1. Introduction

This collection of papers, coming from ‘New Directions in Telecollaborative Research and Practice: The Second Conference on Telecollaboration in Higher Education’ hosted by Trinity College Dublin from the 21st to the 23rd of April 2016, offers a window on a rapidly evolving form of learning which is used in many formats and contexts, but has as a defining feature the ability to unite learners from classrooms around the world in meaningful computer-mediated tasks and activities.

The papers, with the exception of the keynote addresses, are restricted to 1500 words each, which allowed us to include a fair number (39, together with the three keynote papers), but at the same time posed a significant challenge to authors with regard to the level of detail with which they could report on the telecollaboration projects and the research findings elicited from them. Nevertheless, we hope that the particular collection of papers and format chosen will give both experienced users and newcomers to telecollaboration a glimpse of the breadth and depth of the field and inspire them to apply this innovative form of learning more widely and with more confidence, a stronger sense of purpose, and a greater awareness of good practice.
Chapter 1

From these papers it becomes clear that telecollaboration has long shed its exclusive concern with language and that language and culture are now intricately interwoven in ever more complex contexts of global learning. Nor is the application of telecollaboration any longer the sole domain of language studies. A specific section in this publication has been set aside to describe telecollaboration in other disciplines. The bulk of papers, however, comes from authors with backgrounds in languages, working in a range of disciplines and professions, including language teaching, teacher training, applied linguistics, administration and management, language and media centres, and mobility and internationalisation offices. The papers are based on telecollaborative exchanges between at least 30 different countries (not all countries are specified), covering more than 10 different languages. English, as a foreign language or lingua franca, takes a clear majority: it is mentioned as one of the languages in 26 papers. Spanish (6), German (6) and French (4) are next, followed by the other languages.

Following the theme of the conference, the papers offer an overview of the practical and theoretical considerations that went into the design of the projects and the research started in their wake. Basing ourselves on the original conference strands, we have organised the papers by common themes or threads in telecollaborative research and practice that help to identify distinctive trends and approaches to telecollaboration as a form of learning in higher education. From the comparison and rearrangement of papers, five groups of papers emerged from which we have divided this book into coherent sections. These sections are representative of the main perspectives on telecollaboration presented at the conference. Within each section, however, the research focus or practice described may vary considerably. And many papers could have been included in more than one section.

The papers by our keynote speakers are included in a separate section preceding the other sections. This is not only to honour the speakers who have been kind enough to include their presentations in this publication, but also to emphasise the relevance of the topics they address for the field of telecollaboration as a whole.
2. **Keynote papers**

2.1. **Celeste Kinginger: telecollaboration and student mobility for language learning**

Kinginger, in her paper based on the opening keynote address of the conference, explores the potential of telecollaboration in relation to what we know from quantitative and qualitative studies on language learning in student mobility. In a highly relevant, comprehensive review of the literature, she discusses the strong individual differences which have been found in the effectiveness of student stays abroad for language learning. Language development may remain limited due to a range of factors. These include inability to build social networks, retention of strong connections to home, reinforcement of national identities in the face of new cultural or linguistic norms, and failed communication because of overreliance on classroom interaction patterns or incomprehensible language use by the host families. Kinginger sees a key role for telecollaboration in preparing students for the challenges of such exchanges. Telecollaboration may offer a safe environment in which learners have access to expert users of non-pedagogic spoken and written language. Through telecollaboration they may begin to develop the social networks and the language-mediated identities critical for becoming successful language learners during their stay abroad and beyond. She hopes that educators will continue to implement ‘articulated curricula’ in which telecollaboration is linked with student mobility. By outlining issues that literature and research findings have brought forward with regard to language learning during mobility and by suggesting solutions to help us overcome these, Kinginger’s introductory chapter is a valuable resource for educators who want to enhance language learning by setting up telecollaboration, either as a preparation for physical mobility, or as an alternative to it.

2.2. **Andreas Müller-Hartmann: a task is a task is a task… or is it?**

In his keynote address, Müller-Hartmann presents a teacher education perspective and explores the processes that teachers-to-be go through while
developing pedagogic competences for telecollaborative task-based language learning. He sees tasks and task design skills as central to creating and assuring a stimulating learning environment. Müller-Hartmann takes the reader from the theoretical considerations of CALL tasks and teacher competence in facilitating rich task-driven interactions to a practical investigation of a case study in which participating student teachers are engaged in task design on the micro-level. As he demonstrates, students’ telecollaborative on-task performance offers a window into the processes of developing the competences in focus as well as their agency as future teachers.

While exploring the pedagogical context, the author puts a strong emphasis on the role of qualitative and introspective data in tracking the multilayered processes of competence development. He advocates a mixed-method approach to capture how group members contribute to tasks-as-processes and how, in consequence, they develop a wide range of pedagogical and social competences. This is possible through the analysis of different types of qualitative and retrospective data retrieved from chat transcripts, recorded classroom discourse and students’ reflective texts. It is the triangulation of the data that allows a deeper understanding of how teacher trainees become aware of their future role. As the author explains, in this approach tasks become ‘exploitable activities’ which can generate a wealth of introspective and qualitative data without disturbing the usual classroom procedures and interactions – a flaw hitherto seen as inherent to CALL qualitative research.

2.3. David Little: learner autonomy and telecollaborative language learning

Little’s keynote contribution interrogates telecollaboration against the broader background of foreign and second language pedagogy. This analysis encompasses on the one hand a sharp critique of traditional pedagogical practice, and on the other a detailed vision of how classrooms can and should work. Little see the communicative approach as having merely continued the fundamental discourse patterns and roles that have obtained in classrooms for generations, in spite of the failure of these practices to deliver on “the more or less universal goal of L2
education”: “to develop learners’ communicative repertoires, and by doing so extend their identity and the scope of their agency”. He further faults research in instructed SLA for implicitly accepting the pedagogical status quo and failing to construct alternative visions.

The alternative proposed by Little is a classroom driven by language learner autonomy. In such a classroom, learners use the target language from the outset as the medium of planning, executing, monitoring and evaluating their own learning, thereby channelling and extending their agency through the TL. Written language plays a central role in this process, as employed in learner journals, learner-generated learning materials and class posters. This conception of the language learning process prompts a series of questions for telecollaborators, one of the most pointed being the first: “Is your telecollaborative learning embedded in a larger L2 learning dynamic that shares the characteristics of [the autonomy classroom]? If not, why not?”.

Implicit in Little’s challenge is the argument that telecollaboration cannot by itself be an agent of fundamental change: it can only ever be as effective as the pedagogical environment it is embedded in. Conversely, we might observe that among the promises of telecollaboration is the fact that designing online learning projects obliges us to revisit and interrogate our assumptions about language and intercultural learning, identifying those processes that telecollaboration can best support. Among those processes, of course, is the exercise of learner agency through involved communication. This recognition might in turn stimulate us to critically scrutinise our assumptions about the classroom environment more generally: we might, in other words, find ourselves reshaping our physical classrooms in the image of our virtual ones.

3. Telecollaboration in support of culture and language-oriented education

Telecollaboration in support of culture and language emerged as one of the leading themes from the papers edited. Culture and language have been key
foci in telecollaborative practice and research from the early stages, and in light of the background in languages of the majority of authors, it should come as no surprise that a substantial number of contributions centred on how telecollaboration, in different configurations for learners from various language backgrounds, is used to enhance language skills or intercultural communicative competences. All of them have English as one of the languages or as the only language in the exchange.

In the first paper by Ceo-DiFrancesco, Mora, and Serna Collazos, English is one of the languages in a tandem exchange including Spanish as the other language. The project, which was set up to offer learners linguistic and cultural interactions which were not readily available in their respective classrooms, suggests that growth in intercultural learning, if any, is partly dependent on the environment in which the learning occurs (Colombia vs. US). The use of Spanish and English and reference to Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) as one of the guiding frameworks links this project to the second paper by Rojas-Primus. She finds that telecollaboration can reinforce the experiential, transformative and participatory dimensions of learning by students in Canada who are engaged in telecollaborative activities with learners from Chile. English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) is the language in a project between Spanish and French students, reported on by Castro and Derivry-Plard. They seek to engage learners of different L1 backgrounds and cultures in mini-anthropological or sociological tasks along the lines propounded by Kramsch (2014) and others.

Sauro zooms in on intercultural learning in an English teacher education class in Sweden, connected to English teacher programmes in four other countries. She reports that intercultural learning often takes place during in-class discussions and reflections following the exchanges, thereby lending support to O’Dowd’s (2016) contention that integration in the classroom context is essential for achieving intercultural learning. A qualitative study by Yang of student blogs in an English-Korean telecollaboration project also reveals that rich intercultural interactions do indeed occur, providing further support for telecollaboration as a source of intercultural learning.
A less common form of intercultural language learning is presented by Johnson. On the basis of an analysis of recorded videos, reflective essays and learner interviews, she discusses the benefits and risks of setting up intergenerational videoconferencing between French learners of English and senior citizens in the US.

On a more practical note, Abruquah, Dosa, and Duda examine what is needed to set up intercultural exchanges successfully between students from five European universities. Their study reveals high satisfaction with the exchanges overall, but also provides a word of warning against trying to sustain projects with so many partners. Similarly, Nicolaou and Sevilla-Pavón, reporting on telecollaboration projects between students in Cyprus and Spain, find positive development overall of intercultural competence, language skills, and e-literacy; however, in some cases, insufficient commitment and lack of reciprocity may affect students’ motivation negatively. Finally, exploring how the motivation for learning English by students from three Asian countries may be enhanced by connecting them to learners in the US, Shimizu, Pack, Kano, Okazaki, and Yamamura suggest that telecollaborative classes are indeed effective in providing students increased interaction in English, and helping them recognise the value of language learning via telecollaboration.

4. Training teachers through telecollaboration

One of the recurrent themes in telecollaborative research and practice is training teachers for and through telecollaboration. This trend is reflected in eight papers in which the authors address various dimensions of teacher professional development from teacher-learner interaction through interdisciplinary approaches and task design to teacher competences.

A very interesting perspective has been offered by Loranc-Paszylk who, in her study of Polish and Spanish teacher trainees engaged in joint task design, explores the joint potential of cross-cultural videoconferencing and Content and
Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). The author analyses how each of the four pillars of the CLIL conceptual framework can benefit from telecollaboration to conclude that in the context of teacher training it is the cognitive and cultural dimensions that benefit most.

Synchronous online communication is also central to the study by Wigham and Vidal, who concentrate on competences required of teachers engaged in videoconferencing. By analysing multimodal transcripts of exchanges recorded between undergraduate learners of French from Dublin and French teacher trainees from Lyon, the authors identify and examine the strategies and semiotic resources that trainee-teachers use to soften potentially face-threatening acts of correcting learners in a videoconferencing mode.

A videoconferencing context has also been explored by Hoshii and Schumacher, who offer an asymmetrical study into conversational competence of L2 learners and teachers of German as a Foreign Language (GFL). In the project carried out as part of longitudinal partnership between teacher trainees from Berlin and advanced learners of GFL from Tokyo, the authors investigate participants’ interactions and focus on how they signal and then solve problems with comprehension. Based on their findings, Hoshii and Schumacher provide several implications for learning and teacher training.

Interaction is also at the centre of a study by Loizidou and Mangenot, who examine formal and informal patterns of communication between learners of French and prospective teachers of French as a foreign language in the context of asynchronous forum discussions. In particular the authors investigate the conditions under which prospective teachers switch between formal instruction and less formal episodes. As the authors conclude, the types of interaction depend on a wide array of environmental and personal factors.

Whyte and Gijsen use an asymmetrical exchange to investigate interaction between teacher trainees and learners. In their study, 35 TEFL teacher trainees from France and the Netherlands collaborated to design interactive tasks for
secondary-level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. The authors analyse student-teacher course contributions, the teaching/learning materials they designed, and their reflections on this work. The observations they make reveal wide variation across participating teachers which remain consistent with their differing experience, beliefs, training and institutional cultures.

Using telecollaboration to embrace diversity is a key concept of the paper by Valcke and Romero Alfaro. They address the burning issue of growing interculturalism at academic institutions and the consequent need for helping faculty engage in English-Medium Instruction. Importantly, the authors see the value of telecollaborative training in its economy and flexibility to accommodate broadly understood diversities. In their study, academic teachers representing various disciplines from universities in Cadiz (Spain) and Brussels work in intercultural tandems to support each other in the acquisition of English for teaching purposes.

Preparing teachers for telecollaboration is central to the study by Waldman, Harel, and Schwab. They provide evidence that experiencing telecollaboration enhances pre-service teachers’ self-efficacy to facilitate telecollaborative projects. Following a project in which student teachers from Germany and Israel used videoconferencing to compare and evaluate the ways EFL is taught in their contexts, a survey showed raised feelings of competence in designing, organising, running and assessing online exchanges with their future pupils.

An innovative method of training teachers for telecollaboration is presented by Melchor-Couto and Jauregi. The authors use the context of the EU-funded project TILA to explore the role of coaching in enhancing teachers’ competences for integrating telecollaboration in their own language courses. In their study the authors report on the remote meetings of the coach and two telecollaborative teachers. They conclude that coaching is successful for integration of complex pedagogical innovations as it assists teachers in adopting and maintaining newly developed skills and practices.
5. **Telecollaboration in service of mobility**

As the concept of internationalisation has become prominent in tertiary education, telecollaboration is increasingly used to support mobility programmes as a complementary or preparatory stage, or even as an alternative to mobility. As the studies included in this section demonstrate, participation in telecollaborative exchanges helps learners develop necessary linguistic and intercultural competencies, build social relationships and advance in a range of transversal skills, all of which increase the efficiency of staying abroad.

The preparatory role of telecollaboration for mobility programmes is discussed by Giralt and Jeanneau, who investigate a project in which students in Ireland and Spain collaborate online before their study visits. The findings demonstrate that reflection and analysis prompted by students’ telecollaboration not only raise their intercultural awareness and promote language practice but also reduce anxiety and increase motivation for the period abroad.

A comparison of various pre-mobility modes and scenarios is offered by Nissen, who uses a blended learning approach to analyse those aspects which participating students perceive as assets for their learning. Comparing students’ approaches to collaboration with local peers in small groups, local Erasmus students and with telecollaborative partners, Nissen discovers that communication scenarios with external partners, be it face-to-face or telecollaborative, are valued most in terms of perceived learning gains. As the findings show, learner engagement and social presence sustain learning in collaboratively oriented learning situations.

De Martino also focuses on relationships, when he investigates a project in which students of German and Italian work in tandems in the dual roles of native speakers and language learners. Weekly Skype communication on personalised topics serves as preparation for real-life study trips. As the author shows, authentic interaction with native speakers inevitably awakens participants to interculturality issues and helps them establish personal relationships, both of which increase the efficiency of the ensuing study visits.
The impact of virtual versus physical exchanges on the development of personality traits is investigated by Van der Velden, Millner, and Van der Heijden. They present a very interesting study based on a large-scale project in which students from ten countries met online in facilitated video conference sessions to discuss current European socio-political issues. The authors investigate the impact of online meetings on participants’ transversal skills, relating it to with the Erasmus Impact Study (EIS). They provide evidence that the effects of regular online are comparable to those of the EIS.

Telecollaboration can also be seen as an alternative to physical mobility. Hagley provides an account of a large-scale exchange engaging as many as 1500 participants from 21 institutions and six countries. Hagley highlights a unique value of telecollaboration for students from mono-cultural classrooms, where opportunities to engage in authentic communication are scarce. As the author concludes, participation in such a large-scale multi-institutional project frees teachers of the organisational burden and assists learners in attaining cultural acclimatisation, which Hagley sees as preparatory to cultural competence.

6. **Telecollaboration for other disciplines and skills**

Telecollaboration is increasingly used across disciplines to support the learning of content and transversal skills other than languages. This is reflected in this section, which includes applications in Geography, History, Translation, Public Administration, Political Science, Cultural Studies, and Foreign Relations. Language and intercultural communication are obviously still relevant in these contexts, but the emphasis is on how telecollaboration may enhance content learning by providing a global perspective, prepare students better for functioning in a global society, or increase their intercultural and interreligious tolerance and understanding.

Deutscher examines if and how telecollaboration is used in Germany in geography CLIL courses, where online exchanges can bring in cross-
regional perspectives and offer opportunities for authentic language use and integration of digital media, such as charts and maps. In an interdisciplinary project on Latin American history, Fernández finds that pre-service history teachers in Argentina and students of Spanish in Denmark employ different Communication Strategies (CS). The recommendations for CS training she provides may be helpful for others responsible for supporting similar asymmetrical collaborations.

In the context of translation studies, Marczak reports that telecollaboration may help to increase students’ employability by contributing to competences for teamwork, communication, leadership, negotiation, self-management, etc. In view of variation in the degrees to which these skills are developed, he discusses the implications for improving their integration in translator education. Preparing students for working in a global environment is also a key objective in the paper by Mesh, who describes how students in an Italian-English tandem project, by working together through wikis and mobile devices, are acquiring the transversal competencies of using digital tools, managing their own learning and communicating effectively in cross-cultural and interpersonal relationships.

Capobianco, Rubaii, and Lípez-De Castro present lessons learnt from a jointly developed course for Master of Public Administration students in the US and Political Science undergraduates in Colombia, intended to prepare students for being successful public affairs practitioners in a highly technological, globalised and diverse environment.

Finally, in the context of a project between students in a Cultural Studies programme in Tunisia and a Foreign Relations course in the US, Mason shows that students respond positively overall to telecollaboration as a way of improving intercultural and interreligious understanding and overcoming prejudices and misconceptions, but that deeper discussions of controversial points are sometimes avoided and that slow or no responses, especially from US students, may have had a negative impact on intercultural attitudes.
7. **Analysing interaction in telecollaborative exchanges**

This section focuses on the analysis of telecollaboration from a range of research perspectives, interaction models and theoretical frameworks. It includes papers informed by discourse analysis, corpus linguistic analysis and conversation analysis, as well as studies looking at telecollaboration through an activity theoretical lens. The studies contribute to enhancing our understanding of what goes on in telecollaborative exchanges both at the micro level of individual utterances and at the macro level of facilitating successful collaborations.

**Akiyama**, in a discourse analytic study of negotiation turns in a tandem exchange between a Japanese and an American student, shows how valuable opportunities for communication are missed because the American responds to the Japanese student’s moments of silence by explaining too much rather than giving him opportunities to speak. Using corpus-based linguistic analysis, **Orsini-Jones, Gazeley-Eke and Leinster** found that the pronoun ‘we’ as used in asynchronous forum interactions may have different meanings depending on the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the interlocutors involved. This may be a source of miscommunication between the groups involved.

By analysing conversations and reflective interviews, **Hoffstaedter and Kohn** provide evidence that their task design, based on telecollaboration in which secondary school learners address everyday topics in lingua franca exchanges from their home environments, creates suitable conditions for establishing common ground, exercising empathy and dealing with communication problems.

Drawing on an activity theoretical framework, **Dey-Plissonneau and Blin** report on the affordances emerging during pedagogical interactions in an online videoconferencing session between teacher trainees and learners of French. Looking through a similar activity theoretical lens, **Malerba and Appel** examine the opportunities for tandem language learning in the informal language learning communities Livemocha and Busuu.
Using a faceted classification scheme for computer-mediated discourse, Batardière and Helm compare two distinct models of telecollaboration – one synchronous and part of the Soliya Connect Programme, the other asynchronous and part of an intercultural Franco-Irish exchange – with respect to the learning space they afford for politically engaged and reflective pedagogy.

Renner addresses the challenges of applying a conversation analysis framework to data collection in the study of synchronous audio-visual eTandem exchanges. The first cycle of data collection demonstrated the difficulty of capturing all modes of communication, making sure the data are complete and authentic, and getting students to record both on-task and off-task conversations. The same type of data are the focus of the next paper by Aranha and Leone, who report on a major initiative to create a databank of oral teletandem interactions of students in Brazil and Italy with students in the US and UK respectively. The Interaction Space Model by Chanier et al. (2014) is used to identify and classify relevant data from the online exchanges.

8. **Concluding note**

As illustrated above, the papers included in this collection describe telecollaboration from a wide range of perspectives, educational approaches, and research traditions and frameworks. The papers give readers a view of how students experienced telecollaborative projects, how and why teachers and others experts designed the projects and tasks, and how researchers went about analysing them. We hope that this cross-disciplinary, multifaceted approach to practice and research, together with the open access availability of this publication, will bring telecollaboration to the attention of many, including educational administrators and policy makers whose support remains to be fully harnessed to reap the benefits of telecollaboration in HE on a larger scale (Lewis & O’Dowd, 2016). Speaking on behalf of the INTENT/UNICollaboration team, which organised the conference from which these papers have come, we hope that this publication will be followed by a regular stream of papers in the open access journal which this team has planned.
References


