Global North/South Telecollaboration

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Previous ELTRA presentation

• “ELT Research across fracture lines: Themes and methods for difficult times and under travel constraints” (17th June)
• Elizabeth Erling & Maria Grazia Imperiale talked about cross-border projects in challenging circumstances:
  • Technical challenges
  • Reciprocal responsibilities
  • Issues of power imbalance
  • The value of time and patience in order to build relationships of trust
  • The need to take risks
  • The joy of opening windows to other cultures!
• We will build on similar themes (with a geographical overlap) today:
Challenges facing Higher Education in UK

• Increasingly market-led - access depends on ability to pay
• Does this affect content? Shor et al. (2017:4) talk of “subjugated knowledges” and “disqualified discourses”
• Especially true within Engineering? (Morrissey, 2015)

Internationalisation is growing. Should be good, but:
• Many countries / regions virtually unrepresented
• Not much intercultural contact (“Exchange without encounters”, Otten, 2003:15)
Telecollaboration as a solution?

“... bringing together groups of learners from different cultural contexts for extended periods of online intercultural collaboration and interaction. This is done as an integrated part of the students’ educational programmes and under the guidance of educators or expert facilitators.”

O’Dowd and O’Rourke (2019: 1)
But telecollaboration is almost always Global North to Global North (Helm, 2015: 204)

There are two interesting exceptions that link Global North & Global South, and that challenge ‘disqualified discourses’:

1: *Soliya*....but caters mainly for Arts & Humanities students

2: *Engineers Without Borders*....but no ‘end-user’ in Global South
Why not....?

• Link Engineers in the Global North and Global South?
• Work together to look for responses to engineering challenges?

...the English for Academic Study Telecollaboration (EAST) project

| Non-UK engineers, hoping to enter a course at the University of Glasgow | + | Masters-level engineering students at the Islamic University of Gaza |
The EAST project

Every summer since 2015, Engineering students from the Islamic University of Gaza (Palestine) have suggested engineering challenges facing Gaza to peers at the University of Glasgow (Scotland).

In 2019, twelve Engineering students from the Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST), also participated in the EAST Project.

They then telecollaborate (Skype / Whatsapp / Facebook…) in small teams for 5 weeks to try to find context-appropriate responses.

In Week 5:

• they jointly deliver a presentation
• the Glasgow-based students hand in a 1,500-word essay.

If the Glasgow-based students pass the pre-sessional English course, they can matriculate.
Who are the Glasgow-based students?

• Not Scottish....
• Not British....
• They are ‘pre-sessional’ students, i.e. they have to improve their English in order to access their University of Glasgow course
  • China
  • Saudi Arabia
  • Brazil
  • Indonesia....Thailand....Kazakhstan....
Sample projects:

• Generating electricity for wastewater treatment
• Water drainage and sea pollution in Gaza
• Toxicity of pesticides in Gaza
• Groundwater salinity in Gaza
• Road traffic and effects on the environment
• Development of Arabic OCR
What do the Glasgow-based students gain?

• English language practice
• Enhanced content-knowledge
• Problem-solving
• Team-working
• Enhanced digital literacies
• Access to their Masters course!

(....the Gazan students gain demonstrably less. A dilemma for course-organisers....)
What do the Glasgow-based students gain?

• A cognitive challenge: ‘pluriliteracies’ (Coyle, 2015)
• A cultural challenge....
  • ‘Since we have different culture background, sometimes I just afraid I will
    offense their religion without attention’ (Glasgow: 2019)
    .....overcome inductively (Bikowski, 2011)
  • ‘It is my honour that can work with Arabians together, which is I never try it
    before. And they are very nice people and fill with passion’ (Glasgow: 2019)
What do the Glasgow-based students gain?

• Knowledge of real-world issues. This may mean facing up to “disturbing dialogues” (Kumaravadivelu, 2008: 181):
  
  • ‘I just knew that there were wars in Gaza, but I didn't know to what extent they influence in daily life of the people there’ (Glasgow: 2016)
  • ‘This kind of project will aware you that what is happening around us’ (Glasgow: 2016)

• In short, many students will encounter Shor et al’s ‘subjugated knowledges’, learning about the injustices facing the Global South: ....for example, let’s look at a project: ‘The lack of addresses in Gaza’:
Last week…

Steps in conducting an ethnographic study

1. Developing a research problem/question/theory

2. Foreshadowed problems

3. Selecting group/event for study

4. Access – challenges

5. Making relationships

6. Ethics
Abeer
Beyond EAST: virtual crossing borders for building ICC

3 key Qs inspired by EAST

1. How can virtual mobility & telecollaboration in TEFL/TESOL contribute in building *intercultural communicative competence* (ICC) in an increasingly globalised society?

2. How can the ICC of English language student teacher best be improved through North-South telecollaboration?

3. How can the bridges of ICC developed by EAST partners (UK, Palestine & Malawi) be widened & sustained (thro answering the 2 Qs above?)
Beyond EAST: virtual crossing borders for building ICC

What & Why ICC for English language students?

• **ICC:** “the ability to interact with people from another country and culture in a foreign language” (Byram 1997: 71)

• **Importance:** enables student-teachers (practice teachers) & students to become more competent in terms of culture knowledge and interactions. Growing virtual globalisation & migratory movements highlight the need to integrate interculturality in TEFL programs.
Beyond EAST : virtual crossing borders for building ICC

EAST Participants to be varied

to promote intercultural and linguistic competence among student teachers in

• **UK:** British native speakers: ELT & English language students & teacher educators

• **Palestine & Malawi:** undergraduate & postgraduate English language pre & in-service teachers
Beyond EAST: virtual crossing borders for building ICC

Sample ICC topics & competences

Telecollaboration combined with language learning develops student teacher’s ICC through:

1. promoting skills and strategies for developing inter-cultural awareness leading to ICC for global citizenship.

2. fostering intercultural interactions and discussion leading to self-awareness, openness, and transformation.

3. Promoting reading, researching and discussing intercultural aspects related to ICC in UK, Palestine & Malawi
Beyond EAST: virtual crossing borders for building ICC

What key communication skills can all participants gain?

1. knowledge & awareness of the native culture and other cultures
2. fluency in communication skills through virtual language interaction and practice
3. Team-working and persuasion skills
4. Enhanced digital literacies in a fast developing area
5. Presenting skills of most salient emerging themes related to ICC: miscommunication, misconceptions, appropriateness, identity, teaching and learning, and academic success.
Having participated in the EAST Project in 2019, Malawian Engineering and Biomedical Sciences students would like to:

• continue collaborating with their counterparts in UK to investigate possible solutions to Malawian specific Engineering and Biomedical problems.

• explore long-term North-South student exchange programme.

• facilitate Gaza-Malawi collaborative approach to Engineering solutions to local shared problems.

• conduct joint Engineering and Biomedical research projects of common interest.

• work on joint innovations aimed at solving local Malawian problems.
Anna: The technical details of EAST

• Learning context and student needs as the main driver
• Human presence and contact
  • Student - student
  • Teacher - student(s)
  • Coordinator - coordinator
• Community building
  • get to know each other sessions - timetabled real time
• Technology choices
  • fit for purpose
  • less is more
  • familiarity is key
## Ethical dilemmas

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<tr>
<th>What can you do in just 5 weeks?</th>
<th>Constructing collaborative partnerships with overseas partners takes time, in order to build trust and to explore mutual needs (Koehn and Obamba, 2014)</th>
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<td>More benefits / More immediate benefits to GN ss</td>
<td>Possibility of re-balancing in longer-term (funding bids/move from pre-sessional to in-sessional)</td>
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<td>When a university permits a project such as EAST, is the project hacking the system, or is it being hacked by the system? (de Oliveira Andreotti et al., 2015)</td>
<td>”By demanding the end to all domination and by refusing to associate with the institutions of society and of political power, we try and cover over the mess of life, rather than working together to find ways of living together that will include, even embrace, the impossibilities.” (Phipps, 2007:149, talking specifically of power issues inherent in English language initiatives)</td>
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Some closing comments from Gaza:

- *I learned how to respect the cultures of others....before the project it wasn’t a big thing, but when I dealt with others with each one has its own culture, my view of the subject really changed...’ (Gaza: 2016)*

- ‘If you ask me what is the most useful thing that you take it from this project i will certainly say the knowledge about cultures, its great thing to share your ideas and thoughts with other people’ (Gaza: 2016)

- ‘you have just know them, also you can get a full of useful when you chat with them about their habits, thoughts, living and many thing relating to their lives not just talking about the education or college :)’ (Gaza: 2016)
Summary of benefits (Freire, 1996)

• Global North students learn about issues of social justice
• Gazan students have a ‘witnessing’
• This is not ‘banking’ education....everyone involved takes a risk...and by doing so, grows
Further Reading

The British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes have just published a fuller discussion of the issues we have touched on today, within their Social Justice Special Interest Group:

• [https://eap4socialjustice.net/2020/06/06/pre-sessional-english-language-courses-university-telecollaboration-as-a-driver-of-global-north-south-student-contact-for-engineers/](https://eap4socialjustice.net/2020/06/06/pre-sessional-english-language-courses-university-telecollaboration-as-a-driver-of-global-north-south-student-contact-for-engineers/)

You can learn more about the EAST project here:


References

- Helm, F. 2015. The practices and challenges of telecollaboration in higher education in Europe. Language Learning and Technology, 19(2), 197-217