

Book Review

***Telecollaboration 2.0. Language, Literacies and Intercultural Learning in the 21st Century*, edited by Sarah Guth & Francesca Helm (2010).** Peter Lang, 475 pages, Paperback 94.20€, ISBN: 978-3-0343-0440-5

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A decade has passed since we entered the 21st Century. Nowadays Western countries find themselves involved in a crisis of values and economy. During the last few years many authors have tried to define and analyze the times we are living in. Some have used the term ‘liquid times’ (Bauman, 2007), others named them ‘postnormal times’ (Sardar, 2010), characterized by the three C’s: chaos, complexity and contradiction. Despite this pessimistic context we have also experienced a big change in our daily lives: the emergence of a network that interconnects the whole world (Castells, 1996/2000). This network has evolved into the so-called Web 2.0 tools, which has brought us new ways of communicating and new ideals such as flexibility, openness, collective intelligence or sharing.

Considering these circumstances, educators have an important challenge. They must prepare their students for a complex and changing world. They must teach their pupils the curricula contents, provide them with a moral and holistic formation (Rogers, 1998), help them to learn for the future so they can take an active part in the society and improve it (Hicks, 2006), and finally offer them the possibility of developing online literacy so that they can benefit from all the advantages of web tools.

Telecollaboration in Education, a new series edited by Melinda Dooly and Robert O’Dowd, provides orientation about how educators can attain those goals. The first book in the series, coordinated by Sarah Guth and Francesca Helm, deals with Web 2.0 tools in telecollaboration (henceforth TC) contexts. It is divided into four sections. The first one comprises a series of chapters which provide the theoretical framework of Web 2.0, define TC and present current research studies in these two areas. The second section focuses on the skills and competences learners develop once they are introduced to the field. The third section points out qualities the language educator must have. Finally, the book closes with a set of case studies that help the reader to become familiar with the field of TC.

Telecollaboration is a relatively new term, which is why the editors of this volume begin with a brief overview about what TC is and outline its connection with education. The editors explain:

Over the past 15 years, several different terms have been proposed to speak of the new skills and knowledge students need in today's so-called information society. The terms have varied depending on the context of use: information literacy (Shapiro and Hughes 1996), digital literacy (Lanham 1995; Gilster 1997), and participation theory (Giger 2006). However, there is a growing tendency to speak not of single types of literacy in different contexts, but rather to use the plural form 'literacies' as in electronic literacies (Warschauer 1999), silicon literacies (Snyder 2002), multiliteracies (Cope and Kalantzis 2003) and new literacies (Lankshear and Knobel 2006). (Guth & Helm, 2010: 21)

The authors state that TC can promote the development of intercultural communicative competence, new online literacies and language learning. They propose that, on the whole, telecollaboration can be understood as a gradual shift towards new pedagogies; the goal of language learning for 21st century is no longer to educate near-native speakers but rather to help them become "intercultural speakers" who are able to move between their own cultural beliefs and those of others.

In the first chapter, Guth and Thomas begin by pointing out that the number of worldwide internet users has risen dramatically; then they move to a description of the Web 2.0., which is understood as a platform with a shared space for collective intelligence and participation. The authors assert that to be successful in the use of the Internet, new online literacies are required. They close the chapter providing us with a wide range of Web 2.0 tools.

The next chapter is written by the editors of the volume, Helm and Guth. An extensive framework of TC 2.0 is presented. The authors demonstrate how TC can help fulfill the goals of the development of a new online literacy, intercultural communicative competences and foreign language learning, all of which can be achieved through the application of TC methods and tools. After describing the framework, the authors describe an effective methodological approach for TC: Task Based Language Learning (TBLL), then they also report how it can be integrated with the 'Pedagogy of Multiliteracies' (New London Group, 2000) in order to design effective TC 2.0 tasks.

In the following chapter Lamy and Goodfellow problematise what constitutes interaction and learning within the telecollaborative context and the role of 'disruptive technologies' (p. 122). The authors then review some lessons learnt from research and explain the traits of what constitutes 'Learning 2.0'. Their chapter drives home the challenges teachers face when dealing with telecollaboration by taking a critical look at "assumptions underpinning the work of the telecollaboration community" (p. 130).

In his chapter, Thorne takes a very practical approach which is useful for teachers interested in telecollaboration. The author focuses on L2 education and how intercultural competences have taken the forefront in education within these types of virtual interactions. Thorne argues that, until recently, “Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research has focused predominantly on linguistic achievement in formal learning environments” (p. 143) while the web now offers opportunities for language learning through its format of “sociable media” (Op. Cit.). He then points out the opportunities that the Social Web offers and describes positive practices carried out through fan-fiction sites and gaming environments such as *World of Warcraft*.

This first section ends with a chapter by Panichi, Deustschmann and Molka-Danielsen. The authors describe how virtual worlds, through the use of Computer Mediated-Communication, can empower students who are reticent to use the target language. These learners can overcome their affective filter in order to talk and participate in virtual situations in which they are enacting through avatars. The authors discuss different cases taken from experiences in the virtual world called Second Life experience and outline the advantages and opportunities virtual worlds can bring to collaborative language learning.

Part Two considers the changes that new technologies have brought about for the language learner. It starts with a contribution by Guerin, Cigognini and Pettenati, who outline how an ever-changing world requires constant learning. Within this paradigm, they point out three key features that define Learning 2.0. These features are: the ‘Personal Knowledge Management’ skills –a set of abilities and competences learners must have for an effective learning; a background enabling conditions to support Learning 2.0; and an affective dimension.

In the next chapter, Hauck focuses on the communicative competences learners should develop through TC. She considers what new media literacies imply and which should be related educational goals. In addition, the author suggests that collaboration is also a new way of learning. The author closes the piece describing a project where one of the main tasks was designed to ensure the learning of multiple literacies.

The last chapter of that section is written by Hughes in which she centers attention on linguistic aspects involved in TC. The author refers to the multilingual nature of the Internet, highlighting bilingual and multilingual communication online, and how phenomena like code switching and communication mode take place.

Part Three of the book takes a closer look at the educator and how she or he should deal with TC. The section begins with a contribution by Dooly in which she introduces the concept of Teacher 2.0. This concept implies changes in the way people teach and learn, and integrates many

features related to the pedagogical application of socio-constructivism. The author also notes how Web 2.0 refers more to the ideals and pedagogies rather than resources, and that they can help the teacher achieve more learner-centered interaction. In addition, Dooly suggests the differences between work group and true collaborative learning and how this is part of a new conceptualization of educating in the knowledge society. The chapter ends with a list of teaching skills and competences required for the Teacher 2.0.

The chapter that follows, written by Furstenberg and Levet, is based on the interactions and the development of a project in an intercultural project known as the *Cultura* project. The authors describe the intricate participation that requires both online teamwork and classroom work, culminating in a substantial final product. The authors end the chapter by underscoring the importance of the teacher in guiding the development of intercultural understanding in this type of virtual interaction.

This section ends with a chapter written by O'Dowd. He puts forward one of the most challenging questions for the educator in TC. Bearing in mind the goals of TC, from language learning, intercultural learning to new online literacies, one enquiry arises, how can the educator assess student progress? The author stresses that many teachers try to evaluate a TC project with traditional methods, and the results are not as expected. The author then suggests that this is why we need new methods that fit and assess all the skills, competences and learning implicated in TC. The author presents some practical examples of evaluating tools used in TC contexts, for instance the use of grading rubrics.

The volume comes to an end with a series of case studies on TC 2.0 projects. Most of them take place at university level. The cases studies include: exchanges and discussions using wikis (Cloke; Guth and Marini-Maio); the use of Mixi, a Japanese social-networking (Meguro and Bryant) and the use of Second Life for an English learning activity (Carter). There is also a multimodality exchange between teachers trainees in Chile and Dutch students studying Spanish (Juaregi and Banados); a multilingual exchange between Erasmus students and their Italian hosts (Fratter and Helm); an exchange designed for conflict resolution and the study of international relations between the "West" and Muslim countries (Genet); and a case showing how university students help to develop the communicative competence in younger students to prepare them for a language exam (King).

As previously mentioned, there are many challenges educators have to face nowadays, from how to teach a holistic and moral education which takes into consideration the curricula contents, to the development of skills and competences to learn for the future. Teachers must do all of this

within a complex, uncertain, interconnected and changing world. The book, *Telecollaboration 2.0. Language, Literacies and Intercultural Learning in the 21st Century*, provides the reader with tools and resources for a better understanding of the relationship between online media resources and education. *Telecollaboration 2.0* is not only about 2.0 tools, but innovative approaches and a new pedagogy, which entails new online literacies, language and intercultural learning and the development of specific telecollaborative communicative competences. However, although, the book is comprehensive in its stated goals, there is a missing dimension –primary and secondary school levels. Teachers and learners at these levels can be inspired with this volume, but the lack of experiences, cases and examples about TC in lower educational contexts may create a feeling of not knowing where and how to start on similar experiences. That is the only weak point of this outstanding book that takes on one of the greatest challenges of education. This book is a ‘must have’ for all educators who are interested in improving and adapting their teaching lessons to the 21st century needs.

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To cite this article:

Anguera Cerarols, A. (2013). Book Review: *Telecollaboration 2.0. Language, literacies and intercultural learning in the 21st Century*, edited by Sarah Guth & Francesca Helm (2010), *Bellaterra Journal of Teaching & Learning Language & Literature*, 6(1), 81-85.
