

Innovating Teacher Education through ICT-Based Interaction

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Abstract

Telecollaboration is becoming more commonplace in the language learning classroom. Subsequently, researchers and practitioners call for more investigation into efficient praxis in telecollaborative projects for language teaching. Considering the difficulties of changing teachers' established practices -which are often based on their own learning experiences- an intriguing challenge for teacher education emerges: How to ensure teaching approaches that many teachers have not experienced as learners? Recent studies show that many teachers have begun to integrate the use of ICT tools into their teaching practices, however studies also indicate that the use of telecollaboration projects are minimal, implying a gap between teachers' awareness of such practices and ability to effectively integrate telecollaboration in their teaching.

It was within these parameters that a telecollaborative teacher training project was designed and implemented to provide opportunities for language teachers in training (in Spain and the U.S.) to shift from 'knowledge consumers' to collaborative 'knowledge producers'. This presentation will report on the project activities through description of the steps in which student-teachers collaborated via a number of tools (i.e. email, Zoho, Skype, and Second Life) with their virtual peers. Partners developed a teaching unit and teaching materials, followed by shared reflection on their own and peers' teaching practice.

Using a community-of-practice framework (Wenger 1998; Lave & Wenger 1991), specific features of the student-teachers' development of ICT and language teaching competences (e.g. teacher discourse, discussion and application of ICT-mediated teaching activities) are analysed before, during, and after the student-teachers' computer-mediated interaction. The initial comparative data for measuring development is based on the student-teachers' self-assessment, with criteria adapted from The European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL). These data are triangulated with data from the synchronous (face-to-face and virtual) and asynchronous exchanges and results are discussed, followed by a summary of possible pedagogical implications for language teachers.