encourage her to start a debate about the monarchy but she completely ignored the theme ... she is always just referring to the task...

The introduction of one of his e-mails reflects this frustration and shows that Manuel is well aware that a superficial completion of the tasks is unlikely to lead to stimulating debate or productive learning:

E-mail extract 10

Hi Heather! We were supposed to have done a task before this one but, anyway, I think it's better if we catch up because if we don't, we will go one step behind our class-mates and, after all, these tasks intend to get us started so it is up to us.

Here, Manuel is indirectly reprimanding his partner for not having written sooner and thereby having missed out on a task ("We were supposed to have done a task before this one"). He felt that they should have been engaging in more interaction together than simply completing the tasks ("these tasks intend to get us started so it is up to us"). In later e-mails with his partner (relating to [task 9](#)), Manuel could be seen trying to express stereotypes he had about the British and then looking to her to confront and tackle these ideas. He seemed eager to construct new ideas and to consider an alternative perspective. In an e-mail relating to texts which both students had read about the British and the Spanish he wrote,

E-mail extract 11

...it is very relevant the part [of the book extract] that alludes to the way English people behave with foreigners, that is, how a foreign person feels that English distrust him or "make him feel small." It seems to be they are very good at doing so. It's well-known that many people go to England in summer because nowadays everyone wants to improve their command of English and all that stuff. So, people are given accommodation by families that are paid for it. Of course, it can be considered a business, and if you don't want to involve in personal affections is up to you, but, at least, the family should make the person feel comfortable and in an atmosphere that accepts him and not as if he were an object with which they have to put up for a month or two so they can afford the rent or buy a better car. With no doubts, there must be very different types of people who must provide the visitors with a better or worse treatment, but what I've heard about it would be more or less like that.

Anyway, you can give your opinion on this in a more accurate way as you live there and you can see the reality all around you day after day, so correct me if I am wrong 'cause maybe my friends have not been too lucky and because of them now I think this way

In this mail, Manuel tries to relate the text extract about the bad treatment of foreigners by the British to the experiences of his friends and other Spanish students being badly treated in English homestays: "what I've heard about it would be more or less like that." However, his final sentence seems to be the sign of a learner in search of dialogue in the hope that this will allow him to develop or even change his opinions towards the target culture: "you can give your opinion on this in a more accurate way ... so correct me if I am wrong." The task gave Manuel the opportunity to develop his intercultural communicative competence by eliciting the British perspective on this behaviour. Unfortunately, Heather failed to respond to his ideas and questions. Her next e-mails dealt with other tasks and Manuel's opinions were left unchallenged. In a final feedback on the exchange he concluded that, "My opinion about them [the British] was not good at the beginning and I'm afraid it continues the same." In reference to the British image of Spain he says, "They've got some stereotypes of Spain and they comply with them. They are not interested in learning."

Manuel is an example of a learner's attitudes towards the target culture being developed through interaction. However, instead of developing a better understanding of the foreign culture through dialogue with others, he used his previous experiences and his own lack of a successful working relationship with his partner to confirm the negative stereotypes which he had before. His perspectives are indeed being constructed through interaction but not in a way one would wish.

In contrast to Manuel, a further example illustrates how another Spanish student was able to construct a more empathetic view of the target culture by gaining insight into how members of the foreign culture view themselves (i.e., the English) and their own culture (i.e., England).

#### **Partnership Five: Seeing Through the Eyes of Another; Susana and Janet**

Despite initial technical problems, Susana (from Spain) and her partner Janet (from England) had developed a relatively good working relationship during the initial exchanges of e-mails. Both students

wrote to each other in a friendly manner and were taking care to correct each other's language errors at the end of each message. When the students were asked to carry out the word association exercise (task 3), they found that they had very different attitudes to the term "police." Janet associated the word with "uniforms, crime, corruption and racism," while Susana simply wrote, "a normal person." In an interview with Susana following this exercise, I asked her how she felt about this:

This really shocked me. We had spoken about a black teenager being killed by the police in London. But this message really brought it home to me ... Her comments about the police left me ... I don't know ... I thought these things only happened in the films. This really shocked me.

Soon after she carefully breached the subject again with her partner, explaining why she had been shocked by her comments:

E-mail extract 12

And finally, the police is something difficult for me to explain. They are people like you and me but we think that they can help us, but sometimes they can't because they can't do anything. I think it was a bit unjust what you said, they do which they can to help us.

Her English partner responded to this in the following way:

E-mail extract 13

*Gracias por tus contestas a mis preguntas. Estoy de acuerdo con lo que dijiste de la policia - hay un limite a lo que pueden hacer, pero no piensas tambien que hay bastante corrupcion en la policia? La "LAPD" en los Estados Unidos es notoria, no? Y, aqui en Inglaterra, la policia metropolitana de Londres tiene una reputacion racista, especialmente desde la muerte de un joven negro, Stephen Lawrence. Sus asesinos (blancos) no fueron acusados, a pesar de muchos testimonios y pruebas.*

[Thanks for your answers to my questions. I agree with what you said about the police. There is a limit to what they can do, but do you not think there is a lot of corruption in the police? The LAPD in the USA is notorious, isn't it? And here in London the metropolitan police has a racist reputation, especially since the death of a young black boy, Stephen Lawrence. His (white) murderers were not brought to trial, despite a lot of witnesses and proof.]

Here Susana is being given insight into the reasoning behind Janet's negative attitudes to the police and develops her knowledge of "institutions, and perceptions of them, which impinge on daily life within one's own and one's interlocutor's country" (Byram, 1997, p. 51). This can be seen, for example, in the extract "here in London the metropolitan police has a racist reputation, especially since the death of a young black boy..." Susana therefore has the opportunity to move on from an initial shock about the differing attitude to a better understanding of the cultural context which has caused this belief to come about. Commenting on exercises similar to this one, Byram, Morgan, and Colleagues state that

When learners acquire an understanding of the connotations of lexical items in the foreign language and contrast them with connotations of an apparently equivalent item in their own, they begin to gain insight into the schemata and perspectives of the foreign culture. (1994, p. 44)

Later in the exchange, Janet sent Susana the following mail giving her reactions to short texts she had read about England and the English (task 9). Once again she gives her partner a well thought-out explanation of English behaviour based on the English cultural context. Here, Susana is again being given the opportunity to see foreign cultural behaviour through the eyes of someone from that culture:

## E-mail extract 14

*Comparando los hábitos ingleses con los españoles. Los españoles no tienen miedo de expresar sus sentimientos como los Ingleses. Y esto puede parecer casi arrogancia a los demás estranjereros. Pero, como dice Paxman, es solo porque es parte de su cultura proteger la "privacy" en una forma que los hace parecer muy poco abiertos. El autor hace también una relación entre el hecho que la mayoría de los ingleses poseen la casa en la que viven. Hay un sentido muy fuerte del privado, y tener una casa propia significa mas intimidad y "privacy", pero eso no me parece muy diferente que en cualquier otro país. Paxman relaciona todo esto también con el hecho que Inglaterra es una isla, pero yo no creo que eso tenga mucho que ver con los caracteres fríos. Yo lo relaciono mas con el clima, que no deja que la gente se quede fuera en la calle o en otros sitios publicos para mucho tiempo.*

[Comparing the English and the Spanish, the Spanish are not afraid to express their feelings, unlike the English are. And that could seem like arrogance to many foreigners. But, as Paxman [the author of the texts on England, 1998] says, this is only because it is part of their culture to protect their privacy in a way which may seem quite closed to others. The author also makes a link to the fact that the majority of the English own the house in which they live. There is a very strong sense of privacy, and owning one's house means more intimacy and privacy. But this doesn't seem to me to be very different from other countries. Paxman relates all this to the fact that England is an island, but I don't believe that this has much to do with the cold characteristics. I relate it more to the climate which doesn't allow people to stay out on the street or in other public places for a long time...]

In this mail, a supposed aspect of British cultural behaviour (Britons' unwillingness "to express their feelings") and a native's understanding of it are explained by a member of that culture, thereby exposing Susana not only to British behaviour, but also to an understanding of that behaviour "from an insider's perspective" (Roberts, Byram, Barro, Jordan, & Street, 2001, p. 43). Susana's growing empathy and understanding that cultural products and practices have different meanings in different cultures (an integral part of intercultural communicative competence) shows itself clearly in an e-mail she sends towards the end of the exchange. Talking about texts she had read about Spain (Hooper, 1995), she writes,

## E-mail Extract 15

The author said that the Spaniards have a big lack of shame, that we have little conscience of embarrassment, maybe he is right but only if you see it as an English person. They see it this way because they judge it with their rules.

Having received so much insight from her partner on the way the English see and experience their world, Susana seems to be moving on from the assumption that everyone judges behaviour and sees the world in the same way that she does. She shows an understanding that Spanish cultural behaviour will be understood in other ways by other cultures ("maybe he is right but only if you see it as an English person"), a first step on the road to empathy with the target culture. Byram et al. (1994) describe this form of empathetic understanding as "informed supposition" which occurs when students try to imagine how the world might be seen through someone else's eyes.

At the outset of this paper it was asked what characteristics would be conducive in the development of successful intercultural learning in an e-mail exchange. The reported research identified three such characteristics: (a) acceptance of one's own culture by one's partner, (b) the development of distancing, and (c) dialogic interaction. The following section looks at the implications of these findings for future exchanges.



## IMPLICATIONS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

This exchange would appear to confirm the value of network-based interactions for the development of intercultural learning as it was outlined in section two of this paper. The different relationships which developed during the e-mail exchange helped students to either develop the different components of intercultural communicative competence or at least served to highlight the components which required further attention (see, e.g., [Partnership one](#)). Throughout the exchange students were given an opportunity to learn about the important link between language and culture, both through activities which led them to recognise the differing semantic connotations of words in different cultures and also through the need for them to deal with the various communicative styles and socio-pragmatic rules in intercultural communication. Furthermore, in their interactions with their partners, they were also challenged to identify and explain the values and significance of products and practices in both the home and target cultures.

Evaluating to what extent the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of intercultural communicative competence were developed and how the students would later put them to use was difficult to evaluate in the time period during and immediately after the project -- and for this reason it was not attempted in this study. Indeed, increased intercultural competence is only likely to be revealed through further long-term study of the students involved (Kramsch, 1993). Nevertheless, research did reveal evidence of intercultural learning taking place and, most importantly for our research questions, what was causing this to occur.

The feedbacks and interviews carried out with the Spanish students at the end of the study suggested that some students simply confirmed their negative attitudes towards the target culture (Mannell and Juan) while others such as Anna, Lourdes, and Susana had moved on from the stereotypes and prejudices they had expressed in interviews and questionnaires at the outset of the exchange. The reasons why these students were more successful than the others in changing their attitudes and developing their intercultural communicative competence appear to be as follows. Juan's failure to find a receptive audience to his representation of Spain and León (in [partnership one](#)) meant that his own personal goal for the project was rejected by his partner and he subsequently lost his intrinsic motivation to engage in the exchange and, instead, developed a rather pessimistic outlook towards the target culture. Manuel also found his attempts to elicit alternative perspectives from his partner ignored (in [partnership four](#)), and consequently he worked with the little information he had about his partner to come to negative conclusions about her and her culture.

In contrast, the exchanges which enabled learners to successfully develop aspects of intercultural communicative competence exhibited the following characteristics:

- Students had opportunities to express their feelings and views about their own culture to a receptive audience (as in the case of Anna in [partnership two](#)).
- Students were encouraged to reflect critically on their own culture through questions posed by their partners (as in the case of Lourdes in [partnership three](#)).
- Students engaged in dialogic interaction with their partners about the home and target cultures' and consequently this led to a growing awareness of differing perspectives on the two cultures' products and practices (as in the case of Susana in [partnership five](#)).

Consequently, it is clear that not only is task design important for the development of intercultural communicative competence (as already pointed out by Müller-Hartmann, 2000a), but also the learners' ability to take part effectively in e-mail exchanges. Much has already been written about the skills learners need to have when engaging in on-line activities. Shetzer & Warschauer's (2000) electronic literary approach, for example, puts forward a useful framework of skills and knowledge which students need to have in order to develop electronic literacy, while Belz (2001, 2002), Belz and Müller-Hartmann (2002) and Kern (1998) have highlighted various types of communication breakdown which students need to be aware of in on-line intercultural exchanges. However, based on an analysis of the e-mails

exchanged by students in this exchange, the students who were able to develop a successful and interculturally rich relationship with their partner had written e-mails which had the following elements:

- They took into account the socio-pragmatic rules of the partner's language when writing in that language (see e-mail extract 6).
- Apart from the basic information on the topic in question, they also provided their partner with analysis and personal opinions about the topic (see e-mail extracts 4, 7, and 14).
- They asked questions which encouraged feedback and reflection from their partner (see e-mail extract 11 and 13).
- They tried to develop a personal ("friendly") relationship with their partner, as opposed to simply focussing on the tasks they had been given (see e-mail extract 7).
- They recognised and reacted to the needs and interests of their partners, answering their questions and encouraging them to write more about the topics which interested them (see e-mail extract 5 and, for an example of when this was not the case, see [partnership four](#)).

As Tella and Mononen-Aaltonen (1998) point out, current netiquettes encourage users to write short e-mails, often no longer than one screen. Students may also find it difficult to get access to e-mail for long enough in order to compose in-depth messages. Nevertheless, if intercultural communicative competence is to be developed successfully and if students are to learn anything more than superficial knowledge about the target culture, then students need to write messages which take into account the points laid out above. Writing messages off-line or combining e-mails with essays and other hard copy materials (as suggested by Kern, 1998) are two possible solutions to this problem. During the early stages of this project, guidelines for interpreting e-mails from the other culture as well as examples of what I perceived to be good messages (based on the insights of my on-going research) were drawn up and given to the students. These examples and suggestions were often adapted from the students' own e-mails (when they gave me permission to use them) and also from the examples provided by Kern.

It became clear during the exchange that learners are no more likely to know how to compose effective e-mails for their foreign partners any more than they are likely to be aware of the skills and knowledge necessary for intercultural learning. For this reason the role of the teacher in on-line learning needs careful attention. For many years the term "guide on the side" has been used to describe the role of teachers in the technology enhanced classroom, where their function is seen to be that of "a facilitator of knowledge rather than the font of wisdom" (Warschauer & Healey, 1998). However, many researchers (Feldman, Conold, & Coulter, 2001; Fischer, 1998; Müller-Hartmann, 2000b) have been critical of this view. They have suggested that while the Internet may allow opportunities for on-line collaboration, this does not mean that learners will have the skills to exploit these opportunities for successful learning. Similarly, following an analysis of this exchange, I definitely see the need for myself as a teacher of intercultural communicative competence to take a greater role in helping students in analysing and creating e-mails in any future on-line exchanges.

## CONCLUSION

This project set out to identify the factors which successfully lead to intercultural learning in virtual exchanges. It was found that the students who were able to successfully develop their intercultural communicative competence in this exchange had found a receptive audience for the expressions of their own cultural identity. They had been forced to look at their home culture from a new perspective through the questions and comments of their partners, and through dialogue with their partner they had begun to understand the different ways a culture's products and practices can be experienced. However, this project also revealed that intercultural exchanges which fail to function properly can lead to a reinforcement of stereotypes and a confirmation of negative attitudes. This confirms the findings of Belz (2002, p. 70-72).

The research also attempted to identify elements of e-mail messages which would enable students to establish successful intercultural relationships with their partners. The ability of the students to build up a personal relationship with their partners via e-mail, their sensitivity to their partners' needs and communicative style, and their capacity to produce engaging, in-depth correspondence were found to be key aspects of the e-mails which lead to the successful development of intercultural communicative competence in the exchanges.

In conclusion, it is important to point out that the area of intercultural e-mail exchanges continues to offer fertile ground for further research and analysis. It would be perhaps useful, for example, to identify whether the characteristics of successful e-mail exchanges and the content of effective e-mails which have been presented here need to be modified or expanded in other cultural and institutional contexts. Furthermore, greater investigation is needed into the question of how teachers can maximise the intercultural learning experience of e-mail exchanges. Finally, more in-depth research is also required into how notions of language, nation, and cultural identity are addressed by learners in intercultural e-mail exchanges.<sup>4</sup>

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> I would like to thank my partner in London, Manuela Gil Torres, for her contribution to the development of the exchange and the collection of data for this research project.
- <sup>2</sup> The names of the participants used in this paper have been changed.
- <sup>3</sup> For a significant minority of people in the Spanish region of León, a strong sense of local identity is accompanied by a desire for greater autonomy from the Spanish state. As is the case in other Spanish provinces, the movement for independence is often associated with the use of a regional language instead of Castilian Spanish (Hooper, 1995; Mar-Moliner, 2000).
- <sup>4</sup> I would like to thank the reviewers who read this paper for their insightful suggestions and comments. Furthermore, I would like to gratefully acknowledge the support of my colleagues at the English department at the University of Essen, Germany.

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