

HAYAT AL-KHATIB

Globalizing Online: Binary Distinctions or Global Partaking?

Introduction

Various types of telecollaborative practices have emerged with the opportunities provided by globalization in the information and technology supported communication age. Along with these practices, many practitioners and theorists have underscored the possibilities and implicit promises of uniformity and leveling of opportunities as individuals across the globe have engaged in intercultural dialogue. There are numerous examples of online, distance and e-learning practices that have utilized telecollaboration in advancing better learning processes and improving teaching and learning prospects (see Block, 2010, Al-Khatib, 2011). At the educational frontier, telecollaboration has been incorporated to maximize the opportunities afforded through technology and enrich the learning experience (see Jonassen *et al*; 2003; Fitzpatrick and Davies 2003; Chapelle 2004; Lauriero and Bettencourt 2011). Higher education institutions have begun utilizing online communication forums and venues to facilitate telecollaboration for working groups, with the aim of providing better learning experiences, opportunities for cooperating in educational and social activities and exchanging information at a global scale (see Knight 2005; Wilson *et al* 2007).

The technological innovation characterizing the twenty-first century has brought with it promises of improved globalized learning as new access is afforded and new frontiers explored, in the pursuit of better learning experiences, telecollaboration and improved educational practices. In an effort to utilize digital technology in advancing collaboration and better learning processes, educational institutions and especially universities in the developing world have begun promoting the use of technology in teaching and learning, based on the fact that

ICT resources and tools, the internet, multimedia and related technologies offer a wider arena for globalizing online, in pursuit of collaborative learning and the wider participation in internationalized learning experiences.

The opportunities offered by technical innovation have provided aspirations to communities and educational institutions to engage in collaboration in internationalized learning and aim for equality and social justice through capacity building and economic transformation. The role of ICT in the telecollaboration process has been perceived as contributing to an innovative learning experience and global partaking that moves beyond providing the link to distant parties to communicate, and paves the way for a wider landscape of genuine interaction drawing on multicultural resources. Arnold and Ducate (2006) referred to internet based intercultural exchange in the online meetings of EFL teachers. Dooly (2008) underlined the need to move beyond “a simple hook-up” (p. 66) and encouraged genuine interaction facilitated by telecollaboration. Palloff and Prat (2005) observed the development of collaborative skills at a socio-cognitive level, in groups associated with online learning in specific contexts. Additional benefits were related to the active construction of knowledge in participants through personal enquiry (see Cope and Kalantzis 2000; Barab, King and Gray 2004; Goodfellow and Lea 2007; Goodfellow and Lamy 2009).

Kress (2003) and Lauriero and Bettencourt (2011) proposed that the advances in technology have brought new potentialities for learning, to the advantage of the learner. The ease and spread of learning communities facilitated by digital mediums have provided opportunities for groups to collaborate at social, affective, cognitive and organizational levels and have taken education to global landscapes unconstrained by spatial or temporal limitations.

The Use of Telecollaboration in Various Online Education Programs

Education through telecollaboration and globalized online exchange has been recognized as the new phase of learning in the third millennium

(UNESCO 2005). The spread of global telecollaboration in education has been extended to include theories of comprehensive participation, internationalization and social justice (Sandholtz, Ringstaff, and Dawyer 2002; Wilson *et al* 2007; Bax 2011). According to Van Harmelen, telecollaboration in education is an informal and innovative approach that facilitates (2006) collective learning in contexts where new forms of technology are used in communication. Globalized online learning has been perceived as a way of introducing equal education opportunities around the globe (Dudeney 2007).

In developed countries, explorations in extending the physical teaching and learning spheres through telecollaboration have been correlated with positive outcomes for the learner (Dryer and Nel, 2003). In developing countries, the promotion of the internationalization of the learning experience through telecollaboration and globalized partaking is leading to the belief in the opportunity to acquire better learning experiences and high quality education. Internationalized education is thriving as the primary facet of this proposition. Several education enterprises embrace online learning and promoted the ideologies associated with telecollaboration (UNESCO 2005), e.g.

- Phoenix University has become the largest private university in the US, with online and on-campus provisions and programs ranging from sandwich nine week courses without certification, to Bachelor, Masters and PhD provisions. Within the university's online distance education program, telecollaboration is used to provide mentoring support.
- The Netherlands Business School has opened a branch in Nigeria (Universitiet Nigenrole). Telecollaboration is the primary mode utilized in exchanging information, comments and discussions between teachers and students.
- Harvard is developing two branch initiatives in Cyprus and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Telecollaboration is promoted as the necessary medium of exchange for the participating cohorts.
- The University of Westminster is the key partner to the Kingdom of Bahrain University. It is also involved in similar partnerships in Nigeria, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Telecollaboration is used in planning, monitoring and evaluating academic work.

- The United Kingdom Open University provides courses, collaborates on new curriculum, validates programs and shares expertise, through a long list of partnerships in open and distant learning. The Arab Open University is its Middle East partner. Telecollaboration is practiced at all levels; administration, faculties and students, to ensure the dissemination of information, timely follow up and the completion of tasks.

Although the process of telecollaboration and globalization online holds the potential of equality of access, to information, collaboration and world views, its application often reflects disparity between participants at more than one frontier. Inevitably, in this internationalization of learning, new concerns have started to surface and replace earlier, more optimistic perceptions. Researchers have brought attention to concerns about the ability of education through internationalized telecollaborative learning experiences to serve higher goals of access, equality and social justice, which have been reinforced by aspects of the digital divide, perceptions on cultural hegemony and the superiority of western thought (Bourne 2003; Leith 2003; Block 2009).

Online Education: Comparison between Developing and Developed Countries

Education through open and distance venues has been the innovative practice in teaching and learning in the new millennium (Kimber 2003; Bhagwati 2005; Knight 2006). Within the parameters of online education, telecollaboration through open and e-provisions has been perceived to relate to concepts of equality and social justice by offering practices of inclusion and securing participation across the globe (Jonassen 2000; Kimber 2003). From this perspective, social justice is becoming increasingly enshrined in educational practice, guided by an overarching focus on western thought and promoting equal access to education for all.

The demand for international education through online distance education has been increasing at a steady rate. Two million students sought

international education in 2000. The number is predicted to increase to 7.2 million international students in 2025 (Fadlallah 2011). Part of this demand has been met by student mobility to international venues; the other proportion is achieved through international education, including telecollaboration in open, distance and e-learning modes.

The developed world has made use of the opportunities afforded to education, through information and communication technology to produce and disseminate knowledge and material (Aldrich 2003; Barab King and Gray 2004; Wilson *et al* 2007) to geographically distributed learners. The production and provision of new information relies heavily on globalized online communication, and the new mediums that are now available in the digital era. However, the rooted ideologies of the developing world, nourished by a long colonial history, have not always permitted engagement in collaboration on equal footing with institutions in the developed world. In addition, the diversity of learning methods in the developing world, that have been expanded by technological innovation, exposes learners and educational institutions to unexpected difficulties and challenges (Salmon 2002; Sandholtz, Ringstaff, and Dawyer 2002; Richards 2003, 2004; Fadlallah 2011).

One of the main areas of difficulty is the basic provision facing users in poor countries. The digital divide has materialized as a reality that confirms disparity in provisions, abilities and roles, during the practice of globalizing online (Fadlallah 2011). On the one hand, the digital divide between the developing and the developed world has proved to be a major obstacle to equal telecollaborative practice. Advances in information and communication technologies are inevitably related to access to provisions and while these are abundant in first world countries they are scarce in developing countries (Knight 2005, 2006). On the other hand, problems of cost, bandwidth and speed have been identified as further obstacles for access to information and communication in the developing world. Thus, the linking of telecollaboration to an improved learning process, conditioned by technological enterprise is hampered in the developing world by the economic and financial conditions, which in turn constrain the dream of equality as the gap grows wider (Bax 2011; Committee of Vice Chancellors 2002).

A more critical evaluation of the application of telecollaboration, which involves probing deeper into the pedagogy associated with such integration, underlines concerns that ICT supported learning is not able

to fulfill wider pedagogic aspirations of transforming the learning experience in the developing world to ensure active collaboration charted by the learner. At the recipient end, the developing world utilizes the access provided to the global learning arena to accumulate knowledge, in a more passive way, without really engaging in selecting or disputing the content. Online education in third world and developing countries is a means of acquiring and assimilating foreign pedagogies and viewpoints without necessarily contributing to active engagement and knowledge build up. Telecollaboration, applied in an equitable manner in which all learners are engaged in equal opportunities to communicate, could help ameliorate this passive learning process.

Different concerns have materialized in the developed world. Europe, USA and Japan started engaging in a global competition to explore new trends and opportunities in the virtual landscape that embraces globalization and telecollaboration (Barab and Duffy 2004; Block 2010). The flow of culture, ideas, values, knowledge, technology and economy in one direction, through assumed telecollaboration exchanges has resulted in concerns on the cultural hegemony of western thought (Richards 2004; Norton 2000; Pavlenko and Blackledge 2003). Being focused on westernized themes and experiences, the provided material may not bear much relevance to the context of the developing country. Culturally sensitive considerations have to be applied in relation to what can be selected in terms of themes and debate topics.

Laurillard (2002), Gee (2003) and Kimber (2003) have provided a skeptical evaluation of success in using ICT in education and pointed out that despite its wider aim at inclusion and innovation, the pedagogy associated with the practice remains constrained, in the developing world, by a passive transmission model that alienates the learner and does not bring about the desired engagement. Cuban (2001) documents that in some contexts and with old school practitioners, telecollaboration intimidated rather than encouraged educators. Telecollaboration in this respect did not yield the expected improved learning experience (Lankshear and Snyder 2000; Laurillard 2002). The complexities and challenges that arise from attempts to align international collaboration in telecollaboration with improved learning outcomes have to contend with all the aforementioned difficulties.

The present landscape offers opportunities and challenges, entwined with different perspectives, on the dimensions of telecollaboration and

international education. The growing debate centres around the learning experience and learners' reactions in relation to the implicit connotations of cultural superiority and digital disparity between learners in developing and developed countries (Block 2009; Bourne 2003; Goodman, Johnson and Webb 1997).

Binary Distinctions or Global Partaking

The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (2002–2004) identified innovative and new developments in higher education. Education through telecollaboration can have different effects in different regions and contexts. It can have both negative and positive consequences, depending on a variety of factors. In the decades following large implementation of technology enhanced learning, the reassessment of the practice distinguished between the effectiveness of telecollaboration in technology enhanced mediums, the transacted content material and the associated perceptions and ideologies of the practice. The implicit values associated with reliance on transnational western material and ideology, exchanged through telecollaboration, in addition to the division of roles and provisions, has provoked the questioning of the neutrality of the venture.

The stark gap between the provision providers and the service recipient, and the strict division in the range and role of stakeholders impacts the roles and contribution of the collaborators and pose a central challenge to telecollaboration. "Cross-border education" encompasses a wide range of modalities in a continuum, shaped up by different forms of open and distance learning and using a range of technologies including e-learning (UNESCO, 2005). The process of integrating international, intercultural and global dimensions into the core of education through telecollaboration, coupled with the rigidity in allocating roles and privileges of collaboration are bringing new concerns and impediments.

The current study reflects on the experience of senior students in the Arab Open University in Lebanon, in an attempt to develop and extend the debate through focusing on dialogic modes of telecollaboration emerging from online interaction and supported by virtual forums.

The Context of the Study

The Arab Open University is a non-profit private university founded in 2002 in six regions; Kuwait, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Bahrain. In 2009 the seventh branch of Oman was added.

The university is funded by the Arab Gulf Programme for Development (AGFUND). The Arab Gulf Programme for Development (AGFUND) was established in 1980, upon the initiative of HRH Prince Talal Bin Abdel Aziz and with the support of leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries (GCCC): United Arab Emirates, Kingdom of Bahrain, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, State of Qatar, Sultanate of Oman and the State of Kuwait. The Gulf Cooperation Council Countries (GCCC) pledged to support and finance projects in the Arab world, with a focus on human development, high quality education, alleviation of poverty and improving living conditions for vulnerable groups. One of these projects was the Arab Open University (AOU).

Through partnership with the United Kingdom Open University (UKOU), the Arab Open University AOU was able to offer programmes and courses across the national borders of seven countries to meet the demand for higher education. The cooperation with UKOU covers the licensing of material, consultancies, accreditation and validation. The Arab Open University has the faculties of Language studies (English Language), Business studies, Education, Information Technology and Computing.

The mission statement of the Arab Open University explicitly identifies aims of improving access and outreach to marginalized communities and people and providing better learning experiences. Technology-mediated learning, telecollaboration and globalizing online resources provided alternative and virtual forums to facilitate collective learning, supplement face to face tutorials and deliver education themes (Al-Khatib 2009).

The university invested much in e-provision to create suitable technologic infrastructure that was able to support the mission statement. Supported tuition was offered to provide access to socially disadvantaged groups with lower incomes as well as to larger sections of the society to help them gain access to equal opportunity and quality education.

The participating students in the study were final year students. They were required to complete a research project that involved using electronic discussion forums, online weekly meetings and mentoring support.

Extensive technical support was provided for faculty and student to facilitate use of technology in education and open and e-learning resources. The group comprised of 36 participants and 3 mentoring tutors.

Through utilizing multimodal methods of education, the Arab Open University was able to offer flexibility and provide access to sections of the society residing in remote geographic areas. The quest for social justice included reducing social discrimination based on income and elite education provision. High quality British programmes were validated and assured by reputable academic bodies (OUVS) and were perceived to increase opportunities of employability. E-provision included globalizing online, accessing support material, tutorial outlines, virtual conferencing, as well as online upload and download portals for assignment work. Telecollaboration and e-provisions reduced face to face attendance requirements and daily commuting from rural areas and encouraging interactive group work.

Table 1: Statistics: Gender ratio and graduate numbers in each branch.

<i>Branch</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage of females</i>	<i>Graduates</i>
Kuwait	2989	2297	5286	56.55%	2691
Jordan	1447	953	2400	60.29%	2719
Lebanon	1745	2291	4036	43.24%	1175
Bahrain	714	740	1454	49.11%	355
Egypt	683	780	1463	46.68%	296
KSA	6530	6721	13251	49.28%	1647
Oman	821	781	1602	51.25%	—
Total	14929	14563	29492	50.91%	8883

Telecollaboration, Internationalization and Social Justice: An Analysis of the Program

The provision of IT support and technical infrastructure provided access to the wider web as well as virtual resources at no extra cost. The hybrid system of education at the Arab University offered access opportunity to

applicants from rural areas, mature candidates and women. In particular, the double degree program on offer allowed an advantage in the world of work over other graduates with a single degree. The movement of knowledge, program, providers and curriculum across national and regional jurisdictional borders, facilitated by telecollaboration and the adoption of open, distance and e-learning, were related to goals of improving the learning experience and the higher ideological aims of inclusion and social justice.

The program was designed as an answer to the uni-directional flow of information, material and guidance through telecollaboration from providers in western universities coupled by requests for strict adherence to the prescribed program to fulfill degree requirement, resulting in some regions implicit restlessness and unease concerning perceived cultural hegemony. Furthermore, assumptions about the superiority of the material, propagated in some contexts by inexperienced facilitators, contributed to negative attitudes that associated the system with dichotomies of superior and inferior cultures. The introduction and practice of telecollaboration in open e-provision led to developing perceptions of equality and social justice among the participating cohorts. Learners and tutors appreciated the opportunities afforded by telecollaboration in an open e-learning environment that fomented independent learning. Within the wider program, telecollaboration provided a venue for debating local and international themes as well as an opportunity to assess the practice itself in an increasingly complex context. The discussion forum provided an opportunity to exchange views, discuss key issues and gain peer support in virtual learning contexts. Free access was provided as well as technical support through computer laboratories at the university campus. An activity report was extracted every week to monitor the involvement and progress of the group.

Most learners made use of telecollaborative tools to take part in the online weekly meetings, to exchange views and to get project mentoring support. Participants were organized into four forum groups in the shared virtual environments, based on their selected project macro-themes. The facilitator tracked the learners' progress, answered their questions, recommended useful resources and commented on their output. With time, learners assumed facilitators' roles in leading group discussion, initiating and collaborating in learning through the virtual learning environments.

Twenty-three members out of 39 participants took part in the discussion forum on a weekly basis. Eight participants were active on a regular basis while six participants never joined in the discussion forum.

The collaborative method offered participating students the opportunity to take the lead in their learning. Participants chose the project titles that reflected either immediate interests or future job orientation. They were encouraged to actively reform the generic modules and themes into titles that they perceived more relevant to their concerns. In other words, telecollaboration helped “liberate” the learners from tutor-centred instruction and gave them more space to negotiate their goals and plan their study route. They were more involved in the learning process and became partners in initiating discussions and exchanging comments on other group members’ postings.

<i>Forum</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Discussions</i>	<i>Subscribed</i>
News forum	General news and announcements	2	Yes
Forum 1: Functional Linguistics Group (Systemic Functional Grammar)	May H. <i>Subtitling in 2012</i> (a study of authentic translation in films from English to Arabic) Rana D. <i>Functional Analysis of Rap</i> (Tu Pac <i>Changes</i> and Eminem <i>Foolish Pride</i>) Abir M. <i>Linguistic Features of E-mail Messages</i> Sahar Y. <i>How is the writer’s persona preserved in translation?</i>	4	<u>Top of Form</u> <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="562"/> <input type="button" value="Yes"/> <hr/> Bottom of Form

Figure 1: Forum Access and Exchange.

Forum	Description	Discussions	Subscribed
Forum Two; Gender Theory (Sociolinguistics)	Elham M. <i>Gender Differences in Political Speeches (Luther King and Thatcher)</i>	2	<hr/> Top of Form <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="563"/> <input type="button" value="Yes"/> <hr/>
	Therese A. F. <i>Comparative Analysis of Gendered Language in Men's Fitness magazine and Fit 'n' Style (ladies' magazine)</i>		
Forum Three: Language and Power (Critical Discourse Analysis)	Loubna K. <i>Power in Discourse and Power Behind Discourse (Bill Clinton Court Case)</i>	6	<hr/> Bottom of Form Top of Form <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="564"/> <input type="button" value="Yes"/> <hr/>
	Grace A. Z. <i>Racial Discourse in Lebanon</i>		
Forum Four: Language Ac- quisition	Fahda M. <i>CDA of Arabic and English news texts on CNN websites (reporting on Libya and Egypt uprising)</i>		Bottom of Form
	Nidal K. <i>The Role of Advertisement in Consumerism</i>		
	Youssef S <i>Bilingual Acquisition (in 7-12 year old children)</i>	3	
	Denise A. A. <i>The influence of the French language on writing in English (case study of 10 year old Lebanese trilinguals)</i>		
	Sara R. <i>Language Analysis of English writing, case study of Grade 9 students.</i>		
	Dalia H. <i>CMC and language issues</i>		

Figure 1: Forum Access and Exchange.

Forum One included students embarking on a career in translation. Forum Two was comprised of students wanting to pursue a career in journalism. Forum Three participants included a former lawyer and a human rights' activist. Forum Four attracted participation from elementary and intermediate cycle teachers.

It is notable that the selected titles grounded theory into contextual applications, e.g. racial discourse in Lebanon, critical discourse analysis of Arabic and English news texts on CNN reporting on the Libya and Egypt uprisings. These titles are related to increased cognitive and analytic abilities in the learners. Moreover, the postings added by the groups (Figure 2) conform to the active role assumed by the learners.

Discussion	Started by	Replies	Last post
Posting on Writer's Persona	Sahar G. 090776	2	Sahar G. 090776 Sun, 24 Apr 2011, 09:20 PM
Posting on subtitling in 2012	May H. 080793	3	May H. 080793 Fri, 22 Apr 2011, 01:42 PM
Posting on Functional Analysis of Rap (Tupac "Changes" and Eminem "Foolish Pride")	Rana F. 090023	2	Rana F. 090023 Fri, 22 Apr 2011, 11:04 AM

Figure 2: Participants and Postings.

Example: Extract A

Extract A reveals confidence in owning the knowledge propagated in the discussion as well as increased cultural awareness in relation to the subject under discussion.

Posting by Sahar G. 090776 – Sunday, 24 April 2011, 09:20 PM

Language users carry more than just the mere literal meaning in their discourse (either spoken or written); in fact, the choices they make on the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes reveal several implicit meanings and details which are analysed and detected through the Systemic Functional Linguistics of Halliday that studies language according to its functions.

The research that I am conducting will try to study SFL in more applied contexts such as translation. I will try to answer the following questions:

- Is the writer's persona preserved in translation and how?
 - Do the translator's lexical selections compromise the writer's persona in the target text?
 - Is the stance of the writer transmitted in the target text [stance refers to the attitude (positive, negative, neutral), modality (deontic, epistemic)]?
 - Is personalisation in the source text marked in the target language? How inclusive pronouns, pronouns of solidarity and direct addressing are reflected in the target text?
 - Is the standing of the author the same in the target text as in the source text?
 - Is the authenticity of the text related to the writer's persona?
 - Does the target text maintain the relationship established between the writer and the reader in the source text?
 - What are the effects of cultural norms on the writer's persona in the target text?
- II In order to find answers for the questions above, I will analyse the writer's persona of a text chosen from a book related to social studies and then translate the same text into Arabic (in three versions done by asserted translators) and study the text's translation to analyse the writer's persona in the target texts.

Example: Extract B

The student in Extract B discusses with confidence the racial problems that emerge through language use in a rap song.

*Forum 1: Functional Linguistics Group (Systemic Functional Grammar) -> Functional Analysis of Rap (Tupac "Changes" and Eminem "Foolish Pride")
by Rana F. 090023 – Friday, 22 April 2011, 11:04 AM*

My Project

Music has always touched hearts and minds. People have expressed the social ills of their particular era through popular music. Therefore, rap is a tool which allows the society to voice out thoughts about personal frustrations and sufferings. That is why, I decided to study how rap is not just some words said or introduced, but it is a worthy case in studying the language especially the lexicogrammatical features that rappers use in their songs to reflect specific situations or events they passed through. When rappers use language to express meaning, they do it in specific situation and for specific purpose "persuade, reject, etc..." Several questions are raised in this research: What structural features are placed in rap? Are they constant? Do they indicate any specific genre? What are the overall lexical and syntactical categorizations? Does it have any racial significant? And how?

According to Halliday, "language enables human beings to build a mental picture of reality to make sense of what goes on around them and inside them." And this is the case of rap songs.

According to Alice Deignan, metaphors help people to talk about difficult, emotionally intense or uncommon experiences. Like the case of Eminem's rap song.

Deignan explains that speaker or writer may have chosen particular ways of expressing ideas metaphorically to convey an ideological or persuasive point. That is what the two rappers use to highlight their own experiences in order to deliberate a message or even to persuade others.

According to Fairclough, the conventions for speech acts which form part of a discourse type embody ideological representations of subjects and their social relationships, asymmetries of rights and obligations between subjects, these may be embedded in asymmetrical rights to ask questions, request action, complain, and asymmetrical obligations. Rap carries inside it speech acts through different representations like, request actions to end some case or raise other, complain on a specific issue (like racism, cheating,...), or ask for rights (like black people asking to be treated like whites)...etc.

The data that will be collected are written data of lyrics. The two lyrics belong to different rappers Eminem (the white rapper), and Tupac (the black rapper).

Findings and Conclusion

The extracts revealed learners as comfortable in discussing their themes and utilizing concepts from the taught linguistic theories. Participants made reference to racial and social issues, displaying their autonomy and competence in the subject of discussion. They took initiative, used examples from their learning context and expanded their area of analysis. Their discussions underlined their understanding of the taught material from the British program as well as their ability to manipulate wider applications.

Learners presented themselves as partners in the learning process; assessing, evaluating and critically engaging with the material. Moreover, the texts they selected did not contribute to views on cultural hegemony and the superiority of western thought but rather to an understanding of problem areas in other cultural contexts. The findings contribute to widening intercultural understanding which was afforded through telecollaboration and internationalizing the learning experience.

Using telecollaboration in open e-learning in this case study did not substitute indigenous knowledge by an alien one. On the contrary, telecollaborating in an open e-learning environment supported the development of an independent learning identity in participants, which in turn, contributed to the exchange of knowledge and information and reflected a growing interest and active participation in the learning process.

The telecollaborative experience brought improved learning experience and new-found confidence in the learners. Learners assumed active roles in the learning process and took initiatives in charting the path of their learning as well as in proposing topics and themes and responding to each other's' comments and feedback. This materialized through forum participation and telecollaboration in posting comments, exchanging views, discussing material, suggesting resources and in general, collaborating on project work through virtual forums.

Sources of potential learning have been expanded through telecollaboration, globalizing online and e-platforms. Learners assumed control and managed their learning. New ways of collaboration in learning, on the part of students, brought about new ways of monitoring and recognizing learning on the part of tutors. Learning moved from being a tutor-centered endeavor to becoming an authentic student-centered activity. Tutors changed their traditional instructors' roles and adopted facilitators'

roles, with a focus on providing support for students in discovery-based learning. At group level, students assumed facilitators' roles in organizing and collaborating on the learning task.

Telecollaboration in this study underlined new approaches to assessing learning and globalizing online. Learners utilized telecollaboration to explore global themes in local contexts, e.g. racial problems were traced in Lebanon, as comparable to racial problems in the west. New found confidence in learners brought abilities to identify international themes and resulted in cross cultural understanding and improved learning experience.

The final reflections relate the success of telecollaboration in this case study to the ability of participants to move towards autonomy in learning, to participate in global themes and to build new roles. As for the participating tutors, the improved delivery modes that they experimented with, in addition to innovative guidance and flexible mentoring, provided enhanced learning experiences for the learners. If utilized well, telecollaboration in education can contribute to innovation, improved learning experience and intercultural understanding.

References

- Arnold, N. and Ducate, L. (2006) Connecting Universities, constructing meaning: An analysis of beginning and future FL teachers "meeting" online. *Language Learning and Technology* 10(1): 42–66.
- Aldrich, C. (2003) *Simulations and the Future of Learning: An Innovative (and perhaps revolutionary) Approach to E-Learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Al-Khatib, H. (2011) Virtual realities, concrete results. *European Journal of Open and Distance Learning*. Retrieved 19 November 2013 from <http://www.eurodl.org/materials/contrib/2011/Hayat_Al-Khatib.pdf>.
- . (2009) "How has pedagogy changed in a digital age?" the *European Journal of Open and Distance Learning* (EURODL).
- Barab, S. and Duffy, T. (2004) From practice fields to communities of practice, in D. Jonassen and S. Land (eds.), *Theoretical Foundations of Learning Environments*, pp. 25–56, Mahwah, N.J: Laurence Erlbaum.

- , King, R. and Gray, J. (eds.) (2004) *Designing for Virtual Communities in the Service of Learning*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Bax, S. (2011) Normalization revisited: the effective use of technology in language education. *International Journal of Computer Assisted Language Learning and Teaching (I)*. CALLT 1(2):1–15.
- Bhagwati, N. (2005) *In Defense of Globalization*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Block, D. (2009) Researching language and identity in B. Paltridge A. Phakiti (eds). *Continuum Companion to Second Language Research Methods*, pp. 337–349, London. Continuum.
- Block, D. (2010) Globalization and language teaching, in N. Coupland (ed), *Handbook of Language and Globalization*, pp. 287–304, Oxford. Blackwell.
- Bourne, J. (2003) English for speakers of other languages, in Mercer and Swann (eds.) *Learning English*, pp. 287–304, Milton Keynes: Open University.
- Chapelle, C. (2004) Technology and language learning: expanding methods and agendas. *System* 22 (1): 33–45.
- Committee of Vice Chancellors (2002) *The Business of Borderless Education*. UK Perspectives. CVC P. London.
- Cope, B., and Kalantzis, M., (eds.). (2000) *Multiliteracies: Literacy Learning and the Design of Social Futures*. New York: Routledge.
- Cuban, L. (2001) *Oversold and Underused: Computers in the Classroom*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Disessa, A. (2000) *Changing Minds: Computers, Learning and Literacy*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- Dooly, M. (2008) Understanding the Many Steps for Effective Collaborative Language Projects. *Language Learning Journal*, 92 (4): 614–620.
- Dudeney, G. (2007) *The Internet and the Language Classroom*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.
- Fadlallah, A. (2011) Bridging the gap in digital divide, in *The Fourteenth Cambridge International Conference on Open, Distance and E-learning*. Cambridge. Conference Proceedings.
- Fitzpatrick, A., and Davies, G. (eds.) (2003) *The Impact of Information and Communication Technologies on the Teaching of Foreign Languages and the Role of Teachers of Foreign Languages*. EC Directorate General of Education and Culture.

- Gee, J. (2003) *What Video Games have to Teach Us about Learning and Literacy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Goodfellow, R. and Lamy, M. (2009) *Learning Cultures in Online Education*. London. Continuum books.
- Goodfellow, R. and Lea, M. (2007) *Challenging E-Learning in the University: A Literacies Perspective*. Maidenhead and New York. Open University.
- Goodman, A. Johnson, P. and Webb, S. (1997) *Inequalities in the UK*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jonassen, D., (2000) Revisiting activity theory as a framework for designing student-centred learning environments. In: D. Jonassen and S. Lund (eds.), *Theoretical Foundations of Learning Environments*, pp. 89–122, Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- , Howland, J., Moore, J., and Marra, R. (2003) *Learning to Solve Problems with Technology: A Constructivist Perspective*. NJ: Pearson Education.
- Kimber, K. (2003) *Technoliteracy, Teacher Agency and Design: Shaping a Digital Learning Culture*. Queensland University of Technology, Australia.
- Knight, J. (2005) *Borderless, Offshore, Transnational and Crossborder Education*. October report of the Observatory on Borderless Higher Education. London.
- Knight, J. (2006) Cross border education. In: J. Smart and B. Tierney (eds). *Higher Education Handbook of Theory and Practice*. Springer. Netherlands.
- Kress, G. (2003) *Literacy in the New Media Age*. London: Routledge.
- Lankshear, C. and Snyder, I. (2000) *Teachers and Technoliteracy*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.
- Lauriero, A. and Bettencourt, T. (2011) The extended classroom: meeting the students' needs using a virtual environment. *Procedia – Social and Behavioural Science Journal*. 15: 2667–2672.
- Laurillard, D. (2002) *Rethinking University Teaching: A Conversational Framework for the Effective Use of Learning Technologies*. London: Routledge.
- Leith, D. (2003) English: colonial to postcolonial. In: Graddol, D., Leith D and Swann, J. (eds.), *English History, Diversity and Change*, pp. 117–148. Dublin: Open University.
- Norman, D. (2002) *The Design of Everyday Things*. New York: Doubleday.

- Norton, B. (2000) *Identity and Language Learning: Gender, Ethnicity, and Educational Change*. Harlow, England. Longman. Pearson. Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (2002–2004) *Breaking News Stories*. OBHE London.
- Palloff, R. M., and Pratt, K. (2005) *Collaborating online: Learning together in community*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Pavlenko, A. and Blackledge, A. (eds.) (2003) *Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Contexts*. Clevedon. Multilingual Matters.
- Richards, C. (2000) Hypermedia, Internet communications, and the challenge of redefining literacy in the electronic age. *Language Learning and Technology*, 4(2): 55–77.
- (2003) *ICT – Supported Learning Environments: The Challenge of Reconciling Technology and Pedagogy*. Proceedings of international conference on computers in Education.
- (2004) From old to new learning: Global dilemmas. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 2(3): 399–414.
- Salmon, G. (2002) *E-tivities: The Key to Active Online Learning*. London: Kogan Page.
- Sandholtz, J., Ringstaff, C. and Dawyer, D. (2002) The evolution of instruction in technology- rich classrooms. In: R. Pea (ed.), *Technology and Learning*, pp. 255–276, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- UNESCO (2005) *Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross Border Education*. Paris.
- Van Harmelen, M. (2006) Personal Learning Environments. In: Kinshuk, R. Koper, P. Kommers, P. Kirschner, D. Sampson & W. Didderen (eds.), *Proceedings of the 6th IEEE International Conference on Advanced Learning Technologies (ICALT'06)*. pp. 815–816, Washington, DC, USA: IEEE Computer Society Press.
- Wilson, S. Liber, O. Johnson, M. Beauvoir, P. Sharples, P. and Milligan, C. (2007) Personal Learning Environments: Challenging the Dominant Design of Educational Systems. *Journal of e-Learning and Knowledge Society*. 16:1–2.